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Contemporary Research Topics

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Hospitality & Tourism

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This special issue of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)* on Hospitality and Tourism explores the future of those sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

The series *Scope (Art & Design)* aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the visual arts and design. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the visual and related arts and activities, such as sound, performance, curation, tactile and immersive environments, digital scapes and methodological considerations. Within Aotearoa/New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Scope (Art & Design)* seeks to address the matters which concern contemporary artists and arts enquirers in their environments of practice.

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Contemporary Research Topics

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UNLEARNING HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM: TOWARDS PRACTICES OF REFUSAL AND REGENERATION

Adrian Woodhouse

This special issue of *Scope (Art & Design): Hospitality and Tourism* is both a provocation and an offering. It throws down a challenge: to rupture the tired orthodoxies shaping the fields of hospitality and tourism, and to resist the normalised assumptions that continue to govern how we teach, lead, serve, and imagine within them. For too long, dominant logic has rewarded exploitative systems, siloed expertise, and sterile metrics of success. What happens when educators, practitioners, researchers, and creatives stop nodding politely and instead begin to push back? When the myth of limitless growth is interrogated? When our places of service, leisure, learning, and care become sites of cultural resistance and philosophical reckoning?

As editor of this issue, it has been my pleasure to collaborate with a group of contributors who, like myself, are committed to disrupting the status quo. I have spent the past two decades advocating for pedagogical and professional models that challenge the servile and hierarchical paradigms so often embedded in hospitality education. My research has focused on dismantling those systems that prize obedience over originality and reinforce outdated notions of customer service and professional identity. This special issue is a continuation of that work, and a celebration of a growing community of thinkers and doers who are refusing to replicate what no longer serves us.

The contributions in this issue do not merely theorise disruption—they perform it. They emerge from kitchens and classrooms, resorts and runways, bushwalks and boardrooms, and from moments where the personal and political collide. They are international in scope and diverse in voice, but they share a refusal to replicate. Instead, they ask: what if we imagined otherwise?

Across this collection, you will encounter themes that provoke and unsettle, with a deliberate intention to confront the structural foundations of our disciplines. In one thread, the integration of AI into hospitality education raises critical questions of authenticity, craft, and the erosion of tacit knowledge. What vanishes when human intuition is outsourced to a machine? What values are being quietly undermined under the guise of efficiency? In another, the looming threat of over-tourism and unchecked development is laid bare, revealing how the commodification of culture and place risks hollowing out both meaning and mana. The spectre of another "Bali 2.0" is not a distant possibility—it is a crisis already unfolding.

Equally potent are the threads that interrogate the academy itself—its complicity as an institutional gatekeeper, its privileging of traditional academic epistemologies, and its tendency to marginalise experiential and practice-based knowledges. These pieces challenge us to question who is allowed to speak, whose knowledge is deemed legitimate, and what it would mean to dismantle those exclusions from within.

Elsewhere, contributors to this issue reimagine hospitality and tourism as deeply relational and embodied practices, grounded in whenua, whānau, and manaakitanga. These perspectives move beyond the reductive and transactional logic of hospitality-as-service and instead offer radical visions of hospitality-as-relationship. Across these reflections, well-being is not presented as a soft or secondary consideration—it is central, ethical, and profoundly political.

One critical strand of this conversation turns its gaze inward to interrogate culinary education itself. The standardised, Eurocentric curriculum is scrutinised for its marginalisation of non-Western culinary traditions and its role in sustaining colonial hierarchies of knowledge. Contributors offer searing critiques of how the professionalisation of culinary training often excludes students' lived culinary experiences, reifying a narrow and hegemonic conception of gastronomy. Through storytelling and critical autoethnography, these pieces call for a reimagining of culinary pedagogy—one that honours intergenerational knowledge, sensory learning, and the multiple worlds our learners bring with them. Here, decolonising education is not an abstract ideal; it is a grounded practice that begins by restoring dignity, visibility, and agency to those long marginalised by the academy.

We are reminded, again and again, that our classrooms and workplaces are not neutral spaces. They carry histories, worldviews, and power dynamics that must be surfaced if transformation is to be meaningful.

What links these articles is not a single methodology or lens, but a shared restlessness. A desire to challenge the status quo—not only for disruption, but because the status quo is no longer fit for purpose. These contributions demand that we ask better questions of our field: Who benefits from the way things are? What histories are being upheld or erased in our curricula, our dining rooms, our tourism experiences? What would it mean if values such as care, indigeneity, ecological connection, and self-determination were no longer sidebars but centred as structuring principles?

This edition also invites self-reflection. As readers, educators, operators, travellers, and consumers, we are not outside the systems we critique. We are implicated in them. The seductive logic of growth, standardisation, and techno-solutionism lives within us.

Disruption, therefore, is not just noise. It is method. It is refusal. It is ceremony. These contributions are offerings—sometimes raw, sometimes rigorous, always courageous. They speak of pedagogy as activism, of tourism as cultural memory, of hospitality as a site of ethical engagement, and of practice as resistance.

Let this issue unsettle you. Let it provoke your practice, stretch your thinking, and seed new kinds of conversations in your classrooms, commercial kitchens, tour operations, community hubs, and cultural sites. Let it move you beyond compliance and towards courage.

The wider fields of hospitality and tourism do not need more standardisation; they need radical imagination. And here, within these pages, that reimagining has begun.

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Reflective Piece

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MANA AND THE PASS: MĀORI PERSPECTIVES ON WELL-BEING IN KITCHEN CULTURE

D. M. Price

INTRODUCTION

This reflective article delves into the critical learning moments of my professional culinary journey, particularly my early years in the hospitality industry when I played a junior role, learning and following directives from others. It's a story which contemplates culinary industry culture: the club that you just don't understand if you haven't been a member. My account dredges up unquestioned behaviours and questionable values within the industry and surfaces a sad realisation that I had somehow missed the most important and meaningful values in life while working in an industry I loved. How can it be that I only discovered the meaning of true hospitality—manaakitanga/manaakitaka—when I started moving away from the industry?

THE WORLD OF THE KITCHEN

The professional kitchen has long been recognised as a world unto itself, governed by its own set of rules and rituals. Within this environment, individuals are expected to conform to behavioural norms established by those in leadership positions (Barton, 2017; Burrow et al., 2024; Cooper et al., 2017; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018). Therefore, adherence to these rules, rituals, and norms fosters a shared understanding among chefs—an unspoken awareness of how things should operate in fine dining establishments, shaped by experience and tradition.

In recent years, hospitality scholars have increasingly embraced reflective storywork. They use autoethnography as a methodology to cultivate an authentic voice that fosters critical discussion and drives change within the field (Lee, 2021, 2025; Lee & Ruck, 2022; Slavnic, 2013; Woodhouse, 2018, 2021). This reflective commentary contributes to these ongoing critical conversations by offering insights and perspectives that further enrich the discourse. It is a personal story about culinary learner and master, which speaks to integrity, respect, fear, values, humiliation, and hierarchy. It addresses how the traditional culinary way of life—the chef's way of thinking—largely endures today, while also discussing how kitchen culture is evolving. The lid was peeled off the industry's can of culture when social media arrived, and exposure and scrutiny of our 'secret' institution began. Shifts in thinking and attitudes have followed.

The thing with chefs is: you have to earn your stripes. From my experience, to do this in a genuine way takes a minimum of 10 to 15 years. When referring to the educational experiences of young chefs earning their stripes, Chef Gordon Ramsay notes that "you have to bow down and stay focused until the knowledge is tucked away … The weak disappear off the face of the earth" (as quoted in Duncan, 2001, p. 10). Hence, the practice of becoming a chef within fine dining kitchens is as much about learning to be obedient to the master as it is about the acquisition of your craft skills.

As a junior chef, I didn't think about kitchen culture. Work practices, actions, and language were unquestioned and accepted as the norm. We aspired to learn as much from our leaders as possible. That was how you earned their respect: by showing them that you wanted to be there, wanted to learn from them, and wanted to work extra hard—harder than your peers. We wanted to be just like our leaders. We were tight. We all followed, together. This was our distorted version of kotahitaka/kotahitanga: the Māori value of collective purpose and teamwork. The system generated respect for hierarchy in the kitchen. This unwavering commitment to our chef masters meant something; it still means something. Outsiders just don't get it. It's just how it is.

Looking at other industries at the time, we would all shake our heads and say, "They've got no idea." I remember my flatmate complaining about working from eight until six, Monday to Friday. When those of us working in hospitality recalled his comments, there'd be disbelief and high-pitched laughter. Ours was a culture of Us versus Them. Our version of the positive relationships and kinships embodied in the Māori value of whanaungataka/whanaungatanga were skewed by this "Us versus Them" conditioning and subsequent alienation. My reaction towards my flatmate's complaints echoes the findings of Palmer, Cooper, and Burns (2010) who explored the cultural "underbelly" of the culinary arts. Palmer and colleagues' (2010) study illuminated how the culinary arts foster a deeply embedded culture of hard work, resilience, and collective responsibility, which in turn shapes a strong sense of kinship and group identity among chefs. This collective identity, reinforced through shared experiences of long hours and hard dirty work, delineates those in the profession from the "other" (non-chefs), thereby strengthening the internal cohesion and distinctiveness of the chef community. As a consequence, the delineation between chefs and outsiders is not merely occupational but deeply cultural, perpetuating an exclusive, self-referential professional community (Palmer et al., 2010).

As working chefs, we were at the coalface, believing we were doing the real shit; the work that mattered. Work that took skill, talent, commitment, and sheer slog. And then there were the customers. Those battle-hardened chefs reading this article will know precisely what I mean by this, but let me explain. Customers, sometimes along with front-of-house staff, were often seen as the enemy and fell into their very own "outsider" category in the culinary wars. In our minds, customers and other staff were just there to make our life hard. They were seen as poorly educated in all things culinary; demanding; lacking initiative, and possessing no capacity to understand the pressure we were under. Therefore, they needed to be taught their place in the order of things. Any acts of kotahitaka/kotahitanga took place solely inside the boundary of the lino seam of the non-slip kitchen floor and not a step over. Unquestionably, this division still exists today.

I hasten to add that this attitude towards "outsiders" varied in different establishments. There were kitchens that were the polar opposite. But here, I am describing the attitudes and the type of camaraderie or kotahitaka/kotahitanga which existed. This was a grinning, lop-sided, and toothless kotahitaka. When you've been socialised and conditioned, you simply don't question. You are one of the group and it feels good to belong.

We were all about learning from actual culinary masters (*not* TikTok reels or this televised so-called MasterChef bullshit, I might add). We were about hierarchy; earning integrity and respect by working extremely hard; having expansive knowledge of the French classics; constantly researching the latest methods and innovations, and deftly applying all known preparation and presentation techniques whilst under the enormous expectations and pressure of nightly service.

This was the other world—the club—in which 'real' chefs existed.

A PROMPT FOR REFLECTION

Now, let us roll the clock forward 25 years. I'm a parent and homeowner and finally doing a degree. The culinary arts degree I'm completing is deeply reflective, and this takes me by surprise. I share this confusion with my lecturer when reading the outline requirements of an upcoming assignment. I'm required to write two reflective articles,

based on examples from my professional experience, each exploring the principles and values of manaakitanga/manaakitaka, kotahitanga/kotahitaka, and whanaungatanga/whanaungataka, within the hospitality sector.

The instructions trigger frustration and dismay. I think, "Huh?! How is this relevant?" I say, "I can't make any connection at all." I'm given some readings, links to research articles, and videos explaining these Māori principles. For reference, here are the values and the definitions we were provided with:

Manaakitaka (manaakitanga):	The act of extending hospitality towards others.
Kotahitaka (kotahitanga):	The development of collective purpose and teamwork.
Whanaungataka (whanaungatanga):	The formation of positive relationships and kinship.

I struggle to find anything in my memory bank which would authentically represent these values.

I found myself in a hole. I was too worried to ask, "Is it just me, or is it really, really hard to provide these examples?" I realised that I had a career of incidents and experiences which represented nothing but the contrary. Yet, I was encouraged to tell my story and share those experiences. What follows is what I wrote.

MY STORY

I once observed the process of breaking a person so they would conform to the requirements of the workplace. I watched one person using humiliation, physical size, and intense cross-examining to bring someone down a peg or two and assert their dominance. It was a dressing down of a person in front of their workmates so that they became compliant and never made that same mistake again. We were shown how to alienate a young man and make him cry at work. This experience is just one of many which regularly occurred in this kitchen. To protect identities, I have used pseudonyms.

On this particular day, we were ticking over with prep, mostly preoccupied with our own work and being ready in time for service. Brent, the head chef, was a big guy. There's no point in airbrushing it, he was pretty huge and he liked to talk about it. Bending down into the service fridges was clearly not easy for him and so he made very little attempt to squat neatly. He'd just bend right on over, into what remained of any walking space, and then immediately make an offensive joke about his backside. It was a tiny kitchen anyway, and when he was in there, we used our bodies and movements very efficiently indeed. Brent used to walk over to my board and stand right up close, so I had nowhere to go. I used to think to myself, "Well, this is cosy." It was almost comedic. But it was often very uncomfortable. He'd joke, "What's the matter, am I taking up your space? Big boy too fat to fit?" And he'd bellow with laughter. He loved our discomfort.

When Brent came into the kitchen, he never let us know where he was or when to expect him. This kept us at just the right level of anxiety. It was nerve wracking. He never said "legs," or "coming through," when he was on these missions. He just materialised into your space, forcing you to move aside while he went through your service fridge and rattled through your mise (prep) saying things like "This fucking mise better be fucking good. You trying to hide something from me?" Nothing passed him by, until he could satisfy himself that you were doing exactly as you were told.

Who Brent chose to target first always changed. On this day, James, a demi chef, was portioning a tray of citrus semi-freddo into plastic 1L service containers. When he entered James's section, Brent's energy immediately changed. "What are you fucking DOING here?" he shouted. We all knew what was coming but nobody dared exchange a glance. I remember the dread creeping into the space. Brent sucked the air out of the room. He looked at what James was doing, and then he started tearing James down. He drilled him and his words travelled between my own ears and into the back of my head and down into my brainstem. I felt prickling pain and discomfort. I felt hot. Panicked. I could feel my heart banging in my chest from adrenaline. I knew what was coming and each time

it felt worse. There was absolutely nowhere to hide and nothing that could stop it. If anyone tried to slope out of the kitchen, he would notice and say, "Where the fuck are you going? You can fuckin' stay here and learn from this donkey too."

It was relentless. Brent would climb into someone and ride them for an excruciating eternity. And then when we thought it surely must be over, he went further:

> "What did you do that for, you fucking homo?"
>
> "Sorry, Chef."
>
> "I fucking told you to portion it into 50 grams."
>
> "Sorry, Chef."
>
> "Do you think you know better than me?"
>
> "No, Chef."
>
> "Do you think I'm a dumb cunt?"
>
> "No, Chef."
>
> "Get your fucking book out and show me, you fucking donkey."
>
> "Oui, Chef."
>
> "So, what the fuck does that say? Does it fucking say 50 grams in your own fucking writing you dumb cunt, or does it say 'I'll do whatever the fuck I want 'cos I'm an arrogant little prick'?"
>
> "It says 50 grams, Chef."
>
> "Then what the fuck is wrong with you?"
>
> "Nothing, Chef. I'm probably a bit tired."
>
> (Wrong answer).
>
> "You're fucken tired? Didn't you just have two fucking days off, for fuck's sake?"
>
> "Oui, Chef."
>
> "Then what the fuck are you talking about? Can't you fucking handle it? What's wrong with you, you pussy?"
>
> James said, with a tremble in his voice, "Nothing, Chef. Sorry, Chef."
>
> And then Brent said up close: "Fuck off with your fucking 'sorry.'"

Brent would never leave the kitchen after drilling someone. He hung around to really work it through.

This is a true story. I hate repeating Brent's words and language but it's how kitchen language was, and there were times when it was actually worse. I can still feel the atmosphere and the dread. I often think about Brent and try to make sense of his behaviour. We all accepted it. Put simply, it was normal back then. We offered a high-end, fine-dining menu, each course with wine matches, and charged a ridiculous amount per head. We were the restaurant everyone was talking about. Brent was under enormous pressure, and he had to be certain everything was exactly as he wanted it to be.

As a head chef, Brent was highly skilled and well-travelled. At times, he could be extremely funny, intelligent, and reveal a heart made of marshmallow. These traits, along with his other, less likeable aspects, made it all the more excruciating when he was pissed off because I knew deep inside he was kind. I still felt loyalty towards him.

When I talk to other chefs who were cooking at the time, at similar places, they know exactly what it means to break a chef. It was a way of bringing someone down and cracking their psychological shell permanently. You had

to have total buy-in, compliance and commitment from them, and if there was the slightest indication of attitude or mutiny, that was it. They broke chefs to "teach" them. If that chef was still there the next day, well, that was good. If they had left, they were never going to be good enough.

Brent didn't uplift James's mana; he tore it down and embarrassed him. Later, he would make jokes about portioning citrus semi-freddo anytime someone was portioning anything at all, and he had a way of making us—even James—laugh about it. But the laughter was hollow. There was a cloud that hung over us still. Brent was both Jekyll and Hyde.

Was this treatment of people effective? In the respect that Brent achieved what he needed to achieve, sadly, yes, it was. When it came to forming positive relationships and creating an environment where people felt united, that their integrity was upheld and they were respected as learners who made mistakes, then, no. Absolutely not. When this and other such episodes occurred, the atmosphere in the kitchen was taxing and stressful for everyone, including the front of house staff. It was incredibly hard to concentrate or focus on anything, and you found yourself working inefficiently. It had a negative impact on our productivity. After this experience, I just wanted James to leave and take the bad juju with him. Yes, he could be cocky sometimes, but he was barely twenty.

My own response to such treatment in this kitchen was self-preservation. Rather than being in a situation where I felt inspired to do well because of a talented and skilled leader, I was driven by fear to perform at my absolute best. So I worked harder, and my work was impeccable. I committed fully to being better than everyone just to save my own arse from a public flogging. It was everyone for themselves, and the result was that we were siloed from each other, not representing or embodying the principle of kotahitaka. We were not working harmoniously or collectively to achieve our common goals. When James made the portioning error, we had no opportunity to talk together about how we could fix the problem. There would have been solutions and future approaches to be learnt from this mistake, but we were silenced.

Manaakitaka is the concept in which we create and value a warm environment and respect for each other, allowing those around us to be the best they can be. Creating a space in which to flourish and upholding everyone's mana and integrity. Whanaungataka involves caring for and working harmoniously with others to achieve common goals using relational strategies.

The actions of Brent and the environment his actions created never allowed these te ao Māori principles to emerge. Manaakitaka, kotahitaka, and whanaungataka were sucked out of the space along with the air.

Upon reflection, I feel ashamed that I didn't protect James and didn't act. I know there was no need to take that stance. It just didn't have to happen like that. I can say, however, that I was influenced for some time by Brent and, to a degree, mimicked aspects of his behaviour. I don't possess the same vocabulary, and I never raised my voice. I always took people aside if it was serious and I respected their privacy. Humiliating people is not my thing. But I did pick up a little trick of being the dog with the bone when it came to proving a point. I would also drill.

It would be great to explain away these truths by saying, "Well, that's how it was then. It was a different world, and that was the culture." And that's also true. But now, the world has changed, and we have learned that such behaviour is not the way forward, and is just not acceptable. We must care about each other more. We can create a workplace culture that is both productive and pretty good fun. And because of that potential to change, I don't feel proud of myself for that past behaviour. I regret it.

I've taught myself that I can just pause in situations when something is not right because someone is not performing as they should. I have a right royal internal battle at such times. But I have learnt that there's a lot to be gained from creating an empty space! Just pausing and sitting with things quietly, I can let people carry on happily making a bad job of something.

I'm also not as much of a control freak. My previous habit was to jump in to prevent an error before it happened and then monitor closely. When the mistake was repeated again and again, I would come down hard and get all interrogational. Instead, I now leave a space. This space gives me time to think and heightens my self-awareness. It's actually kind of fascinating to observe myself in such moments. It wasn't an overnight transformation! But I recently had real success with this approach. I had shown a person how to change the way they were performing a particular task. This person continued with the method they had been using instead of adopting the process I had demonstrated. I asked them to change their process again and backed off. They continued approaching the task using their initial method another two or three times, then suddenly stopped their process and finally adopted my approach. It was like a real miracle.

Through such experiences, I have learned that fostering an atmosphere of ease, trusting that others will eventually "get it," and allowing them more time to learn can genuinely encourage people to engage with the shared goal and become team players. This approach creates a supportive environment where individuals can thrive and perform at their best. While the principles of manaakitaka, kotahitaka, and whanaungataka were lacking in the kitchen culture of my own training, I now see how they play a key role in developing the next generation of aspiring chefs.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As a junior chef, our focus was to "get the job done as fast and perfectly as possible and ensure the Chef was pleased." At the time, it was difficult to apply positive examples of manaakitaka, kotahitaka, and whanaungataka within professional kitchen environments. That was simply the way things were. Yet, amidst the intensity, there were also moments of joy: camaraderie, laughter, and strong friendships. However, workplace priorities were different then.

Reflecting on these experiences through the lens of these principles today highlights the profound life lessons I have learned and the personal growth I have achieved since those early days. I now recognise that the industry culture and socialisation I was immersed in actually hindered aspects of my personal development—an unfortunate reality for any young person. This realisation has been gradual but deeply transformative. I have retained my humour and can now find amusement in situations that once felt overwhelming. More importantly, I am excited about what lies ahead. The core of who I am remains intact, but through experience and growth, I have refined that foundation into a stronger, more authentic version of myself, one that will guide me confidently into the next chapter of my professional journey.

D. M. Price is the pseudonym of a seasoned New Zealand chef with 30 years in the hospitality industry leading award-winning restaurants and luxury lodges. Her professional practice and research interests focus on sustainable food systems, with a particular emphasis on hospitality staff well-being and community food resilience. She holds a Bachelor of Culinary Arts from Otago Polytechnic and is currently studying towards a Graduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching from Massey University.

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Reflective Piece https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1029014

THREADS OF MEMORY: NAVIGATING THE AI-HUMAN BORDER IN CULINARY EDUCATION

Tony Heptinstall

Morning light falls across the stainless steel workbenches as I watch Aroha adjust her apron with quiet determination. The scene holds a poignant tension. Her hands move with the muscle memory passed down through generations, yet beside her, a laptop screen flickers with algorithmic suggestions for her grandmother's pork and puha recipe. This moment in my institute's training kitchen crystallises a concern that has occupied my thoughts for months.

As a senior lecturer on the Bachelor of Culinary Arts programme at Otago Polytechnic in Ōtepoti/Dunedin, New Zealand, I recognise that AI tools offer remarkable advantages in tertiary education. However, my concern is that their unchecked adoption threatens to erode authentic learning, cultural knowledge preservation, and the creative thinking capabilities this world desperately needs. What is unfolding in my culinary classroom resembles similar scenes in lecture theatres, art studios, and science laboratories throughout this institution and beyond.

My attention drifts between Aroha's methodical preparations and her classmates' varied engagements with technology. Computer cameras monitor stress levels, AI analyses plating arrangements—and an AI-generated cooking assistant even provides guidance on cooking techniques, sounding a lot like celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay. Though they might seem futuristic, these technologies already exist. Within the next few years or decades, Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) might well have arrived, capable of performing any intellectual task humans can, with the ability to learn, reason, and adapt across all possible contexts.

The Digital Education Council's 2024 Global AI Student Survey confirms what I'm seeing. Eighty-six percent of university students now rely on AI for information gathering and summarisation (Digital Education Council, 2024). More troubling is what Ethan Mollick terms "illusory knowledge," where students mistake AI assistance for genuine learning even as their actual understanding diminishes (Mollick, 2024).

My father never worked professionally in a kitchen, yet his relationship with the beer he served in the pubs where I grew up mirrored the intuitive mastery I now observe in accomplished chefs. I recall watching him move between beer barrels, his fingers touching the wood, head slightly tilted as though listening to something imperceptible to others. He knew intuitively whether a beer had fully fermented or if a barrel needed turning. This knowledge was not gained through formal education but through total immersion in his craft.

These memories surface frequently as I observe students becoming increasingly reliant on AI for culinary guidance. What subtleties might they never discover, overlooked by guiding algorithms?

I'm reminded of Philip K. Dick's prescient warnings about technological dependence in novels such as *Minority Report* (Dick, 1956) or *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Dick, 1968), adapted as *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982). His stories often portray worlds where human intuition and improvisation become endangered qualities, much like the culinary instincts I fear our students might lose. In his worlds, as in our kitchens, the ability to question, create, and adapt beyond programmed parameters ultimately proves essential for survival and meaning.

At Otago Polytechnic, I see this tension daily. Some students eagerly embrace AI to discover new insights and deeper understanding, while others, like Aroha, express unease about drifting from their cultural backgrounds. Her adaptation of pork and puha represents more than a dish: it embodies her connection to heritage and shows a personal creativity that algorithms cannot replicate.

My kitchen has become a microcosm of broader institutional challenges. Across campuses worldwide, administrators are purchasing large-scale AI licenses, often motivated by promises of control and equity rather than substantiated learning advantages. Marc Watkins aptly characterises this as "panic purchasing": institutions investing substantial funds, hoping to shape or regulate AI usage without clear plans for promoting authentic learning outcomes (Watkins, 2025).

During discussions in various AI advisory groups, the divide becomes apparent. Some colleagues voice concerns about the uncritical adoption of AI, while other staff emphasise the need for our students to be AI-ready for the workforce. Nursing educators worry about clinical judgement being undermined, while design tutors speak of creative intuition being compromised. This duality of opinions reflects a fundamental question that transcends disciplinary boundaries: how can tertiary institutions embrace technological advancement while preserving the essential human elements that define higher education? The kitchen, with its blend of technical precision and artistic expression, simply makes visible the tensions that exist across our entire academic sector.

The AI-augmented classroom is not a future possibility but a present reality reshaping higher education across all disciplines, from the humanities to the sciences. By next year, even greater advancements will challenge our teaching methods, creative processes, and the nature of learning itself. The critical question becomes not whether AI belongs in tertiary education, but how we maintain genuine creativity, cultural fluency, and human empathy at the centre of our teaching, whether in kitchens, laboratories, or lecture halls.

I stand quietly at the edge of the kitchen as Aroha plates her completed pork and puha dish. Despite the AI-generated suggestions accumulating on her screen, her final presentation reflects something deeply personal, a combination of ancestry with modern technique, guided more by her grandmother's teachings than AI's algorithms. At that moment, I recall the whakataukī: "E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea" ("I shall never be lost, I am a seed sown from Rangiātea"), a poignant reminder that identity and resilience spring from cultural roots that cannot be automated.

My thoughts return to my father's pub, to the worn wooden bar where he'd sometimes let me sit after closing, explaining the subtle differences between beers as he cleaned glasses. Those moments held no algorithms, no digital assistance, just the transmission of knowledge through story, observation, and shared experience. It seems vital that, amid technological advancement, we preserve such spaces for direct human connection and knowledge transfer.

For me, this represents more than an academic concern: it's a deeply personal challenge. As I observe students navigating these technological advancements, I recognise my responsibility to help shape AI's role in our classrooms rather than passively accepting corporate-defined guidelines. If we fail to act thoughtfully, we risk replacing the artistry of cooking, with all its cultural and personal significance and creative potential, with mere technological reproduction. My father's intuitive knowledge of his craft, Aroha's connection to her grandmother's recipes, and countless other personal relationships to food and beverage preparation remind us what we stand to lose.

I have committed myself to engaging with these technologies by questioning how they transform learning, exploring their capabilities while remaining critical of their limitations, and demanding that they serve education rather than dictate its terms.

Through active leadership in this conversation, we can prepare the next generation of tertiary graduates to thrive in an AI-driven world without sacrificing human creativity, cultural depth, and whanaungatanga. I want to see this positive change not just in our culinary programme but across all faculties.

Our obligation extends beyond merely incorporating AI into teaching. We must critically evaluate whose interests these technologies serve. We must also work to preserve the uniquely human aspects of learning that no algorithm can replace: our intuitive knowledge passed from generation to generation, the cultural understanding embedded in our disciplines, and the creative impulse that elevates education beyond the mere transfer of information towards a transformative experience. In kitchens and classrooms, even as the digital tools we employ grow increasingly sophisticated, what makes tertiary education meaningful remains fundamentally human.

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SRI LANKA'S TOURISM: AVOIDING BALI 2.0 BY BALANCING GROWTH WITH PRESERVATION

Madura Thivanka Pathirana

INTRODUCTION

After being ravaged by the Easter Sunday attacks, the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent economic crisis, Sri Lanka's tourism sector is starting to bounce back (Furkhan, 2025). Tourism remains one of the major contributors to the country's GDP. It has a critical impact on the economy of the country, especially in foreign exchange earnings and employment generation (Jayasinghe, 2024). The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) reported that tourist arrivals in 2024 grew by 38.07 percent compared to the previous year, surpassing two million, which marks the highest visitor arrival rate since 2019 (Daily FT, 2025). This increase in international visitors is alleviating some of the pressure being faced by the economy and reigniting hope for the future of the tourism industry (De Silva, 2025a).

The government of Sri Lanka has actively participated in the branding of the country as a tourist hub through several marketing initiatives (Furkhan, 2025). The deployment of ad campaigns, construction development, and changes in tourism legislation have significantly aided Sri Lanka in capturing new tourism markets. Emerging markets such as Poland, Bangladesh, and China have significantly contributed to the growth of tourists visiting Sri Lanka, helping to diversify the origins of international visitors and reduce dependence on traditional markets like India and Russia (Aktaş Çimen et al., 2024; IMF, 2024; Kumari, 2024; Wasantha & Dinushi, 2024).

Regardless of these positive trends, the nation is confronted with considerable challenges concerning its economic recovery, particularly the threat of over-tourism and commercialisation. Sri Lanka has always been a prize destination due to its cultural heritage, breathtaking natural beauty, and exceptional history. These alluring features of Sri Lanka could begin to fade due to the recovery of tourism in the country, which could result in the loss of the very essence that constitutes Sri Lanka's appeal. The experience of other nations with environmental degradation, overcrowding, and cultural desecration serves as a wake-up call highlighting the unsustainable nature of mass tourism. Sri Lanka, blessed with similar beauty and charm, risks being trapped in an unsolicited cage of automatic growth unless certain measures are adopted to promote sustainable economic development (Daily FT, 2024).

Sri Lanka's temples and tea plantations can be extremely appealing, but there is an emerging risk that these attractions will be converted into resources for mass tourism (Muthunaidelage & Vithanawasam, 2025). Jumbo-sized luxury hotels and all-inclusive resort-style developments targeted to foreigners are popular for business but usually do not blend into local cultures (Kangara et al., 2025). These resorts may overshadow the unique cultural and ecological aspects of the island (Abeyrathna et al., 2025). These projects, and many others concentrated on mass-market tourism, greatly endanger Sri Lanka's rich culture, traditions, and beautiful nature (Gajapathy et al., 2024; Sauf et al., 2015).

Excessive commercialisation undermines both the local way of life and the Sri Lankan experience. The increasing number of foreigners can at times create tension among the locals, especially when big international hotel companies and resorts begin to overpay local businesses for land, water, and other resources. If too loose

regulations are implemented that cater to the demands of foreign travellers and do not consider the locals, Sri Lanka could easily lose its allure as one of the most exceptional tourist locations in Asia (Daily FT, 2024).

Sri Lanka's tourism has previously relied on its cultural and ecological features, but it must use these features cautiously as the sector grows (Furkhan, 2025). The influx of tourists provides Sri Lanka with an excellent chance to improve its global reputation. Nevertheless, there is the risk of growth occurring at the expense of what makes Sri Lanka unique. Responsible policies and sustainable tourism can help protect Sri Lanka's natural and cultural resources for future populations (De Silva, 2025b).

THE RISK OF SRI LANKA BECOMING BALI 2.0

The tourism industry of Sri Lanka is on the brink of collapse if something is not done immediately. The country could travel down the path of massive over-saturation that leads to loss of culture, much as Bali did some years ago (ABC News, 2025). The island of Bali attracts large numbers of tourists, which has resulted in an overabundance of pollution, the destruction of coral reefs, and an overall loss of local identity due to commercialisation. Sri Lanka is beginning to face the same issues (Muthunaidelage & Vithanawasam, 2025). In Sri Lanka, the Southeast region, which was breathtakingly beautiful, has been transformed into an overly commercialised region. No longer are the beaches splendid; rather, they have turned into sites for an idealised version of tourism where local culture is obliterated by pointless consumerist culture. Sri Lanka is in dire straits due to the rapid transformation into a tourism driven economy (ABC News, 2025).

There is a growing sense of discontent among Sri Lankan citizens as well as underlying conflict, which can be traced back to the consequences of overzealous tourism development (Sooriyabandara & Hettiarachchi, 2024). Such development has increased pollution, and transformed national parks such as the Yala National Park, and the cultural city of Kandy, into commercialised sites of tourism. This has led to increased discontent amongst the citizens, which has put a strain on the already fragile infrastructure and deepened the erosion of the identity and nature-defining boundaries of the country (Muthunaidelage & Vithanawasam, 2025).

Bali's experience serves as an important lesson. In order to prevent Sri Lanka from heading in the same direction, the country needs to adopt a more proactive approach (ABC News, 2025). Sri Lanka's tourism should not be overly commercialised, while the positive effects of tourism must also be enjoyed socially and economically. As Sri Lanka develops, it is crucial for the government to impose regulations that prevent infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive areas. Striking a balance between tourism revenue and sustainable efforts will be critical for Sri Lanka's future (ABC News, 2025).

The phenomenon of over-tourism is a challenge for the Sri Lankan tourism sector as it exerts strong pressure on the country's natural and cultural capital. Sri Lanka needs to adopt sustainable tourism policies that encourage the protection of the environment and cultures as soon as possible.

METHODOLOGY

To effectively tackle these concerns around over-tourism and create an actionable plan, a framework was developed through a model capturing real-world insights from experts. This section describes how that model was built.

For the construction of the "Sustainable Tourism Model for Sri Lanka to Avoid Bali 2.0," a stakeholder consultation approach using focus group interviews was adopted with the intent of maintaining credibility and transparency. Data were collected to represent the critical constituents of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Semi-structured interviews were prepared to address issues revolving around the impact of tourism on local residents, the local environment, and the corresponding framework for development planning. The interview questions and guidelines were developed through a literature review on sustainable tourism, and overtourism and other tourism problems associated with Bali.

A total of 37 interviews were carried out from January to February 2025 with selected participants including members of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), local tourists and tourism officials, representatives from environmental NGOs, community leaders, and citizens living close to tourism hotspots. These people were invited to participate for their expertise and hands-on experience and to cover the diverse perspectives that were essential to the study. The focus group interviews were intended to develop an in-depth understanding of the gaps and possibilities of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka, and to ensure practical lessons to improve the model. The consultations were essential in making sure the model addressed the issues faced by people who were directly affected by tourism. They helped shape the model to be constructive in theory and in practice, advocating for sustainable tourism which could help manage future development and preserve the rich cultural and environmental heritage of Sri Lanka.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL FOR SRI LANKA TO AVOID BALI 2.0

The model developed for this research, the Sustainable Tourism Model for Sri Lanka to Avoid Bali 2.0, reflects stakeholder input and integrates global best standards for sustainable tourism. The model shows ten core pillars that would enable Sri Lanka to strive for resilience and inclusivity in tourism. As presented in the model, each component has been translated into specific actions which are outlined in the later section entitled "Strategy Implementation Advice." To operationalise this model, the next section presents foundational proposals from international experiences—especially those of Bali—tailored for Sri Lanka.

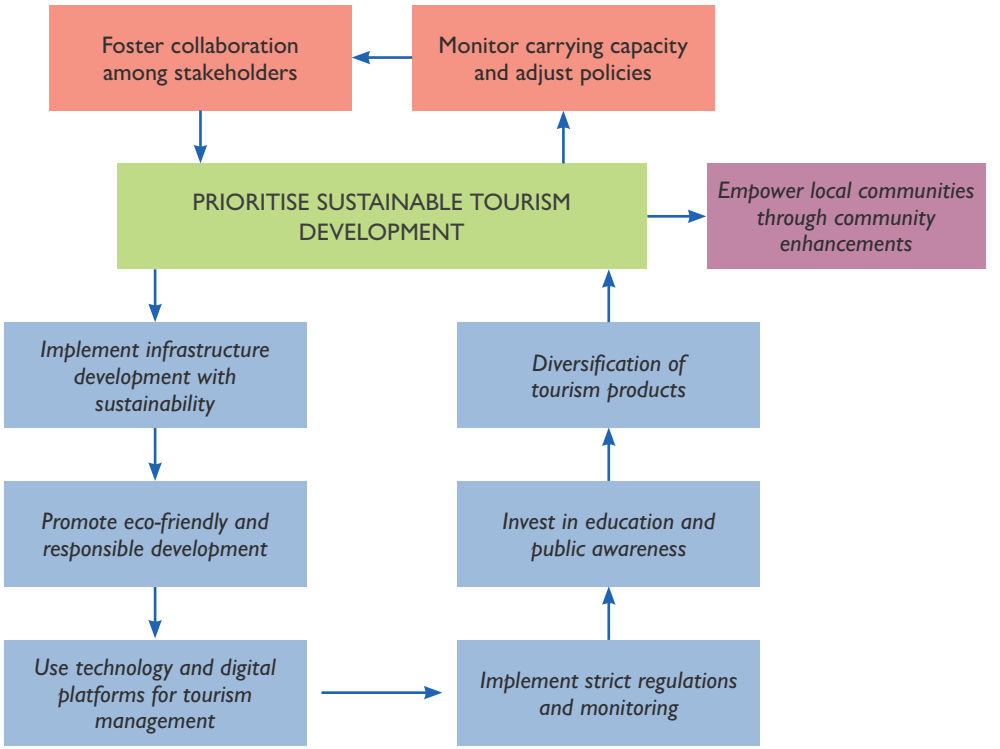

Figure 1. Sustainable tourism model for Sri Lanka to avoid Bali 2.0.

LESSONS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

One of the most crucial lessons we can learn from Bali is how to maintain a balance between tourism and the environment. Bali has suffered from excessive tourism which has caused water scarcity, land erosion, and the destruction of coral reefs (Utama et al., 2024). To avoid such scenarios in Sri Lanka, it is vital to focus on eco-tourism, alongside stringent measures that protect the nation's biodiversity by safeguarding its beaches, national parks, and forests, among other areas. Sri Lanka could also establish caps on visitors to certain sensitive regions (Suardhana et al., 2024). In addition, Sri Lanka could adopt green measures in the hospitality industry by promoting the use of renewable energy, minimising waste, and endorsing the production of sustainable food (Lestari et al., 2024).

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been very effective in combating overtourism in Bali. In this system, residents actively participate in managing tourism and ensure they receive profits from it (Utama et al., 2024). Sustaining Sri Lanka's tourism requires the local communities to be empowered similarly, which will help to distribute the profits more fairly. This might require educating the local people about tourism management, hospitality, and cultural preservation while offering services to tourists (Lestari et al., 2024). Moreover, CBT could be further implemented in rural and less popular regions, which would contribute to the development of these areas and alleviate the concentration of tourists in popular areas.

Sri Lanka needs to start focusing on alleviating the destructive impacts of mass tourism by varying its tourism products. Bali's over-dependency on luxury beach tourism, for instance, has been to the detriment of its society and environment. To mitigate similar problems, Sri Lanka can consider niche areas of the tourism market such as adventure tourism, cultural tours, wellness retreats, and eco tours. The cultural heritage and scenic beauty of Sri Lanka offer a strong base for such diversification. Instead of chasing mass tourism, the country should focus on sustainable, high-end tourism. These types of services can aid in the even distribution of tourism-generated revenue, minimising the negative effects associated with tourism in Sri Lanka (Lestari et al., 2024).

To cater for the flow of visitors into Sri Lanka as well as tourism diversification, specific sustainable infrastructure goals must be set to lay the groundwork for the country's future development. These goals focus on reducing ecological damage, mitigating climate change through equitable tourism access, and promoting pedestrian-friendly infrastructure with eco-friendly construction. Equity of access ensures that all individuals, regardless of background, have equal opportunities to benefit from tourism, while sustainable infrastructure helps protect the environment and fosters climate resilience (Jayasinghe & Walpola, 2024; Kumudhini & Vijesandiran, 2024). As emphasised in recent literature, Sri Lanka's tourism future depends not only on expanding physical access but also on integrating environmental and social safeguards into development decisions (Jayasinghe & Walpola, 2024; Kumudhini & Vijesandiran, 2024). How these sustainable goals could steer infrastructure development is discussed in the subsequent sections.

LESSONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT WITH SUSTAINABILITY IN MIND

Sustainable tourism infrastructure development will mean constructing systems and facilities that have the least negative environmental impact and provide unrestrained aesthetic value for present and future generations of Sri Lankan society. In this case, this means improving land cover (in particular, limiting the range of tourism development), adopting eco-friendly construction standards and energy and water conservation. It also involves ensuring growth and development in rural and underdeveloped areas on the outskirts, helping to balance the benefits of tourism more evenly across the country. In addition, the government should also proactively support green infrastructure developments, such as waste management systems and renewable energy facilities, to ensure the environmental impacts of increased tourism will not be detrimental to the natural ecosystem.

In this regard, these aims, which highlight the need for economic change based on emerging literature and stakeholder criticism of the policy, should be integrated into this phase of planning. (Jayasinghe & Walpola, 2024; Kumudhini & Vijesandiran, 2024). The strategies discussed below show how Sri Lanka can step towards these goals in infrastructure planning.

Sri Lanka has the ability to advocate for responsible tourism by promoting sustainable modes of transport like bicycles, electric vehicles, and public transport (Suardhana et al., 2024). Tourists need to be made aware of how to lower their carbon emissions, appreciate local cultures, and refrain from unhealthy interactions like discarding waste or disturbing nature. Sri Lanka can also create "green" lodging certificates to identify "eco-friendly" establishments so that tourists can easily recognise those who comply with sustainability criteria.

Digital technologies can be very important in controlling the movement of tourists and making sure that the industry is preserved. In Bali, the absence of real-time information on the numbers and activities of tourists created problems in managing the flow of visitors (Rumani et al., 2024). Sri Lanka is in a position to introduce smart tourism via booking engines that could monitor visitor counts and offer real-time information regarding the occupancy of hotels and the availability of other services. This information can be utilised to impose quotas on visitors for delicate areas, disperse tourists among various regions, and issue tailored recommendations to avoid excessive concentrations of tourists. The Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) or a designated government agency would oversee the implementation and management of this system, ensuring that data is acted upon effectively to promote sustainable tourism practices.

In order for the tourism sector in Sri Lanka to be sustainable, the country needs to set regulations and monitor the environmental and social costs of the industry. Regulations have always been an issue in Bali, especially with the growth of unregulated property rentals through platforms such as Airbnb (Lestari et al., 2024). Sri Lanka should develop regulations that reach even informal accommodation providers so as to maintain safety and environmental standards. There should also be periodic monitoring and evaluation of tourism activities so that their harmful consequences are limited and the positive impacts on the local community are guaranteed (Salam et al., 2024).

Education is a key component of a sustainable tourism system. In Bali, chronic ignorance among tourists and locals of the consequences of visitors for the environment and culture has hurt Bali tourism (Suardhana et al., 2024). Sri Lanka needs to design and implement public awareness initiatives to teach foreigners and residents alike about the country's environment and culture and why they need protective measures. These campaigns could be implemented through collaboration with schools, local communities, and tourism bodies to make sustainability a distinguishing feature of Sri Lankan tourism.

In sustainable tourism, destinations have a defined "carrying capacity" which refers to the maximum number of visitors that a place can sustain without compromising its culture, environment, or economy (Zekan et al., 2022). Sri Lanka, like any other country with a developing tourism industry, needs to constantly review its tourism carrying capacity, which may include modifying policies to ensure that tourism growth does not exceed the limits which can be sustainably managed by the environment and local people.

Collaboration is a multi-dimensional process which Sri Lanka needs to encourage from different fronts such as government, program implementers, local people, and tourists. As observed in Bali's mass tourism struggle, uncoordinated strategies can have the opposite result to that intended; in Bali's case, inefficiency (Widiati et al., 2021). Sri Lanka should formulate and implement a multi-stakeholder policy geared towards the sustainable development of tourism so that all sectors of the tourism industry, including the government, private sector, society, and tourists are encouraged to participate in joint decision-making processes. This kind of dialogue would enable the active involvement of diverse representatives.

If Sri Lanka avoids becoming Bali 2.0, the country can become a model for sustainable tourism on a global scale. By proactively engaging local communities and practicing responsible tourism, planning and development in Sri Lanka will aid in the sustainable growth of the tourism industry without losing the country's heritage and authenticity.

The recommendations above provide a general framework, but the following section aims to provide detailed guidelines on how to implement the model with practical measures for Sri Lanka.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION ADVICE

The model (Figure 1), Sustainable Tourism Model for Sri Lanka to Avoid Bali 2.0, focuses on community-based tourism, responsible asset development, and the preservation of nature and culture. The model's step by step guide will focus on the main pillars listed in Figure 1.

The first step of the model is to implement a self-sustainable tourism development strategy, which corresponds to the pillar, "Prioritise Sustainable Tourism Development." This is defined as creating a plan that ensures tourism will not harm the ecology or the culture of the area. Sri Lanka's tourism authorities need to embed sustainability into the heart of the strategic planning process. Every single detail of tourism development, from infrastructure projects to marketing campaigns, needs to not only consider but also integrate environmental protection as well as cultural preservation. New developments in the tourism sector should embrace—rather, require—sustainable measures centred around waste reduction, carbon footprint minimisation, and use of sustainable energy. For instance, recently constructed resorts, as well as other infrastructure, ought to be compliant with green building regulations. Additionally, there needs to be a system to ensure the sustainable management of water and energy resources.

Once sustainability is achieved, the next priority to address is community-based tourism for self-empowerment. This correlates with the pillar, "Empower Local Communities Through Community Enhancements" in Figure 1. During this phase, local communities should fully participate in planning and have control over the activities related to tourism development and management. Community-based tourism increases the income earning potential of the local community and encourages the protection of their heritage. To achieve this, vocational training in hospitality, tourism management, and sustainable practices needs to be implemented. Locally participating as artisans, farmers, and small entrepreneurial businesspeople provides opportunities for these people to be incorporated into the tourism value chain, which in turn enhances the distribution of tourism revenue so that culture and the economy are impacted positively.

It is clear that Sri Lanka still relies heavily on traditional tourism options such as resorts and luxurious star-class hotels. Rather, the focus should be on developing cultural heritage tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, wellness tourism, and other specialised types of tourism. Specialised marketing is needed that will promote, for instance, trekking in the central hills, exploring the island's ancient temples, and eating marvellous food as experiences in Sri Lanka.

For this stage of development, an additional critical milestone is "Implement Infrastructure Development with Sustainability." To meet the increasing demand from tourists visiting Sri Lanka, there is a need for roads, airports, and utilities. Planning and development of such infrastructure should take into account the concepts of sustainable development, which includes the development and expansion of public transport, energy-efficient accommodation, and modern multi-purpose eco-friendly waste disposal facilities. Furthermore, the government needs to collaborate with the private sector to make prospective development initiatives more nature-friendly and conservation-focused. The principles governing urban development should be improved, and regional policies should ensure that all feasible building ventures undergo additional environmental scrutiny for compliance.

The objective for the fifth step, "Encourage Green and Responsible Eco-Tourism," corresponds with Figure 1, "Promotion of Eco-Friendly and Responsible Tourism." This step is dependent on the success of the previous steps, putting the responsibility on tourists for self-regulation. Furthermore, it would be important that the tourists are welcomed to observe and participate in local customs and traditions in a way that fosters sensitivity and respect among tourists and the host country.

As Sri Lanka moves towards sustainable tourism, the country is putting greater focus on technology and digital platforms for tourism management, as advocated by "Use Technology and Digital Platforms for Tourism

Management" in Figure 1. There is also the option to develop pre-trip experiences using augmented or virtual reality technologies, where prospective tourists can view and interact with several of Sri Lanka's attractions prior to traveling. These systems could help manage tourism demand in real time and reduce the risks of overtourism.

It is recommended that governments monitor and regulate tourism for sustainability. This corresponds with "Implement Strict Regulations and Monitoring" in Figure 1. This requires creating a systematic approach for managing the waste, construction, and other environment-related activities. There should also be complete checks and audits on tourism companies to ensure that such businesses observe the protective laws associated with the environment and people. The effectiveness of these regulations would depend on the Sri Lankan government adopting a system of stiff penalties for infringements against protective legislation and ensuring adequate enforcement resources and personnel.

In addition, the government should promote education at all levels and through public campaigns, consistent with the "Invest in Education and Public Awareness" part of the model. The general public, tourism sector employees, and tourists should be educated on the importance of sustainable tourism. Educational campaigns aimed at parents who are visiting with their children can also alter their behaviour towards the use of plastics, lodgings, and local customs. Other government branches can collaborate with the school system to develop seminars, lectures, and other information materials devoted to ecology and the protection of culture heritage.

To achieve a sustainable model, Sri Lanka needs to monitor its tourist carrying capacity and adapt government strategies accordingly, as depicted in Figure 1, "Monitor Carrying Capacity and Adjust Policies." This requires estimating the degradation thresholds for various tourist regions and sites, meaning how many visitors can be managed without any environmental, social, and economic impacts. Such assessments could help control the number of visitors to prevent over-tourism while ensuring that tourist attractions remain functional and valuable in the future.

Achieving sustainable tourism development requires integrating diverse groups, including government, local communities, businesses, and tourists. This step corresponds with "Foster Collaboration Among Stakeholders." Working together ensures the integration of all stakeholders' interests which would be vital for responding adequately to the populations where tourism is being developed and serves the national interest. Joint workshops and stakeholder meetings would make sure that all efforts directed toward sustainable tourism were successful in the long term.

CONCLUSION

Sri Lanka's tourism industry has positive prospects, despite great difficulties in recovering from the effects of the Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the economic crisis. On one hand, the development of tourism is aiding the economy, but on the other hand, there is a danger of excessive commercialisation and environmental damage. Sri Lanka risks becoming like Bali, which was once a greatly admired destination but has lost its charm due to poor planning and degraded authenticity and cultural richness. With properly implemented sustainable tourism policies, infrastructure improvements, and increased investment in eco-tourism and luxury tourism, Sri Lanka can avoid the worst-case scenarios of excessive visitor numbers and overexploitation. Sustainable tourism is what Sri Lanka needs to continue being a recognised tourism destination. The country can adopt responsible growth and diversify the eco-tourism and development of the regions, while still preserving its cultural and environmental resources.

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Reflective Piece

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VEILED BY SHADOWS: A GRADUATE STUDENT'S TALE OF BECOMING AND DISSENT IN QUEST OF THE IVORY TOWER

Kaitlyn Sifford

PROLOGUE

This paper is a critical reflection on my academic journey as a doctoral student in hospitality and tourism management in the U.S., framed by post-qualitative inquiry and informed by Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre's (2005) concept of writing as a method of inquiry. As Richardson posits, writing is not just a tool for representing knowledge, it is an act of *becoming*. Through this process, we construct, question, and continuously reshape our identities as researchers. This form of inquiry resists formulaic structures, rejecting the assumption that knowledge can be neatly categorized and captured (Lee, 2025). I used this lens to explore how my own evolving academic identity has been shaped by rigid structures that not only demand, but award, conformity in the increasing neoliberalization of higher education (Lee & Benjamin, 2023). Embracing a narrative approach through a fictional storytelling of my journey allowed me to undertake a reflexive exploration of my experiences. My writing positions my own *becoming* as an ongoing personal negotiation of meaning within an institution that resists such fluidity.

My goals are twofold. First, I aim to critically examine my evolving identity as a researcher, considering how institutional constraints and broader structural forces shape my doctoral education experience. Second, I embrace a more reflexive, arts-based writing, challenging the positivist's rigidity that has falsely cemented itself as a norm of "good" academic writing (Lee, 2025). My narrative contributes to ongoing discussions on the instability and challenges of higher education. It aligns with scholars advocating for a more reflexive and self-critical academy, one that acknowledges experiences within institutions not as isolated struggles but as reflections of broader systemic issues (Benjamin & Dillette, 2022; Caton, 2014; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2010; Lee & Benjamin, 2023; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). These critical discussions are imperative to tourism and hospitality scholarship. If tourism and hospitality as a field critically examines power, space, and mobility, then we, as researchers, must also critically examine ourselves and the academic systems we belong to and participate in (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010).

VEILED BY SHADOWS

There stands what some call the Ivory Tower. Its spire rises into the clouds, wrapped in an illusion of grandeur, casting long shadows below. From the outside, it may seem like a monument to knowledge, home to scholars and the world's finest thinkers. They question, build on, and break down old assumptions, always interrogating the established theory. Some call it a sanctuary. Others say the Tower is an illusion. Few see inside; even fewer understand.

I never thought my path would lead me to the Ivory Tower. No one in my family had ever set foot in its halls. No mentors had whispered its secrets to me. It stood distant and abstract, a place for others, but not for me. Then I caught a glimpse. Through the rose-colored haze of a master's degree, I saw innovation and collaboration, a space where mentorship flourished, and ideas took flight. The vision was intoxicating. The hunger for knowledge was insatiable. So, I knocked at the gates, armed with the proper credentials, eager and determined to join its ranks. I pursued a doctoral degree. The Tower gate opened just enough. I stepped inside, believing I was entering a sanctuary of truth, of learning, of minds set alight with curiosity.

But the Tower was not what it seemed.

As I journeyed deeper into my doctoral degree, the Tower's walls closed in around me. What I once envisioned as a space for enlightenment revealed itself as rigid and oppressive. The grand hall, where I had hoped for the free exchange of ideas, was instead the arena for a game of thrones. Above us, suspended from the rafters, shimmered prized treasures of recognition, security, and power, an illusion always just out of reach. The closer someone came to grasping them, the farther they flitted away. Professors, locked in desperate struggle for this illusion, wore tattered robes, had hollow eyes, and bore the scars of their pursuit. Graduate students like me lingered at the margins, caught in the crossfire, expected to learn the rules of a game designed to abuse, break, and discard us.

I moved between warring academics and scholarly text, searching for wisdom in pages that no longer spoke to the realities I faced. The knowledge I carried, shaped by industry, by lived experience, and by the world beyond those walls, was dismissed outright. "You don't understand how things work," they told me. Instead, I was instructed to chase what was popular, what would earn recognition for me and my supervisor. Inside those walls, time stood still. Outside, the world spun forward, leaving the academy in its dust. Each day, the weight of expectation pressed down, demanding conformity, urging me to reshape myself to fit an institution that had become more game than pursuit of truth. I watched meaningful inquiries become overshadowed by the frantic pursuit of publication quotas. I no longer saw a space for thoughtful, impactful research and scholarship, only an assembly line of metrics. One day, I caught sight of my reflection in a mirror and did not recognize the person staring back. The hopeful student who had entered this space was gone, replaced by someone weary, frustrated, and lost.

Yet, I resisted. For the first time, I rejected the relentless pace demanded of graduate students. I slowed down; I rested. In this stillness, I saw the Tower for what it was: a relic, its foundations crumbling under the weight of its own contradictions. Yet even there, I found those who fight, not for status, but for something real. I was energized by like-minded academics who gave me both permission and the tools to push back against structures that sought to mold me into something I am not. I do not wield the armor of rank or authority, but I refuse to accept illusion as truth. I realize now that my journey is not just about securing a place within the Tower but about reshaping it, imagining an academy that acknowledges its own instability and dares to change. Perhaps one day, its walls will be transparent, its gates open. Until then I question, I learn, and I write.

WRITING MY *BECOMING* THROUGH WRITING AS INQUIRY

In my narrative above, I referred to the current state of the hospitality and tourism academy as "the Ivory Tower." While this term carries multiple connotations, I use it here to describe an academic environment that upholds rigid traditions and resists critical, creative, and transformative approaches to scholarship. What follows is my attempt to unpack that tension through the lens of writing as inquiry.

My own engagement with the Ivory Tower, through the act of writing, became a way of making sense of this space. Like Benjamin and Dillette (2021), I turned to narrative not just to describe but to critique; not just to tell, but to inquire. They challenge the current academic norms that reproduce exclusion under the guise of objectivity and the way critical tourism scholarship is often dismissed as less rigorous or relevant. In this way, the Tower becomes a gatekeeping structure, demanding performance over purpose and conformity over critique. Writing became a

method of resistance, a way to challenge the hierarchies embedded in academic spaces and to reassert my voice within them. Benjamin and Dillette (2021) expose and justify the ways the Ivory Tower is more than symbolic. It is a lived reality, particularly for critical scholars navigating an academy structured by neoliberalism, colonialism, and defining academic value through quantification. The Ivory Tower not only privileges positivist values and publishing standards but also marginalizes work that foregrounds equity, emotion, and lived experience. Benjamin and Dillette confront the Tower through vulnerability and reflexivity in their narratives, which not only represent the Tower as a distant metaphor to be confronted and critiqued, but a site of personal tension and internalized struggle that carries deeper meaning.

Writing, as Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) stresses, is not simply a tool for passive reflection, but a deeper and active process of thinking, knowing, and *becoming*. Such processes disrupt the traditional notions of research which adheres to rigid and sterile methodological structures as legitimate (Lee, 2025). Writing allows us to document the process of *becoming* through a continuous, evolving negotiation of identity, knowledge, and power. By "writing to inquire," we can locate ourselves within larger disciplinary, institutional, and social frameworks (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Academic structures shape how knowledge is created and shared, influencing not just our research topics but also our identities as scholars. In this process, writing becomes a space of *struggle*, one where we constantly navigate the tensions between institutional expectations, disciplinary boundaries, and our own intellectual pursuits.

I felt this struggle first-hand while writing the narrative above. As an avid fantasy reader, crafting a fictionalized account allowed me to step outside my immediate reality and critically examine my experiences, much as I would analyze a character in my favorite novels. Writing forced me to engage with emotions I had not confronted, flipping between the satisfaction of expressing my experience and the deeper examination of how this had impacted and shaped me.

Graduate school often feels like a constant tension between personal intellectual examination and professional survival. I worry that being too critical in my writing might make me a less desirable job candidate, yet the more I talk to professors and other doctoral students, the more I realize how common this disillusionment with academia is. It seems almost like an expected rite of passage. But should it be? If writing is indeed a struggle, a form of knowledge-making and site of resistance (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), then instead of simply enduring the pressures of academia, we can use writing to challenge and reshape the very structures that make it exclusionary.

Within this "creative space," as Rydzik et al. (2013) describe, I found tools not just for research but for survival. Embracing my narrative allowed me to step outside normative structures of validation and instead inhabit a space of *becoming* where research was also healing. As tourism and hospitality researchers, we are in a "creative space" that invites us to move beyond conventional methodologies and embrace the transformative potential of arts-based inquiry (Rydzik et al., 2013). Rydzik and colleagues (2013) argue that this creative space is not simply about aesthetics or expression, but an ethical and epistemological site where knowledge can be co-created through reflexive and other arts-based methodologies. Such arts-based approaches challenge the dominance of positivist paradigms by amplifying silenced voices and engaging with embodied and experiential ways of knowing. This creative turn allows researchers to position themselves not merely as observers, but as co-participants in knowledge production navigating the messy, emotional, and often invisible dimensions of tourism work. By embracing these arts-based approaches we disrupt the rigid boundaries of "valid" scholarship and open up space for more inclusive and socially engaged research practices. Within this creative space, we are called to not only study the world, but to imagine it differently (Rydzik et al., 2013).

This imaginative, co-creative space still operates within the formal structures of academia. I find myself in a paradoxical position (one that I believe many conscious graduate students are in). I am engaging in arts-based inquiry to challenge dominant paradigms while still navigating the conventions of academic writing and publishing. As a PhD student, I feel I must demonstrate fluency in these dominant conventions, such as formal prose, to

earn the credibility to question them. Writing remains the primary mode through which research is evaluated and legitimized. As Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argue, traditional qualitative prose often mirrors quantitative accounts, suppressing voice, metaphor, and emotion in pursuit of credibility. In this context, writing has been academically privileged as the legitimate pathway to knowledge. Creative analytic practices resist this tradition while advocating for a more expressionist prose that embraces emotion, creativity, and self-reflexivity. I do not argue for abandoning formal prose but for cultivating a more inclusive understanding of scholarship that recognizes embodied and creative forms such as dance, music, theater, performance, and other artistic expressions. Scholars such as Johnny Saldaña and Paolo Mura remind us that knowledge does not only live on the page (Mura, 2020; Mura et al., 2021; Saldaña, 2005). Knowledge is also performed, felt, and lived. Writing a fictionalized narrative was not simply a stylistic choice, it was the form of expression I prefer. Fantasy has long been a space where I can escape to reflect, imagine, and find clarity. In this context, storytelling became a method of inquiry, an entry point beyond the constraints of the Ivory Tower and into new intellectual and emotional terrain.

As I reflect on how to close this inquiry, I turn to Kellee Caton (2014) who invites us to question everything, our hospitality and tourism curricula, our research methods, and especially where we have lost sight of our humanity. This resonates with my experience as a graduate student, where I have previously felt reduced to just another body moving through the system, valued more for advancing others' publication goals than for my own learning and wellbeing. Caton recognized the neoliberal academic structures that have separated technical business practices from social sciences in our discipline and calls for the inclusion of arts and philosophy in our research and teaching. She illustrated this through her own experience of how a simple short story opened pedagogical opportunities for connecting with real-world tourism experiences. Caton advocates for weaving arts and humanities into our hospitality and tourism curricula, an approach that speaks to me as someone who finds solace in fantasy literature in my own sense making. When we look beyond our narrow disciplinary boundaries to embrace other forms of learning, literature, and ways of knowing, we better understand the world around us, which is fundamental to our field.

Caton reminds us that at the heart of our hospitality and tourism discipline are humans. That core human traits such as inquisitiveness, questioning, critiquing, and imagining are essential not just to scholarship but to life itself. When we carry this ethical stance beyond academic walls, it shapes how we move through the world, how we build community, how we create space for care in our work, and how we find courage to speak up even when it's risky. These acts may seem small, but they represent resistance against systems that seek to constrain who we're allowed to be. When we strip away the human element from education, from our interactions, from our understanding of how we participate in larger systems, we may produce more work, but we lose ourselves. We stop questioning. And without such questioning, what hope do we have of ever reimagining the Tower at all?

In writing my *becoming*, I found more than reflection, I found resistance. The Ivory Tower may demand conformity, but within the cracks, narrative offers light. By embracing post-qualitative, arts-based inquiry, I hope more of us can refuse the reduction of knowledge to metrics. Instead, we write to *critique*; we write to *resist*; we write to *become*.

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Reflective Piece

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THE FIGHT WITHIN: AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC POETRY AS DEFIANCE IN ACADEMIA

Stefanie Benjamin

I've become disillusioned with both the hollow promises of higher education and the insatiable greed of corporate interests (Benjamin et al., 2024; Lee & Benjamin, 2023). Some might classify me as a critical tourism scholar, while others may prefer to label me a "pain in the ass." It's not just my *tone*—it's the questions I ask. These questions tend to uncover the cracks, shining light on what others would rather ignore. I've always viewed the world through this lens, and now, as a tenured Associate Professor, my privilege and power to resist and challenge have never been stronger. *Cue evil laugh*.

Over the past decade, I've witnessed what some might bluntly call a "dumpster fire" within my department, university, and the broader landscape of higher education. This metaphor barely captures the depth of turmoil—from political unrest destabilizing academic freedoms (Hals, 2025) to the relentless waves of the COVID-19 pandemic (American Association of University Professors, 2021) that exposed and deepened existing inequalities. Beyond these immediate crises, there is the insidious, ongoing erasure of counter-histories and marginalized narratives—systematically whitewashed from official U.S. government websites and even sacred sites like National Parks (Jingnan & Lawrence, 2025; National Parks Conservation Association, 2025). These forces are not simply external events; they infiltrate every corner of the academic environment, shaping curricula, scholarship, and the very spaces where knowledge is produced and shared.

Living within this context means navigating the exhausting reality of a capitalistic, white-washed society that perpetually demands conformity and compliance (Benjamin & Laughter, 2022). It is not merely tiring to endure these systems—it is utterly draining to constantly push back against them. Academia, which ideally should be a place of critical thought and liberation, often mirrors the oppressive structures of the wider world, privileging certain voices while silencing others (Benjamin et al., 2024). The emotional labor required to resist this status quo—challenging ingrained biases, fighting for representation, reclaiming erased histories—is relentless and exhausting. It is a struggle that depletes not only intellectual energy but also emotional and spiritual reserves.

It is from this place of weariness and defiance that I felt compelled to write this piece—an ethnographic collection of poems that serves both as an act of resistance and a means of reclaiming my intellectual and creative autonomy (Leach, 2021). Poetry becomes more than an artistic outlet; it is a sanctuary where I can name and bear witness to these struggles, reclaim the narratives erased by systemic oppression, and assert my presence and voice in spaces that often seek to render me invisible. This work embodies the tension between fatigue and resilience—a testament to the ongoing fight to carve out meaning and justice within systems that persistently seek to undermine them.

I encourage you, dear reader, to read this at your leisure. Perhaps some portion of it resonates with you. Perhaps it does not. In either case, let this space encourage creative and critical push-back in a system that tries so hard to keep us down. A homogenizing, basic system.

Why even bother?

A paradox, perhaps, or cruel irony,
to teach service, yet serve so little in return,
in a system that grinds us,
to wither, to falter, to question:
Why bother?

We toil in classrooms, usually the dilapidated buildings on campus,
building futures on fragile, broken lies.
No applause, no recognition, no care—
Just the silence of a system that deems us unseen.

Least hospitable building on campus—even though we teach hospitality.
Least valued in our industry—low pay wages, low respect, low enrollment.
Everything seems like we've arrived at Doomsday Eve.

And how can we be *seen* when our narratives are erased?
And how can we be *heard* when our histories are illegal to tell?
And who will be left to *tell* our stories?
Doomsday feels near, a shadow on the door.

Who will remain
to fight off the shadows?
When the very institution we've committed our time,
our energy, our health to—
welcomes Doomsday with an honorary doctorate.

Dr. D is here.
Centering neo-liberalism as their theoretical framework.

This generation

They said, *this generation is lazy*.
Without empathetically listening to their concerns …

They said, *these students are entitled*.
Without valuing their resistance against corporate greed.

They said, *we need good workers*.
Without compensating for their humanness.

Our industry and academy view *students* as numbers.
As pawns. As faceless and nameless workers.

This is nothing new. It's happening generation after generation:
institutional hypocrisy at its finest.
Meritocracy is a myth.

And *this generation* is jumping ship.

Who will they trap now?
When this *lazy generation* refuses to romanticize productivity,
no longer values the institutions from which they stand,
and pushes back …

Pushes back—demanding liberation, not assimilation.
Pushes back—not to destroy, but to rebuild with care.

Got hope?

Nope.

How about a flicker of light?
Perhaps.

How much more time do you need for your progress?
As Baldwin once demanded—
how much more time?

Hopefully, the time for progress, is now,
not in some distant, foggy future.

So do I have hope?
Not the kind that waits.
Not the kind that begs.
But maybe the kind that fights.

Hope in a generation that may seem *lazy*
but questions the greedy systems
and heartless institutions
that shamelessly robbed them
of their wide-eyed innocence?

Sure. Fuck it.
I *might* be hopeful.

Note: The quotation is from the 1989 PBS documentary *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (Thorsen, 1989).

This ethnographic collection of poems does more than describe fatigue within a broken system—it inhabits and gives voice to that very exhaustion. The poems function as a methodology in their own right, offering a fragmented, emotionally charged lens through which to understand institutional neglect. Poetry allows what prose alone cannot: the register of exhaustion, the rhythms of disillusionment, and the sudden jolts of rage or resignation. These are not polished narratives; they are ruptures. And that rupture *is* the point.

The field of hospitality is one that prides itself on care, empathy, and belonging—yet these poems reveal the bitter irony of working in an academic space that often withholds those very values from its faculty and students. The short lines and sharp tonal shifts resist the polished detachment of academic writing, mirroring the very conditions they critique: undervaluation, invisibility, erasure.

Yes, the themes—low wages, disrespect, institutional gaslighting—could be outlined in prose (as I have begun to do here), but it is the poems that make us *feel* them. The repetition, the clipped syntax, the use of rhetorical questions—all enact a method of knowing that is bodily and affective. The poetic form interrupts the reader's comfort. It slows us down, forces us to sit in the discomfort, to dwell in the tension between what is said and what is felt.

So, when the poem circles back to the question of hope, it's not just repetition, it's a method of unfolding. The question is no longer the same. The body has absorbed the ache, and the reader has, too. Hope is no longer naïve. It's cautious, cracked open, bruised—but not gone.

This isn't simply a reflection on institutional harm; it's a methodological choice to document that harm *poetically*. And the choice matters. It allows anger to breathe, contradiction to stand uncorrected, and silence to carry weight. In doing so, the poems assert that not all knowledge must be neatly argued. Some truths must be felt.

AI statement

I used ChatGPT to assist with my grammar and sentence structure.

Stefanie Benjamin (she/her) (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4653-6754) is the Co-Founder of CODE, Co-Director of Tourism RESET, and Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee. Her research challenges traditional perspectives in tourism, amplifying counter-narratives through academic and popular outlets. Dr. B is committed to bridging academia and industry, advocating for inclusivity and sustainability.

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ME, *THE BEAR*, AND I: FROM BURNING STOVES TO BURNING QUESTIONS

Shawn Bucher

INTRODUCTION

I just finished watching the second season of the U.S. television series, *The Bear*. I wept through every episode. Everything about the show resonated with me—from its evocative cinematography to its stirring soundtrack. Watching *The Bear* opened the floodgates of memories from my past life as a chef; and now, I face the bittersweet reality that I am on the other side of that chapter. I never fully realized how deeply the culinary identity informed who I am. Having chosen a new career path in academia, I now grapple with a painful severance—"an amputation of the culinary self" (Bucher & Lee, 2023, p. 2)—a mourning of my chef identity.

One episode stood out. Titled: "Forks" (Season 2, Episode 7) (Russell et al., 2023), this installment centers on Richie, a character who has grappled with finding purpose and significance in his job at the restaurant throughout the series. Lost and searching for inspiration, Richie is directed to *stage* (pronounced "stahzh," this is essentially an unpaid internship or apprenticeship where one works for an establishment or chef in exchange for the chance to learn). He is sent to one of Chicago's most prestigious and elite fine-dining establishments in the hope that he will discover his *raison d'être*. Among the restaurant's elite service crew, Richie endures a series of hazing rituals, beginning with a week-long assignment of meticulously polishing forks before being allowed to undertake any other work. At first, he struggles to find meaning and purpose in these seemingly menial tasks. As the episode progresses, we see him gradually changing and evolving. He wakes up a little earlier each day, feeling a little more prepared and determined. His attire changes from stained, sloppy T-shirts and jeans to suavely pressed suits and Windsor-knotted neckties. Ritchie drives off into his newfound purpose to Taylor Swift's *Love Story* as the credits roll at the end of the episode.

Richie's realization resonates with me as an individual who *used to have* a purpose as a chef. Having lived a twenty-five-year career in the culinary industry, I strangely find myself today on the opposite side of Richie's realization. Richie has a newfound purpose; I, on the other hand, have recently let go of mine. I cannot help but wonder how many other chef practitioners-turned-scholars have felt and undergone the same identity fracture? How many chefs, food and beverage professionals, managers, and practitioners of the culinary craft feel the same sense of longing and "amputation" after turning to academia?

As I pondered on these questions, I came across the *pracademic*. The term "pracademic" constitutes the joining of the terms "practitioner" and "academic" into one word that can be used as both a noun and adjective (Hollweck et al., 2021). The phenomenon of a "pracademic" encompasses a unique blend of academic rigor and practical experience positioned at the intersection of theory and practice (Marcus, 2023). This dual role enables pracademics to bridge the often-distinct worlds of academia and professional practice, facilitating a dynamic exchange of knowledge, insights, and practical applications. These individuals exist in the liminal space between theory and practice, which as Friesen (2022) describes, is a space to be occupied, not simply bridged over. In this article, I explore a group of pracademics pivotal to the hospitality academy: chefs.

The transition from being a culinary professional to becoming an academic can be a bewildering experience. Many chefs find themselves compelled to set aside their culinary expertise to navigate an environment dominated by academic credentialism and rigid formalities (Abidin & Basar, 2024; Bucher & Lee, 2023; Lynch, 2024; Pittman, 2024; Woodhouse, 2024). In this article, I explore the ways chef pracademics navigate the neoliberal academic system—a system characterized by the "publish or perish" mantra, that values corporate metrics over genuine educational impact, and self-interest over community interests (Benjamin et al., 2024; Lee & Benjamin, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

As an attempt to make sense of my experience coming to academia, I embraced what Lee (2025) describes as "living qualitatively"—a process of getting lost, to be found, only to be lost again—and sought into the lives of three established chef pracademics. I approach this research from an interpretivist position, adopting an autoethnographic methodology (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnography seeks to produce meaning that does not come from maintaining a rigid dichotomy between art and science, or subjective and objective interpretation. Rather, it is a form of inquiry situated along a continuum of practices, which overlaps art and science by analyzing the self (auto) along with the culture (ethno) (Ellis, 2004). The strengths of this methodology lie in the ability it gives the researcher to analyze personal experiences and tie them to cultural and social phenomena.

My sample of participants were chosen purposefully, as each participant had made the transition into academia after a full industry career where they had all worked for over a decade. Each chef pracademic had also obtained tenure at R1 institutions in the U.S. and currently ranks as either a full or associate professor (see Table 1). I engaged in three interviews with each participant. Each interview took place on the video conferencing software Zoom, and lasted on average 60 minutes, with some conversations spanning into several hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, with each participant answering a series of semi-structured questions. These interviews took place over the course of three months.

Name (Pseudonyms)	Position (Current)	Industry Experience (Number of years)	Academic Experience (Number of years)
Carol	Full Professor	20	15
Kyle	Full Professor	23	29
Charles	Associate Professor	29	16

Table 1. Participant profiles.

In the sections to come, I portray one key theme that emerged from a preliminary round of qualitative analysis: "Kitchen people" coming through the "back door," a discussion about how each participant arrived at their original posts in hospitality education.

"Kitchen people" coming through the "back door"

> I definitely came into academia through the back door … After working for many years in country clubs and private clubs, I was getting really burned out … I had a family, I was in my thirties, and I found that I had a different patience for education that I didn't have when I was eighteen. I was much better at it, much more involved in it, much more interested in it. (Charles)

I begin with Charles' story: a tenured chef pracademic whose journey into academia began with little to no structured plan but through an opportunity born out of frustration and necessity. Charles was initially hired at the university in 1998. He had neither a PhD nor master's degree to his name, yet he held a joint role as a clinical professor, teaching culinary courses in the school of hospitality, and as a special events chef who catered

specifically for the president of the university. Charles had a unique entry into the university walls; he called this entryway "the back door."

The "back door" represents an unconventional path into academia, one that circumvents the traditional credential-based hiring model in favor of fulfilling a specialized need within a hiring department. In Charles' case, he solved an operational issue for the hospitality department, as culinary instructors—like quality cooks—are hard to come by. The presence of a "back door" also implies that there is a preferred, more conventional and formal "front door" which, in academia, admits a candidate earning a master's or doctoral degree prior to securing a faculty role at the university. For those without the "credential keys" to the front entryway, the back door becomes their next best option.

For Charles, the front door not only barred him from attaining a formal faculty role, but admission into a master's degree program. When Charles wanted to pursue a master's degree in hospitality, his culinary arts credentials came under heavy scrutiny. Graduate programs simply did not know how to evaluate or transfer his culinary credits for matriculation. As Charles recalls,

> I tried to apply as a non-traditional student, and what I found very quickly was they would love to have me, but they didn't know what to do with my culinary school credits. How do you transfer credits for ice carving or *garde manger* to a traditional university? Then, suddenly, I'm [working] in a university where they were willing to make exceptions to the rules for transferring credits.

While there is one front door to enter through, various forms of back door entry are common amongst fellow pracademics involved in my inquiry. Even with the necessary formal credentials of a doctorate, severe biases against culinarians and their legitimacy in academic roles persist. The front door remains shut to these individuals, even when they possess the necessary "doctoral key."

Take Kyle, for example. Kyle realized he wanted to step out of operations and into teaching while running a university foodservice operation and began pursuing a master's degree. Upon completion, he found a job at a neighboring university teaching full-time, whilst simultaneously beginning his PhD program. After completing his course work, Kyle was able to join the faculty of a large hospitality program in a non-tenure track position—even before completing his degree. Once the PhD was completed and the doctoral key obtained, he was able to step through the front door to access a tenure track position, against the advice of his department head:

> He told me, "You should just stay on the non-tenure track line and not go tenure track because you kitchen people don't make the transition well." So, I told him, look, I didn't get my PhD from the number one ranked PhD program in the country, and the toughest person in hospitality [his academic advisor] just to stay on a non-tenure track. So, he said, ok, *but it's your funeral.*

Kyle is not alone in this experience. Carol entered academia later in life after leaving an illustrious twenty-year career in the industry. She describes her back door entry as a "break in." She had nearly the same experience as Kyle when applying for the tenure track position:

> I came to the interview, and he said, "I know you're here to get the tenure track line but I'm going to offer you the instructor line instead." And I said to him, I did not fly all the way over here for that, and if that's what you're going to offer me, I just won't be here. So, he said, alright I'll give you the tenure line […] They didn't think I was going to make it. I was outwardly told *not to get too comfortable* because people didn't believe that I was going to make it past my three-year tenure evaluation.

The phrases, "you kitchen people don't make the transition well" and to "not … get too comfortable" are clear gestures of the prevailing neoliberal structures that shape our hospitality field, ones that reinforce exclusivity through credentialism and "preferred" career trajectories. The derogatory phrases assign culinarians a monolithic identity—one that is hands-on, vocational, and incompatible with the intellectual and research demands of tenure-

track positions. The phrases reflect a wider and less overt prejudice that discourages culinary professionals from attempting to move into tenure-track positions. It implies that a rigid academic hierarchy exists, where chefs are seen as secondary outsiders expected to remain in teaching-focused or adjunct roles, rather than engaging in intellectual exchange and research.

With the front door shut, the back door for these chef pracademics was the only way into tenure-track research roles. For Charles, the back door opened serendipitously, and for Kyle and Carol, it came with additional discriminatory consequences. Either way, the common denominator remains: they resolved to use the back door because the front was not an option for them. Fortunately for Charles, his culinary skills and professional demeanor prevailed, earning him the social capital to obtain his advanced degrees and eventually a tenure-track role. Yet for Kyle and Carol, their culinarian identities continued to expose them to prejudices against mere "kitchen people." Even after they had a PhD in hand, the biases against their vocational expertise were obvious to scrutiny. They still had to fight for their own legitimacy within the institutional walls. The back door, while granting access, served also as a constant reminder that they were never welcomed in the first place. A fracturing of the self emerged as they wrestled with their identities—no longer part of the kitchen yet never fully accepted as scholars—leaving them in a liminal space where their worth was persistently questioned.

DISCUSSION

The voices of the chef pracademics reveal a shared narrative of fracture, adaptation, and resilience. Their journeys into academia were not linear; but were shaped by necessity, serendipity, and a desire to teach. Their experiences speak to the tensions of belonging, of being both insiders and outsiders in institutions that demand research productivity while depending on practical experience to sustain programs.

Charles, Kyle, and Carol's stories illustrate how traditional academic pathways were not designed with chef pracademics in mind. The "front door" of academia was inaccessible to these chefs, forcing them to seek entry through alternative routes, often in teaching-focused roles that did not initially require a PhD. Yet, even after earning the "doctoral key," these chef pracademics continued to face institutional skepticism. The comment, "you kitchen people don't make the transition well," serves as a stark reminder of how culinary expertise is often undervalued in scholarly spaces.

For many chef pracademics, the reality of being seen as "kitchen people" means they are often assigned to manage laborious culinary lab courses and cater for departmental events, while meeting research expectations. The academic system, while eager to utilize industry experience, remains hesitant to fully accept chef pracademics as scholars. From managing kitchen operations to coordinating events, their workload is both physically and mentally exhausting. Yet, much of this work remains invisible within academic evaluation systems. This balancing act of physical and intellectual labor reflects the broader issue of how academic institutions reward work, with research output prioritized and hands-on culinary instruction seemingly undervalued. These experiences of chef pracademics reinforce the sense of being caught in a liminal space, where they are deeply connected to their culinary identities yet forced to constantly prove their legitimacy in academia. The result is a fracturing of self, a rupture between who they were as chefs and the expectations and requirements of scholars.

Despite the challenges, the experiences shared here are not just about struggle; they are about transformation. While chef pracademics may enter through the back door, their presence challenges the rigid structures of academia, pushing institutions to reconsider the value of applied knowledge. This study is one of the first to document the lived experiences of chef pracademics. Its findings highlight the need for a more inclusive academic culture—one that transcends the rigidity of conventional tenure track systems in the U.S., and values multiple forms of expertise that serves the academic community.

FINAL REMARKS

When tending to our emotions, the award-winning Harvard Medical School psychologist Susan David (2016) underscores the significance of properly labeling our feelings—specifically those of unhappiness. I soon came to realize that my negative emotions associated with watching *The Bear* went beyond mere sadness. The title of "chef" is intertwined with my identity, and the mere thought of letting go of that title felt like abandoning a significant part of myself. The decision to hang up the apron and embark on a PhD journey brought about a complex mix of emotions, including *disappointment*, *displacement*, and *longing*—emotions that resonate with people who, like me, have had to transition away from identities that have long defined their lives (Shepherd, 2003). When I properly identified these emotions, I understood why this loss of identity can be described as an "amputation" (Bucher & Lee, 2023, p. 2). Joining academia after having had an already illustrious career, and having my expertise treated as "lesser than" and "lower tier," conjured a festering pain within me that *The Bear* brought to fruition.

Today, I find myself "showing up" and "stepping out" from these emotions (David, 2016). Having inquired into them, spending months pinpointing, critiquing, and listening to my emotions as data, I have started to realize that there is also a sense of relief to move on from the restaurant industry. I have not left my culinary identity behind, but rather I am evolving it. To overcome these feelings of disappointment, displacement, and longing, I must walk my *why* and move on into a new career. By obtaining a PhD and embracing my aspirations of becoming a chef pracademic in my own right, I might just carve out a new chapter of my life story.

Richie's journey in *The Bear* is one of self-discovery, of finding clarity and purpose as part of his *becoming*. In contrast, the chef pracademics in this study navigate an ongoing rupture, a process of reassembling their identities in a system that often does not fully see or appreciate them. Yet, through their stories, a new narrative emerges, one that does not view their past culinary careers as something to be left behind, but rather as an integral part of who they are as educators and scholars.

As I reflect on my own journey, I realize that this inquiry has also been a process of finding fragments of myself within the stories of others. The rupture of my identity is not unique, and in these shared experiences I find empathy, power, and community. I see now that the way forward is not in severing my culinary identity from the rest of myself but embracing, leveraging, and appreciating it as a part of becoming a chef *and* a scholar, or a chef pracademic.

Shawn Bucher is an entrepreneur and chef-turned-scholar, with over 25 years of industry experience. His research interests include chefs, foodservice operations, business strategy, and entrepreneurship. As a current consultant, researcher, and the father of four kids, his life has very few dull moments.

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MANAAKITAKA REKA: A COLLABORATIVE KAI EXPERIENCE

Chloe Humphreys

INTRODUCTION

Context for the project: Feast Matariki, A national celebration of indigenous food stories

Established in 2019, *Feast Matariki* is Aotearoa New Zealand's first and only national food celebration dedicated to honouring indigenous food narratives during the Māori New Year. The festival comprises a series of kai activations and events across the motu, fostering connections and enhancing cultural capability among those who contribute to Aotearoa New Zealand's food landscape. These events help deepen understanding of Matariki, food sovereignty, indigenous knowledge, and the role of kai in wellbeing and community resilience.

Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) and overseen by EatNZ, the 2024 *Feast Matariki* celebrations were shaped by the concept of kai hau kai—a Māori practice of reciprocal exchange of resources, narratives, and practices (Payne, 2020). A series of curated events were held in Ōtautahi/Christchurch, Ōtepoti/Dunedin, and Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, with the support of Ngāi Tahu and various community partners.

As part of *Feast Matariki* celebrations in Ōtepoti, a team of kaiako and ākonga from Otago Polytechnic, led by Adrian Woodhouse (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha), Chloe Humphreys, and Tim Lynch, developed the food experience concept *Manaakitaka Reka (Delicious Hospitality)*. This public food experience explored Aotearoa's past, present, and future food systems. Guided by the kaupapa: "imagine a food system that doesn't rely on inequity of access," this project considered how indigenous thinking could contribute to a more just and sustainable food system for all. Building on the foundations established in previous Matariki celebrations, the team collaborated with mana whenua to design a kai experience for approximately 80 guests that wove together indigenous food knowledge, contemporary sustainability practices, and culturally responsive design thinking. The event took place at Otago Polytechnic on 26 June 2024, offering an interactive and immersive exploration of kai as a vehicle for cultural storytelling and social change. This review documents the evolution of the project and tells the story of the final kai experience.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN METHODOLOGY

A collaborative design methodology was adopted for the project, enabling a cross-disciplinary approach that brought together students from the Bachelor of Culinary Arts, Bachelor of Design (Product), and Bachelor of Design (Communication) programmes. Their task extended beyond menu development to encompass all aspects of the experience, from food and service design to communication and storytelling. While some ākonga sat naturally within their own area of expertise, the project offered others an opportunity to step outside of their discipline and explore areas of design that were new to them. The integration of cultural knowledge, creative practice, experience design, and menu design, provided ākonga with an immersive, practice-based approach to food design, underpinned by te ao Māori and sustainability principles.

Practice theory, a sociological framework that explores the interplay between materials, competencies, and meanings, was introduced during the development phase of the project (Shove, 2010). Ākonga were encouraged to consider design decisions in a deeply integrated and connected manner by exploring materials (ingredients, tools, experience design materials, and natural resources); developing competencies (culinary techniques and practices, storytelling, and sustainability practices), and engaging with the meanings behind them (manaakitaka, indigenous food sovereignty, and te ao Māori). By analysing and bringing together all three areas, the design team aimed to produce an experience that not only engaged the senses but also carried cultural, social, and ecological significance (Lynch, 2024).

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT: MAHIKA KAI

Figure 1. Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau (Sinclair Wetlands). Photograph: Chloe Humphreys.

Integrating indigenous thinking around food systems led the design team to explore mahika kai, starting with a field trip to Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau (Sinclair Wetlands). Tumai Cassidy (Kāi Te Pahi, Kāi Te Ruahikihiki, Kāto Moki, Kāi Tahu), and Steve Bryant (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha) led the team on a hikoi (walk) around this wahi taonga (treasured place), sharing stories of the site's history and insights into how we must better protect our indigenous food systems.

One of the key insights shared by Cassidy and Bryant was the inherent tension between sustainability and generosity. They emphasised the profound spiritual relationship that Māori maintain with the whenua (land) and all living beings, underscoring the necessity of engaging with these entities with the utmost respect. Prior to colonisation, Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau served as a significant food-gathering site for Kāi Tahu

Figure 2. Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau (Sinclair Wetlands). Photograph: Chloe Humphreys.

and Kāti Mamoe. However, the introduction of invasive species, alongside the ecological degradation caused by Western agricultural practices, severely impacted the availability and sustainability of kai Māori (traditional Māori food sources). The ongoing restoration efforts led by Kāi Tahu seek to re-establish ecological equilibrium and facilitate the resurgence of indigenous food systems. As a result, sustainability and the protection of kai Māori emerged as fundamental considerations in the conceptualisation and execution of this project.

Another central principle guiding the project was manaakitaka, which encompasses the values of hospitality, care, and generosity. Within te ao Māori, mana is closely linked to values of giving and abundance (Dell et al., 2018). This meant that, for the project, generosity was a crucial aspect of giving back to mana whenua. However, ākonga quickly understood that this generosity had to be carefully balanced with sustainability, particularly in relation to the inclusion of indigenous food sources.

Achieving this balance needed a highly intentional approach to menu design and ingredient selection. Ākonga and kaiako worked collaboratively to design a menu that featured a curated "taste" of local kai Māori, complemented by a broader celebration of producers committed to regenerative practices. Additionally, the integration of rescued food and ingredients traditionally considered second-tier reinforced the project's commitment to minimising food waste while honouring both environmental and cultural sustainability.

MANAAKITAKA REKA: THE KAI EXPERIENCE

The design of the final experience aimed to narrate the history of Aotearoa's food systems—past, present, and future—while exploring how a deeper understanding of these systems can foster more sustainable and reciprocal ways of eating. The intention was to foster mindfulness about what we eat and the food systems that sustain us while ensuring the experience embodied manaakitaka through exceptional kai and hospitality.

The event was structured around three distinct experiential narratives, each exploring a different food system over time. The first experience (experience tahi), set outdoors, showcased indigenous food systems, offering guests a taste of kai Māori prepared with ingredients and techniques deeply rooted in traditional practices. Local kai moana (seafood), including tuaki (clams), kuku (green-lipped mussels), and rawaru (cod) wings, were steamed and roasted in rimurapa (bull kelp) over an open fire. Kūmara was hot smoked over mānuka and served with pickled karengo (native seaweed), while tasters of tītī (muttonbird) were paired with warm kawakawa and horopito tea. Grounded in the kai traditions of Te Waipounamu, these dishes provided a small taste of the past while prioritising sustainability in their selection, gathering, and preparation. The sensory experience of eating directly from the fire, huddled together on a cold, dark, foggy night, evoked the essence of Southern Māori kai customs, immersing guests in the rich cultural traditions embedded in these food practices.

Figure 3. Experience Tahi. Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

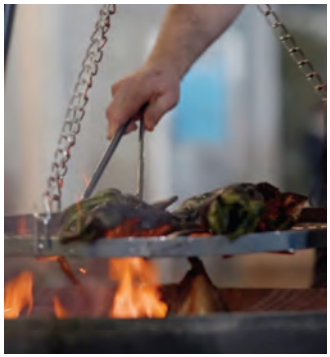

Figure 4. Experience Tahi. Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

Just as the guests began to feel the cold, the double doors of Manaaki Restaurant opened, revealing a warm, candlelit space set with white plates and formal table settings. This phase of the evening represented the era of colonisation, inviting scrutiny of the new food systems and paradigms that have since dominated Aotearoa's culinary landscape. Ākonga had designed the menu to reflect this colonial influence. An amuse-bouche titled *A Taste of Swede Served in a Noxious Weed* featured swede—an introduced species—prepared using various Western techniques and served in bamboo, another introduced species known for its invasive growth and tendency to smother native flora. The main course showcased lamb ribs braised in milk (a nod to the dairy industry) and lamb belly slow-baked in clay, symbolising the whenua on which the animal grazed.

This phase of the experience served a dual purpose. By highlighting introduced species and Western preparation techniques, the dishes provided a stark contrast to kai Māori, emphasising the profound changes wrought by colonisation. At the same time, sustainability remained central, with a focus on hyperlocal seasonal ingredients and secondary cuts of meat sourced from Provenance Lamb, a bio-farm committed to regenerative practices. Another layer of storytelling was woven into the presentation, with the whakapapa (genealogy) of the kai at the heart of the dishes. The lamb belly was presented in the clay in which it was baked, while the tables were strewn with autumn leaves, branches, and rocks, evoking the natural environment from which these ingredients were sourced.

The final experience (experience toru) presented an alternative food system: one that critically examined society's immense food waste problem and showcased a solution that rescued and revalued food destined for landfill. Hazelnut pulp, a byproduct of oil extraction at Dunford Grove, was repurposed into mini hazelnut cakes, served with compressed windfall apples collected from Darling's Orchard in Roxburgh. By reimagining ingredients typically considered waste, this phase of the event aimed to challenge perceptions of food waste and highlight the unsustainable nature of current food systems. In doing so, it encouraged guests to consider more equitable and sustainable approaches to food production and consumption.

Figure 5. Experience Toru.
Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

Reciprocity lay at the heart of the entire experience, ensuring that every design decision aligned with principles of sustainability and respect for the environment. A strict low-waste policy was upheld, with all waste—whether from food, props, or table settings—returned to its original environment or integrated into a closed-loop system, where it was transformed into compost to nourish the living campus gardens. As a final act of giving back, each guest was gifted a pod of kōwhai seeds, inviting them to contribute to the regeneration of indigenous plant life, reinforcing the interconnected relationship between people, food, and the whenua.

Overall, *Manaakitaka Reka* created space for ākonga, kaiako, and guests to reflect on our current food systems and explore indigenous practices as alternative models for a more equitable future. Through collaborative design and the deep and deliberate consideration of manaakitaka, sustainability, and reciprocity, the project encouraged participants to question assumptions and consider the potential of kai as a means for fostering social and systemic awareness in Aotearoa and beyond. These reflections offer valuable starting points for future *Feast Matariki* events and similar initiatives aiming to centre indigenous knowledge and equitable access to kai.

You can find a link to a video overview of the event here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOI371S-4xw

AI statement
I used ChatGPT to aid with grammar and sentence structure and to proofread my work.

Chloe Humphreys is the Academic Leader and Principal Lecturer on the Bachelor of Culinary Arts programme at the Food Design Institute, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand. Chloe's research is focused on the subject area of culinary education and wellbeing, and how through mindful curriculum interventions, education can be a site of personal empowerment.

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Creative Essay

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WALKING THE WATERWAYS: USING TRAVEL DIARIES TO (RE)STORY THE CANAL

Edward Loveman and William Rupp

Figure 1. Can of Carling (lager) at the Hatton Bottom Lock on the Grand Union Canal. Photograph: W. Rupp.

AN ODE TO A CAN OF CARLING

A moment of quiet falls. After miles of blurring traffic noise and train whistles, a shift in the wind sweeps those white sounds away, and an ethereal 'sculpture' (read: a torn nightie, attached to a doll's head, hanging from a tree on the other bank) brings attention back to the sounds of the canalside which are momentarily foregrounded again. Part of this soundscape, almost inaudible, is the clink of aluminium against the lock gate. Suspended in a green ooze, half empty, a can of Carling lager sits black against the water and the fading tar of the wooden lock.

The most constant of companions on the towpath is this can of black and white, and dozens and dozens like it. Carling, it seems, is the drink of choice for users of the waterway. Every now and again, a dog walker, wrapped in expensive fleece, trudges by, either not noticing the cans or turning away, ignoring them. But they are everywhere: litter that will remain long after the walkers, the dogs, the voles, the birds, the reeds, and the very canal itself have gone.

It's easy to discount the can of Carling as it makes its journey along the canal and through the locks. It didn't just appear here. It and its companions were likely purchased in hole-in-the-wall off licences that seem to grow like yellow flag and arrowhead up and down the inland waterways. Perhaps they were brought to the Canalside and consumed, on cold autumn evenings and in long summer twilights, by people that neither the canal builders nor the Canal and River Trust ever thought would be interested in the cut. Those people are here, though, leaving testament to their engagement in piles of cans and the thin metal sheen of trampled containers that build up on corners and against embankments.

However easy it is to ignore the cans, they tell a critical part of the story of the canal. In fact, in many ways, the can is the most authentic artefact of the waterway. Alcohol was long a staple of canal business, and there is a circularity in the fact that one of the most common current sights is the beer can. At some level, this discarded Carling can is a sign of the social decay and staleness that surrounds much of the accessible parts of Britain's canals. But, like some kind of invasive species, the can has found its way throughout the network, including spots (presumably) miles from lager consumers.

The can's carriers cannot be ignored, though. Their stories, the cans, and the canals in which those cans now float all offer a kind of future to the countryside that doesn't fit easily in safe (middle class) notions of space and place. These people—who may be popping up in your mind in black tracksuits with their hoods pulled tight—are not the outsiders or outcasts. They are carving out a kind of canal existence that has a desperate urgency and immediacy. Whereas many other canal users are transitory occupiers of this space—bargees passing on their narrowboats, dogs and their walkers (with their fitness apps), kingfishers with their ever-hungry stomachs—the Carlingers linger. The canal offers an unjudgmental space for them. Often frozen out of public houses, they have made the towpath their pub. With the canals and the can carriers pushed to the edges of more genteel consciousnesses, both have found a foundation with the other.

The moment passes. The wind shifts. Lorries downshifting on the motorway push the faint sounds of the lock away again. Clouds move and the light slants in a slightly different direction; the floating Carling can fades back into the oily sheen of the water. The scene moves on. The can, however, remains.

INTRODUCTION

Our Ode is fiction. As with all folktales, though, there is truth at its core (Shaw, 2021). Canals—once central to trade, industry, and community life—have become a site of increased tourism in recent years (Gehrke, 2019). There has also been a rise in those choosing to live on canals in response to the global pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, or as a counter-cultural means of escape (Bowles, 2022). This sense of subversion is perhaps why canals

are often treated with suspicion, deemed sites of anti-social behaviour (Kaaristo, 2024), ecologically hazardous (Wallace & Wright, 2022), and politically agitational (Shell, 2015). Therefore, canals represent many things—they can be sites for (re)imagination, spaces for reflection, connection, and ecological concern, as well as areas of contention where different values and priorities come into contact.

Given that the canal is, broadly speaking, a space of travel, this project utilised the narrative and artistic potential of travel diaries (Figures 2 and 3) created during three walks along the 'Warwickshire Ring' (a circular route through the core of the canal network in England's former industrial heartland) (Canal & River Trust, 2024). By grounding our work in the lived and envisioned narratives of the canals, we were making efforts to subvert the traditional colonial approach to travel writing, tourism, and hospitality. Instead of viewing landscapes as sites for passive observation or exoticization, these diaries sought to understand and honour the local histories and perspectives embedded within canal spaces.

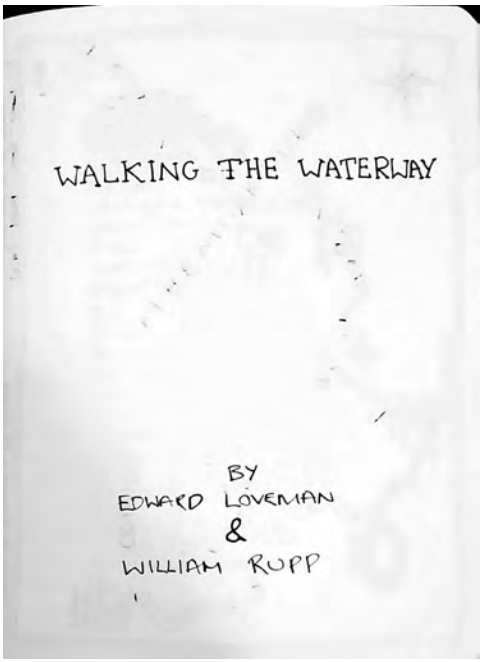


Figure 2. Dr Loveman's Travel Diary.
Image Credit: E. Loveman.

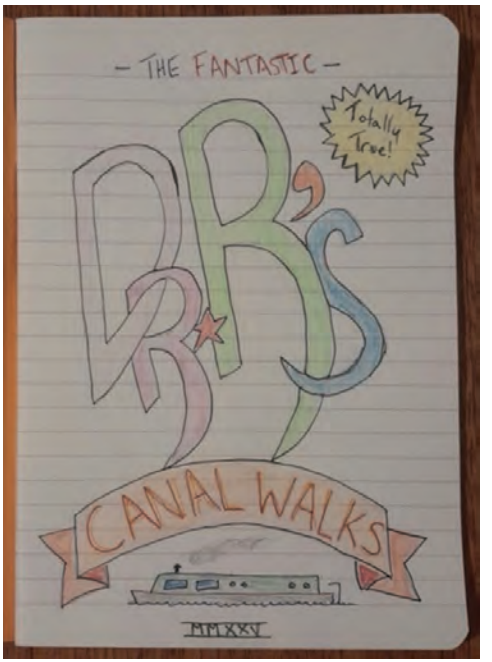


Figure 3. Dr Rupp's Travel Diary.
Image Credit: W. Rupp.

In exploring parts of the canal network in the immediate vicinities of our lives and work, our motivation was to explore questions such as: To what extent can local waterways present an alternative narrative to modern traditions of travel? How might travel diaries be used to (re)story the 'local'? A further, and equally important, question was: What happens when we allow ourselves to sit within the everyday, the 'mundane,' the background? The outcome of this questioning is a depiction of local tourism that offers insights that are potentially true of every such experience, but which are often overlooked and ignored. We suggest that, as much as our daily routines may seem ordinary and lacking in significant choices, they encompass a wide range of human experiences including, as Storey (2014) observes, "the extraordinary, the wonderful, profound sorrow and profound joy, love and sacrifice, politics, and poetics" (p. 2). Therefore, in our own storying of the canal, we hope that this research can, in a small way, (re)produce planetary empathy through (re)thinking and (re)enchanting our immediate surroundings.

In all honesty, we accept that some readers may find moving between complex interdisciplinary academic literature, emotional expression, and our artistic representation 'jarring.' However, we believe that such an approach to this project helps to create a picture of everyday tourism. We argue that this means that you (as the reader) are given the opportunity to 'make sense' of our experience. In this way, you are positioned as observer and participant in our experience, transporting you into these 'mundane' spaces. Our hope is that you find this beneficial, and that it pushes you to reflect on and experience your own locales, especially the waterways within them.

WATERWAYS LIKE NEURONS

At the core of this project lies a sensorial immersion in our local waterway network. Much like neural pathways, a waterway transmits sensory information from the multiple worlds it intersects (Fleming, 2019). This affinity between waterways and the brain/perception should not be understood as simply our own metaphorical interpretation, but as an articulation of the ontological challenges that this project has presented. Water is perceived as a living being by many indigenous ontologies (McGregor et al., 2023); it was central to creation stories in ancient civilisations (Bradley, 2012), and the waterway plays a key role in folklore (Chainey & Winsham, 2021). As Yates et al. (2017) posit, what are the implications of taking "seriously the possibility and politics of a multiplicity of water-related worlds, highlighting multiple water realities and ways of being-with-water, not just different perceptions of our knowledge systems tied to water's (singular) material existence"? (p. 798). We returned regularly to this notion of multiple realities throughout the project as a means of recognition for the many, historically marginalised, understandings of water (Wilson & Inkster, 2018). Recognising these many understandings forms part of this project's attempt to subvert the anthropocentric convention of 'natural' human knowledge production that dominates 'academic' inquiry.

This hegemonic discourse regarding the nature of knowledge and knowing is still rooted in a modern Eurocentric interpretation that requires academics to distinguish, at some level, between the natural (objective) and social (subjective) in designing research (Linton, 2010). This model of existence attaches meanings "to things [that] impose themselves on things, may even be inscribed or embodied in certain things, but are always presumed to be—in the first instance—distinct from things themselves" (Henare et al., 2007, p. 3). In other words, when meaning originates from human interpretation rather than from a thing itself, human knowledge is privileged which results in a form of conceptual ownership. This possessive individualism, at the core of many tourism and hospitality paradigms, places the human as the sole, or at least central, power and knowledge producer. This does not represent the relationality we have felt during our engagement with the waterway. Instead, a more cosmological approach such as that of Salmond and colleagues (2019) comes closer to the way that we came to appreciate the waterway. Put simply, the waterway is a being itself. It has a voice that speaks about real and potential pasts, presents, and futures. Furthermore, it brings into confluence various worlds: human, more-than-human, and otherworldly (Stang, 2014).

CANALS

We are not the first people to discover the allure of either England's inland waterways or travel writing. Indeed, canals have attracted the attention of numerous people thinking and writing about travel (Conder, 2017). They have been of academic interest for decades and factor into all major discussions of British social and economic development from the seventeenth century onwards. They were the great infrastructure project of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were a significant contributing factor to the Industrial Revolution. Langford, writing in one of the standard histories of England, describes canals and canal building as a kind of phenomenon whose very concept became "quickly absorbed into the Englishman's perception of his own place in the history of progress" (1998, p. 417). Other studies have tempered this opinion somewhat, suggesting that the impact of canals was more regional than national (O'Gorman, 2016). Nevertheless, by the introduction of railways from the 1830s, the canal network in England, Wales, and Scotland had grown to some 4,100 miles (Hadfield, 1981). This meant that,

even if there was a more regional focus for specific canals, they were a national concept with influence and impact on many aspects of life and business for a wide cross-section of society (Burton, 2015). For modern audiences, many of whom may never have looked at or for canals in their area, it can be difficult to appreciate the scope of canals, currently estimated at 2,000 miles (Canal and River Trust, 2012). For comparison, recent UK government data reports England, Wales, and Scotland currently have just under 10,000 miles of railways in what is considered a national and integrated network (Department for Transport, 2023).

The focus on the economic dimension of canals has superseded culture investigations. Towards the end of the Second World War, Rolt (1944) published an account of a canal voyage he had undertaken at a pivotal point in the commercial life of the network. *Narrow Boat* became a best seller and sparked a national post-war conversation about the value of canals and their role in preserving 'traditional' ways of life. Although Rolt's view of the women and men who lived and worked on canals was paternal and, in some ways, patronising, it also sold the value of canals as sites of cultural and environmental importance with vast intrinsic value to the nation (Boughey, 2013). Its publication led directly to the foundation of the Inland Waterways Association, which has been an instrumental advocate for continued preservation of and investment in canals and waterways (Blagrove, 2005).

In the nineteenth century there was considerable concern for the morality of the communities living and working on the canals (Matthews, 2013). The transient nature of canal communities created, at least in the minds of middle-class moralisers, an environment where hygiene took second place to baser influences, desires, and actions (Hanson, 1977). These views were widely held through the Second World War (Smith, 2011). Later analysis has shown that canal communities were no more or less disadvantaged (or immoral) than other groups of workers (Freer, 1992). Yet this negative viewpoint remains influential today.

The UK's canals straddle the divide between genteel tourism and luxury, and deprivation that can often be invisible (Worrall, 2019). Described in one context as "uncomfortable heritagisation," this duality has seen the preservation of infrastructure and the built environment, with less emphasis on folkways and communities based on and around the waterways (Wincott et. al., 2019). Furthermore, public information on the canals currently put out by the Canal and River Trust and the Inland Waterways Association does not engage directly with the waterways' enabling of imperial economics and their connection to very difficult topics such as enslavement. The Canal and River Trust's website, for instance, only has one short article discussing the links between canals and enslavement (Canal and River Trust, 2022). Taken as a whole, then, the cultural development and current sociological position of canals is complex and occasionally problematic, but very vibrant.

TRAVEL WRITING

The study of travel writing is also a deep and rich subject area. In the context of the British press, by the end of the eighteenth century travel writing was a top selling genre (Leask, 2019). Much of the focus of this writing was on subjects beyond the borders of the 'home nations' and tied into a burgeoning interest in understanding Britain's increasingly dominant geopolitical position (Youngs, 2013). A 'rediscovery' of domestic topics of interest from the seventeenth century onwards, promoted considerable attention on the geography, history, and politics of the United Kingdom (Sweet, 2004). Famous accounts of travel within Britain included those written by Daniel Defoe (1724–1727), Thomas Pennant (1750s–1790s), Arthur Young (especially 1760s–1770s), and William Cobbett (1820s), generally holding a political or social agenda (Rogers, 1985). Into the nineteenth century, travelling—and the recording of travels—came to be seen as "important undertaking[s] for the well-educated man or woman who, having made a trip, wished to convey in an artistically pleasing fashion the information he had gleaned" (Batten, 1978). Concerns over the authenticity of travel accounts abounded, with the consensus being, to paraphrase Adams (1980), that travellers were inevitably also travel liars. This did not dampen the public's enthusiasm for such books, and there was an increase in the number of 'gentlemen travellers' publishing accounts of their journeys (Buzard, 1993).

This increased enthusiasm coincided with concerns over who was a 'traveller' and who was a 'tourist.' When travel was largely limited to a select and wealthy few, a distinction of this nature was not overly important. With more and more people travelling (and writing about their experiences), concerns over this difference became acute. Fussell has summarised the reductive nature of tourism, stating that it "requires that you see conventional things, and that you see them in a conventional way" (1987, p. 651). For someone to be an authentic traveller, they needed to possess "notions of movement and individuality" (Hulme & Youngs, 2002, p. 7) that "should manifest some impulse of non-utilitarian pleasure" (Fussell, 1987, p. 21). The only people likely to possess the time for such 'non-utilitarian' pursuits were aristocrats and the few members at the top of the middling classes and the gentry with sufficient wealth to make such journeys (Bohls & Duncan, 2005, p. xvi). Such characterisation of travellers as being genteel has met with sustained criticism, not in the least because such a narrowing of the sample pool leaves aside a sizable range of experiences. As Bohls and Duncan ask, "[d]o sailors, soldiers, servants, slaves, emigrants, exiles, transported convicts, military and diplomatic wives, count as travellers?" (Bohls & Duncan, 2005, p. xvi). In other words, whose voices can qualify as those of authentic travellers?

WALKING THE CANAL

In this project, a travel diary 'method' was used to record our experience of the waterway through multiple mediums. In practical terms, after initial scoping and planning, three 'journeys' were agreed upon that balanced macro and micro approaches to experiencing the canals and their surroundings. This meant completing approximately 18 hours and 35 miles of fieldwork along sections of the 'Warwickshire Ring' in a slow, meandering way that fostered a deliberate sensory engagement with the waterway, and recording information in our diaries as we 'travelled.' Each diary blended visual documentation, personal experience, and reflection on the history, present, and imagined futures of the waterway. There was no set format, or prescription in how we recorded information, but rather an adaptability inherent in the recording that allowed us to (re)present our experience through whichever medium felt most appropriate. This holistic approach offered a means of generating narratives and meant that the diaries themselves began to transcend mere documentation, becoming intricate, tangible artistic objects.

Much like our approach to understanding and experiencing waterways, our decisions have invariably drawn inspiration from existing processes of 'data collecting.' Diary writing, including about travel, is a well-established academic practice (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015; Markwell & Basche, 1998; Schlich & Axhausen, 2003), and is a practice increasingly being adapted to emerging technologies (Allström et al., 2017; Prelipcean et al., 2018). The same can also be said for artistic practices such as painting (Sullivan, 2002), drawing (Theron et al., 2011), and psychogeography (Arnold, 2019). Of course, walking was central to this research, particularly walking methodologies for a more-than-human world (Springgay & Truman, 2017)—walking in a way attuned to a particular place and the rhythms of life within it, privileging non-visual senses to connect oneself to the environment.

THE JOURNEYS

The long one

For the first journey we decided to make a long and 'linear' progress between two pre-defined destinations: from the Coventry Canal Basin to Rugby (Figure 4). The route was nearly 17 miles and followed the canal from the post-industrial centre of Coventry, through the quaint eighteenth-century atmosphere of Hawkesbury Junction, then cutting into the green and greys of rural Warwickshire before connecting with Rugby.

This walk demonstrated the many different worlds the canal intersects and how the waterway might exist in ways beyond those which 'we' may be able to conceive. Therefore, we involved ourselves in a "type of tourism which nurtures a sense of ourselves as one with this planet" (Huijbens, 2021, p. 113). For example, our diaries highlighted

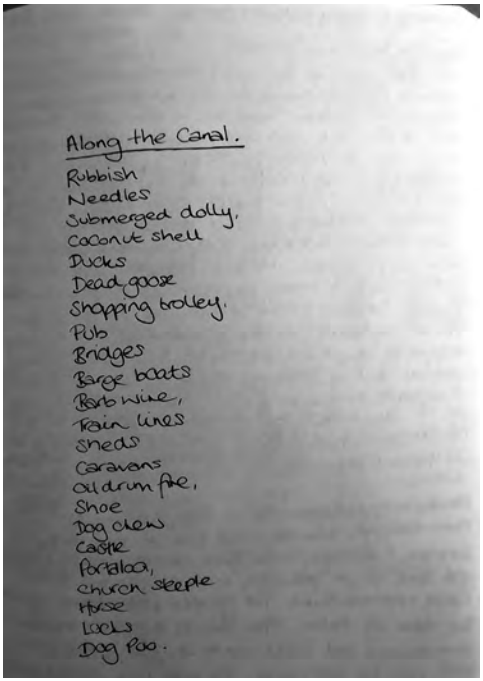
Figure 4. Map of journey one.
Image Credit: E. Loveman.

the sense we had that the canal was 'communicating' with us in a variety of ways (Figures 5 and 6). The waterway has knowledge, and it produces knowledge—regardless of whether 'we' are there to engage with it or not. During this walk, we experienced urban, rural, and environmental knowledge.

A to B

Our experiences in the first journey confirmed for us that travel is more than simply a social phenomenon (Gren & Huijbens, 2012). Rather, we are planetary tourists ourselves (Smith, 2018). For the second journey, then, we began at a set point, but moved forward freely without fixed goals, and with no defined end (Figure 7). Specifically, we started at the bottom of the Hatton Flight locks just west of Warwick and ended in the village of Lapworth, approximately eight miles away (Figure 8). This walk took us about four hours and facilitated a different kind of visualisation. It allowed for more intentional observation and narrowed the focus of 'discovery,' such as when we came across the rebuilding of a lock gate on the Hatton Flight locks. This reconstruction work blended traditional craft, such as the woodwork that went into constructing the massive wooden gate, with modern technology, like the hydraulic cranes used to manoeuvre the gates into place.

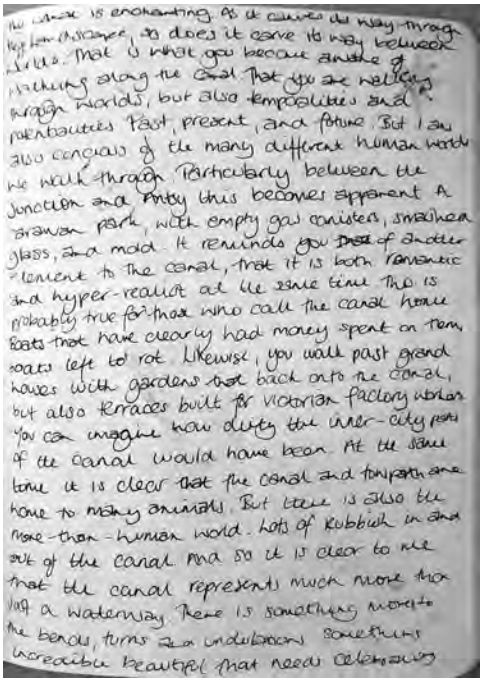
This example of rebuilding was one of several instances on the journeys that highlighted the many existences of the canal, from the human, to the ecological and zoological, to the technological (Figure 9). We perceived the traversing of many different 'existences' as important, conceptually speaking, to tourism, which is so often conceived of as temporally exclusive, involving activities that are time-limited, such as holidays or boat cruises. Even those utilising the canal for an income (Figure 10) 'tour' in a sense, and this emphasised for us the need to approach our immediate surroundings with the sense of wonder that is too often associated only with 'far-off' places.



Along the Canal.

Rubbish
Needles
Submerged dolly.
Coconut shell
Ducks
Dead goose
Shopping trolley.
Pub
Bridges
Barge boats
Barb wire,
Train lines
Sheds
Caravans
All drum fire,
Shoe
Dog chew
Castle
Portaloo,
Church steeple
Horse
Locks
Dog Poo.

Figure 5. Poem "Along the Canal."
Image Credit: E. Loveman.



the canal is enchanting. As it carves its way through the countryside, so does it carve its way between worlds. That is what you become aware of whilst walking along the canal. That you are walking through worlds, but also temporalities and potentialities past, present, and future. But I am also conscious of the many different human worlds we walk through. Particularly between the junction and Priory this becomes apparent. A caravan park, with empty gas canisters, smashed glass, and mold. It reminds you that of another element to the canal, that it is both romantic and hyper-realist at the same time. This is probably true for those who call the canal home. Boats that have clearly had money spent on them, boats left to rot. Likewise, you walk past grand houses with gardens that back onto the canal, but also terraces built for Victorian factory workers. You can imagine how dusty the inner-city parts of the canal would have been. At the same time it is clear that the canal and towpath are home to many animals. But there is also the more-than-human world. Lots of rubbish in and out of the canal and so it is clear to me that the canal represents much more than just a waterway. There is something more to the bends, turns and undulations. Something incredible beautiful that needs celebrating

Figure 6. Recounted tale of walk one.
Image Credit: E. Loveman.

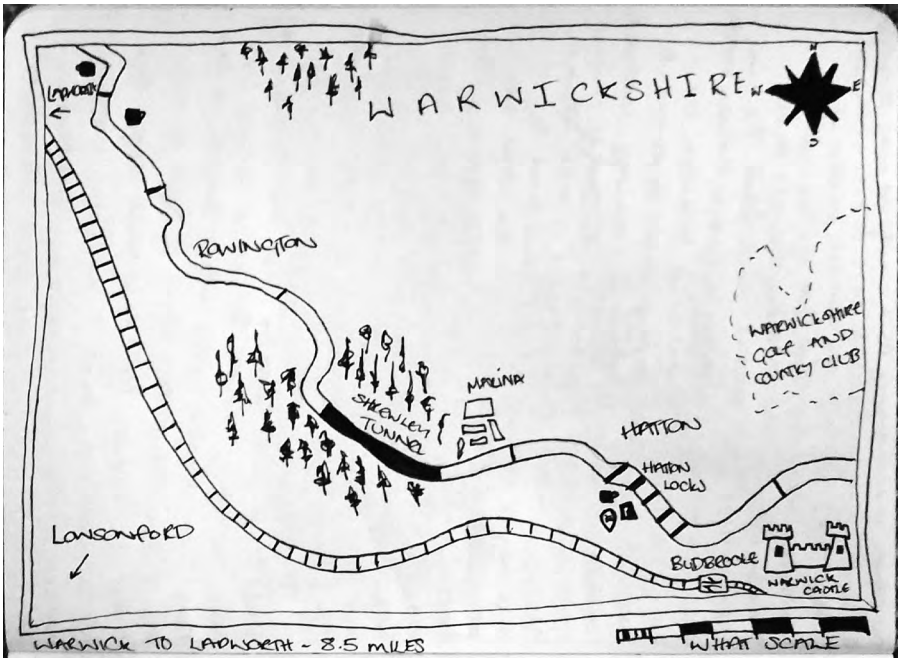


Figure 7. Map of journey two. Image Credit: E. Loveman.

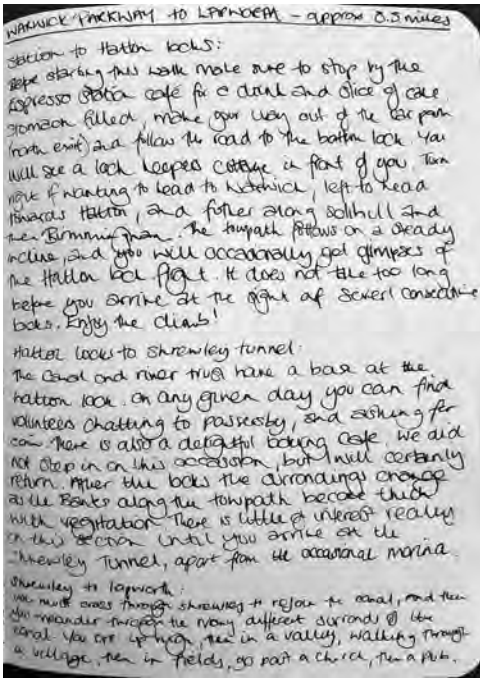


Figure 8. Diary account of walk two.
Image Credit: E. Loveman.

Figure 9. Fuel tank at Rose Narrowboats.
Image Credit: E. Loveman.

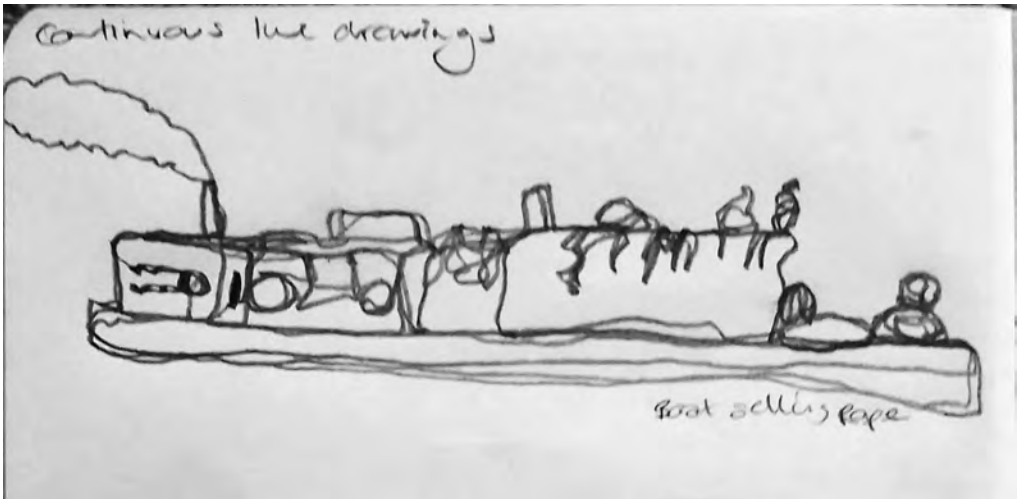


Figure 10. Five-minute continuous line drawings of boats selling rope.
Image Credit: E. Loveman.

Figure 11. Brindley Place, Birmingham, looking west.
Photograph: W. Rupp.

Getting lost and messing around near boats

Our final journey through the centre of Birmingham was reminiscent of what Wordsworth (1807/n.d.) wrote describing London from Westminster bridge: "The river glideth at his own sweet will / Dear God! the very houses seem asleep / And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

Brindley Place, at the heart of this stretch of the Grand Union Canal, is in many ways the antithesis of a source of wonder. Whereas our other two itineraries had physical destinations in mind, here we employed a method closely tied to the mid-twentieth century European situationist movement, and Debord's (1958) concept of a "dérive" (translated as "drift") which described a random, aimless walk through urban environments. This challenged us to consider how our capacity to 'make sense' of existing phenomena, especially if we accept more-than-human agency, might be impossible to know (St. Pierre, 2021). Wandering along Birmingham's canals we were struck by the different levels through which you walk, sometimes above but often below the rest of the city. It was, perhaps, the clearest representation of what it means and how it looks to travel 'through' your own locale (Satchwell et al., 2020).

Figure 12. A lock along the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal, now covered over by urban development in central Birmingham. Photograph: W. Rupp.

TO CONCLUDE

Overall, our journeys highlighted how canals occupy a precarious and fascinating space in the narrative of and arguments about how space and place are valued; and, perhaps more relevantly, whose concepts of such value get amplified. As the climate emergency makes international travel increasingly challenging, those interested in the topics of leisure, tourism, and hospitality must create alternative narratives of what it means to be a tourist. By connecting travel writing with the creative approaches we used to construct our own diary responses, we have hopefully opened a potential model for how to enact this connection to the local anywhere. Ultimately, people who are interested in travel and hospitality must bring the wonder of the 'exotic' to the 'mundane.' Doing so enables all of us access to the extra-ordinary that is just beyond our own doorsteps. For us, the canal walks (re) connected us to our surroundings, and enabled us to engage with transdisciplinary spaces which are, ultimately, accessible to anyone who takes the time to look. To this end, perhaps readers have been encouraged to step outside, seek wonder in the mundane, and 'travel' within their own locales.

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BEYOND KIA ORA: INVESTIGATING MANAAKITANGA IN TOURIST-LOCAL INTERACTIONS

Helen Geytenbeek and Rachel Byars

The tourism industry is navigating a complex and volatile environment, grappling with challenges in recruiting and retaining a sustainable workforce. Factors such as the lingering effects of national lockdowns, shifting immigration policies, and a historical reliance on low-wage migrant labour have compounded these issues. Historically labelled as a "Cinderella industry" offering poor-quality jobs (Williamson, 2017), tourism and hospitality in New Zealand continues to suffer from the realities of long hours, low pay, and limited career progression (Insch, 2020). This includes staff retention issues, increased casualisation of the workforce, high turnover rates, and persistent labour shortages. These challenges are particularly pronounced in peripheral or remote areas, where access to skilled and reliable workers is often limited. These challenges have a flow-on effect and further implications for the tourism industry as a whole, particularly in delivering high-quality, culturally authentic visitor experiences.

To counteract some of these labour issues, employers have embraced the expansion of the working holiday visa programme, with half of respondents in a 2022 Tourism Industry Aotearoa survey indicating plans to recruit visa holders for seasonal roles (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2022). More recent government interventions, such as the 2024 temporary visa option for some seasonal workers, aimed to address challenges in recruitment and retention further by improving wages, working conditions, and access to skilled migrant workers (New Zealand Immigration, 2024).

However, these measures alone may not resolve deeper structural issues within the sector. Critics argue that the reliance on short-term migrant workers has diluted the authenticity of New Zealand's tourism experiences and led to the exploitation of migrant workers, attracting a young, transient, international workforce (Leung & Ladkin, 2024; Newport, 2017; Stringer et al., 2022). Furthermore, as highlighted by Kimbu et al. (2023), the tourism industry faces a global scarcity of workers that predates the pandemic. Over a decade ago, Sir Paul Callaghan (2011) advocated for a shift toward a knowledge-driven economy to enhance productivity and provide meaningful employment for young people—a vision yet to be fully realised. Additionally, Newport (2017), in an article written about the tourist boom pre-COVID-19, claimed that heavy reliance on migrant workers had already led to the creation of experiences for tourists that might not be authentically 'Kiwi.' His argument was: how can destinations "be authentic if there are no New Zealanders there?" (Newport, 2017, p.19). Authentic Kiwi hospitality, according to Wang (2024), is renowned for welcoming guests as if they are family, fostering a warm and personal bond between hosts and visitors. It transcends basic service, cultivating a friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

Authenticity is central to tourism in both cultural heritage and indigenous settings (Jamal & Hill, 2004). It can be thought of as objective, referring to the real or original nature of objects, places and cultures (de Andrade-Matos et al., 2022); and experiential, which focuses on the tourist's personal feeling of genuineness, self-discovery, and having real or meaningful experiences (de Andrade-Matos et al., 2022). A lack of authenticity, coupled with insufficient knowledge and understanding of manaakitanga (the Māori concept of hospitality and care), undermines the ability to provide meaningful and enriching interactions for visitors. Furthermore, limited promotion of cultural authenticity can lead to a homogenised tourism offering, detracting from the unique appeal of specific destinations.

Assessing the challenges identified above requires a multifaceted approach, including improved workforce planning, investment in training, and development and strategies to enhance job attractiveness and sustainability in the regions. Addressing these interconnected issues is essential for fostering a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry that values cultural integrity, supports local communities, and enhances the overall visitor experience.

The following scenario presents an illustration drawn from real-world observations, which is offered not as empirical evidence but rather as personal observation of our combined industry experience. It captures the fundamental disconnect witnessed between visitors and tourism workers and the challenges the industry is facing:

> Emily, an Australian tourist, arrived in Queenstown, eager to experience the vibrant local culture she had read so much about. On her first evening, she dined at a popular lakeside restaurant, excited to try the region's local cuisine and hear stories about local life from the staff. Her waiter, however, was a young backpacker from Europe who admitted they had only been in Queenstown for two weeks and didn't know much about the area.
>
> When Emily asked for recommendations on hidden local spots to explore, the waiter shrugged and suggested looking online, mentioning they hadn't had time to explore themselves. At her hotel the next morning, the receptionist, an international worker on a short-term visa, struggled to answer her questions about Māori cultural experiences, giving generic responses and directing her to the tourist brochure rack instead.
>
> As Emily walked through town later, she reflected on how her interactions so far had felt transactional rather than engaging. She had expected to gain insight into Queenstown's rich local culture and unique identity but found it hard to connect with workers who lacked personal ties to the region. While the scenery was breathtaking, Emily couldn't help but feel a sense of disconnection, as if the authentic 'soul' of Queenstown was missing from her experience.

This disconnect between tourism workers and visitors is why it is important not to lose sight of the key cultural aspects that characterise a destination. Locals also need to be able to share in these authentic experiences by demonstrating reciprocity and hospitable interactions in the form of manaakitanga.

Manaakitanga is a fundamental Māori concept that embodies the principles of respect, kindness, generosity, and care for others. As a customary concept, it can be regarded as setting an expected standard of behaviour, including nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being careful about how others are treated (Mead, 2016). In the context of the tourism industry, "manaakitanga" or "manaakitaka" is translated as "hospitality" (Wikitera, 2019; Zygadlo et al., 2003). Manaakitanga focuses on service, respect, and treating people well, supporting the tourism industry in its aim to operate and act in mana-enhancing ways (Ransfield & Reichenberger, 2021). This reciprocity of hospitality and respect from one individual or group to another is based on the values of "mana" (prestige), which are reflected in culture, language, and the continuous effort to be generous hosts. Manaakitanga represents a deeply authentic approach to hosting and serving visitors that is intrinsic to the cultural identity of Aotearoa.

Manaakitanga is one of three key values, alongside kaitiakitanga (guardianship), and whanaungatanga (sense of belonging) which are central to the Tourism Industry Aotearoa Tourism 2025 and Beyond framework (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2019). In the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 manaakitanga "implies a reciprocal responsibility upon a host and an invitation to a visitor to experience the very best we have to offer" (Tourism New Zealand, 2007, p. 5). More recently, 100% Pure New Zealand Travel Trade (n.d.) promotions have highlighted respecting the mana, culture, lands, and people of Aotearoa (New Zealand). This emphasis on cultural values and reciprocity was further enhanced by the launch of the Tiaki Promise in 2018, a collaborative project by the public and private sectors that seeks to inspire both international and domestic travellers to explore Aotearoa New Zealand responsibly, ensuring safety for all, preserving the environment, respecting cultural heritage, and safeguarding the country for future generations (NZ Māori Tourism, 2018).

For service providers in the tourism industry, manaakitanga is not just a professional obligation but a genuine expression of cultural values. Welcoming visitors with warmth and respect and treating them as honoured guests (manuhiri) goes beyond transactional interactions, creating meaningful connections that make visitors feel truly valued and cared for. Another more logical reason for the inclusion of manaakitanga is the fact that the tourism industry is a service-based industry and therefore there is a need for a level of respect for the visitor. These cultural interactions can be viewed as an opportunity for visitors to gain personal understanding of their new surroundings, culture, and the host community (McIntosh et al., 2004).

Māori businesses, in particular, can use storytelling to carve out a unique proposition (New Zealand Trade Enterprise, 2015). However, as most travellers are seeking authentic experiences (Cohen, 2004), there is a need to nurture an industry that respects local culture while ensuring visitors feel welcome, reflecting the values of manaakitanga and the relational and reciprocal nature of the indigenous culture (Dell et al., 2018). It is a balancing act between ensuring a high level of service, local culture and the authenticity of products. Manaakitanga goes beyond the physical aspects of hosting as it is about creating a safe and welcoming environment where visitors feel comfortable which involves engaging in meaningful kōrero and being genuinely interested in making connections. The use of manaakitanga in New Zealand tourism marketing highlights and promotes the significance of culture (Tourism New Zealand, 2023). Therefore, those visiting expect that they will genuinely experience this culture, applied in a way that benefits and protects both the local community and visitors rather than its being sold as cultural tourism (Puriri & McIntosh, 2019). Genuine manaakitanga demonstrates a generosity of spirit which extends beyond service and incorporates knowledge of the local culture, environment, and community, making visitors feel genuinely welcome and supported throughout their experience.

By integrating manaakitanga into their service approach, tourism providers in New Zealand can create experiences that are uniquely rich, meaningful, and deeply connected to the cultural essence of the destination through the people who are delivering the service. However, the heavy reliance on migrant labour (more significant pre-pandemic) remains a concern because it detracts from the authenticity of the service. Authenticity, as we have seen, is crucial in practising manaakitanga, as it cannot be a performative act but must come from a genuine place of care and respect. Visitors can sense when hospitality is genuine versus simply a scripted service approach. By letting local guides and community members share their narratives and culture, more interesting and real travel experiences are created. Such authenticity can set these experiences apart, creating lasting and meaningful connections with visitors and turning tourism from a one-sided transaction into a meaningful cultural exchange.

The key to a sustainable tourism future lies in the hands of passionate local operators who carry the tourism message with pride. These authentic cultural ambassadors do more than simply welcome visitors; they share lived, authentic experiences in every interaction they facilitate. By prioritising local expertise and professional development within host communities, the tourism industry not only creates meaningful employment opportunities but also ensures that visitors receive genuine, high-quality experiences that accurately reflect a destination. This approach transforms tourism from an economic activity into one that ensures cultural preservation, cross-cultural understanding, professionalism, and value for both communities and visitors alike.

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CHALLENGING THE LOGIC OF "SHE'LL BE RIGHT": FOSTERING WELL-BEING WITHIN PROFESSIONAL KITCHENS

Juliane Tautz

Picture this: A young chef had just finished her traineeship and stepped into the chaos of a bustling professional kitchen, eager to prove herself. She was the only female in a team of 12, with a head chef who was under immense pressure after just having opened a new restaurant. The clatter of pans, the sizzle of oil, the rapid-fire calls for service: it was a symphony that fuelled her dreams. After an exhausting 70-hour week, with aching feet and a mind that was a fog of exhaustion, she found herself back on the grill. Under immense pressure, working through the stress of hundreds of orders each night, she made her first mistake, and a meal was sent back.

No big deal, it was fixed. She brushed it off, pushed forward, and the night went on. But then came the second mistake. This time, it was met with sharp glares, muttered insults, and the unmistakable disdain of her head chef and the kitchen staff. "What is she even doing here?" The words hung in the air, unspoken but felt. Her hands trembled, her stomach churned, but she clenched her jaw and told herself she couldn't break. Not here. Not now. She could feel emotions taking over her body but was trying her hardest to stay calm. Then the third dish was returned.

What followed was a public explosion of rage from her head chef, a torrent of expletives and humiliation that echoed through the kitchen, telling her to leave and never to come back. In that moment, as she walked out of the kitchen in tears, she could feel the eyes of every chef burning into her back. Shame consumed her. Her mind screamed that she wasn't good enough, that she never had been.

She collapsed onto a crate outside, next to the rubbish skip, her body shaking, her dreams unravelling. Why had she ever thought she could do this? Why had she chosen to be a chef? But before she could catch her breath, the kitchen door slammed open. Her head chef, the man whose approval she had been chasing, whose respect she had been starving for, stormed out. His words were sharp, laced with the same disrespect, demanding she come back inside. He expected her to ignore the emotional toll and continue the shift as if nothing had happened.

And so, she wiped her tears away, stood on unsteady legs, and stepped back into the fire, like a good soldier …

This story really happened, and it happened to me. It showcases the fact that the hospitality industry, an industry that I love, had been slowly breaking me, and countless others like me. It highlights a systemic issue within the hospitality industry, a culture where long hours are glorified, and mental health is ignored (Robinson et al., 2022). My story is not isolated. It reflects practices unfortunately found in numerous professional kitchens around the globe (Barton, 2017; Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2017; Ram, 2018). This is a culture that too often dismisses emotional and mental well-being for the sake of speed, efficiency, and perfection.

The hospitality industry, long celebrated for its resilience and camaraderie, is also notorious for its unsustainable work culture (Williamson & Rasmussen, 2022). The "She'll be right" mentality, a phrase embedded in Australian and New Zealand cultural lexicons, has often justified long hours, high stress, and a disregard for hauora (personal well-being) in the hospitality industry. However, as the industry grapples with staff shortages, burnout, and declining mental health (Robinson et al., 2023) it is evident that "she," in fact, is NOT "right." Change is necessary.

From my own experience as a chef and now as a hospitality educator, I have seen how deeply ingrained these unhealthy work practices are. Many of my students have shared similar stories of overwhelming pressure, mental strain, and burnout. The sad bottom line is, that the suicide rate among female chefs is nearly four times higher than the suicide rate of females in all other occupations (Burnett et al., 2022). Furthermore, the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations' report on student mental health in Aotearoa suggests that mental health concerns are prevalent among all of New Zealand's students (New Zealand Union of Students' Associations, 2017). These challenges may be exacerbated when they enter the demanding environment of the hospitality industry. I found myself directing learners to hauora and mental health services too often, watching them struggle under the weight of these compounding pressures.

Traditional culinary arts practices and workplace cultures are not sustainable, nor are they healthy (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). A recent New Zealand and Australian study has shown that 25 percent of hospitality workers are working more than 52 hours per week (Robinson et al., 2023). Another study suggests that about 30 percent of workers are not getting paid for those additional hours (Williamson & Rasmussen, 2022). It is now evident that the hospitality industry cannot continue on this path as the industry struggles to attract staff and retain them. In a review of the employment conditions in New Zealand's tourism and hospitality sector, 33.7 percent of respondents said that they were thinking of leaving the sector and 45.1 percent did not want, or were unsure about having, a long-term career in tourism or hospitality (Williamson & Rasmussen, 2022). The practices of the industry need to change, and central to this is making the workers' well-being a priority.

For too long, the "She'll be right" mindset has dominated hospitality, reinforcing an unsustainable and often harmful culture. By redefining leadership, reshaping education, and shifting industry norms, the hospitality sector can move toward a future where chefs and hospitality professionals are not only skilled and efficient but also healthy, supported, and fulfilled. As part of the research for my master's thesis, *She'll Be Right—Culture Change Through the Lens of Redeveloping Culinary Management and Leadership*, I created a series of podcasts with New Zealand community and culinary leaders discussing well-being in the industry. The aim of these podcasts is to unpack the problem of disregarding well-being in hospitality and discuss potential positive ways forward.

Episode 1 'She'll be right – Hauora and well-being'

In episode one, I talk with Pete Rees, the Managing Director of Te Ara Mahi. He discusses hauora and well-being in the context of his work with individuals facing mental health challenges and reintegrating them into workplaces across New Zealand.

Episode 2 'She'll be right – Hauora in education'

In episode two, I talk with Shane Yardley, a senior culinary academic from Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. Shane and I explore the crucial role that formal education plays in fostering awareness and practices related to hauora among future hospitality professionals.

Episode 3 'She'll be right – Hauora in the industry'

Finally, in episode three, I talk with Debbie Crompton, a chef with over 30 years' experience who has worked in numerous high-profile New Zealand resorts and luxury lodges. Debbie shares her lived experiences in the industry, linking them to bicultural frameworks and discussing the realities of well-being (or lack thereof) within her past and current kitchen environments.

These podcasts provide a deeper understanding of well-being within our communities. They contain valuable insights into positive pathways for the hospitality industry to become healthier, supported, and fulfilling for its professionals.

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GROWING HAUORA: A PERSONAL JOURNEY OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE AND NATURE-BASED LEARNING

Sylvia Dwen

INTRODUCTION

In an age where industrial progress and digital saturation increasingly disconnect us from the land beneath our feet, the need to re-centre human well-being within the rhythms of nature has never been more urgent. As a chef, solo mother of three young children, and future educator, this has become increasingly apparent to me in recent years. Last year, I completed a Bachelor of Culinary Arts through an Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) process, which offered me the opportunity to reflect on what is truly important to me—and how these values are expressed in my practice as a chef and future food educator. This reflective journey culminated in a Framework of Practice (FoP): a conceptual model that articulates the underlying beliefs, values, and practices that inform my professional actions.

My reflections on the importance of nature in both my life and my practice—alongside a growing concern for the well-being of today's children—led me to explore the notion that engagement with nature, particularly through food, education, and culturally grounded practice, can serve as a powerful pathway to individual and collective well-being. This article traces that exploration, drawing on indigenous and contemporary understandings of health, ecopsychology, mātauranga Māori, and my own lived culinary experience

As a result of this reflection and research, I propose that a reciprocal, empathetic relationship with Papatūānuku is both urgent and transformative. This relationship forms the foundation of my Framework of Practice. By creating opportunities for people—especially children—to reconnect with the natural world, I believe we can foster deep, enduring well-being. Set within the context of hospitality, this perspective invites educators and practitioners to reimagine sustainability and our relationship with nature not as a trend, but as a deeply relational, values-driven approach to living and learning.

FOUNDATIONS OF MY FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING HAUORA AND ITS ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS

According to the 1946 constitution of the World Health Organization, health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 2025). The constitution further states that all aspects of health are essential for the well-being and functioning of individuals and communities: "Healthy development of the child is of basic importance; the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment is essential to such development" (World Health Organization, 2025).

Considered alongside the Treaty of Waitangi, the understanding of health in Aotearoa New Zealand shares some important features with the World Health Organization's definition. Health is seen as a holistic concept where a balance of factors can affect well-being. It comprises a number of dimensions: te taha wairua (the spiritual part); te taha hinengaro (the mental); te taha tinana (the physical); te taha whānau (the family); te taha tūroa (the environment) and te reo (language). This framework has been modelled by Mason Durie as Te Whare Tapa Whā, with the four walls of a wharenui representing the four pillars of health: te taha wairua, te taha hinengaro, te taha tinana, me/and te taha whānau (Te Whatu Ora, 2024). It is paramount that all factors are considered when assessing personal and communal well-being (Te Whatu Ora, 2024).

Despite these positive definitions of health and the targets they set, as a society we have lost sight of what true health and happiness look like. I believe this has to do with factors such as larger human populations, consumption, urbanisation, resource depletion, waste generation, pollution, and chemical contamination. We have become a society that believes that the successes of the modern world depend on controlling and converting nature to our own uses (focusing on wealth and material gain); as opposed to understanding that physical, mental, and spiritual well-being all rely on our ability to experience diverse natural systems.

In ancient indigenous cultures around the world, health, well-being, and connection to nature are understood in this holistic way. Historically, indigenous societies were dependent on, or interdependent with, their natural environment (Salmón, 2000). As a result, they also formed a deep connection with it, viewing humankind as part of a wider ecosystem where living in balance with the natural environment was necessary for sustaining human life (Warbrick et al., 2023). This reciprocal relationship is responsible for the sustainability ethos of indigenous societies.

Given this country's ancestral ties to Māori culture, I have come to view human wellness in the context of the indigenous concept of hauora (health). Although New Zealanders have a strong affiliation with the 'outdoors' and nature, as our urban areas and populations grow this connection is becoming weaker, resulting in poorer overall health.

Whereas the *Collins English Dictionary* defines "nature" as "all the animals, plants, and other things in the world that are not made by people, and all the events and processes that are not caused by people" (Collins, 2024), in te ao Māori this definition extends further: "Taiao (nature) is the natural world that contains and surrounds us—the land, water, climate and living beings. It refers to the interconnection of people and nature" (Taiao Ora, n.d.). Taiao Ora (n.d.) describes it further with a whakataukī (proverb): "Ko au Te Taiao, ko Te Taiao ko au" (I am nature, and nature is me). This proverb assumes a permanent relationship of respect, reciprocity, and interdependence. Like us, nature is alive—Taiao (nature); ora (alive). This concept can be unwrapped further:

Tai:	The horizon where heaven and earth meet
Ao:	The world around, above and below us
Tai Ao:	The natural world that contains and surrounds us
Ora:	To be alive and well
Taiao Ora:	Taiao Ora: The well-being of our natural world. (Taiao Ora, 2004)

I believe we have an intrinsic desire and need for nature—even if it only takes the form of an indoor plant. As Stephan Kellert explains in his book *Building for Life*, "because we evolved in a biological rather than an artificial or machine-dominated world, we have always relied on—and continue to rely on—repeated experience of nature to achieve our physical and mental health and productivity" (Kellert, 2005).

Ecopsychology is a recent field that studies the relationship between human beings and the natural environment, utilising both ecological and psychological principles (Society for Environmental Population and Conservation Psychology, 2011). This concept proposes that healthy people create a healthier environment, and interacting with

a healthier environment fosters improved health in people (Summers & Vivian, 2018). Social and environmental movements such as the deep ecology movement formed by Arne Næss (1995) and the Deep Green Resistance, based on the book of the same name by Derrick Jensen, Lierre Keith, and Aric McBay (2011), stress two main things: that every living being, human and nonhuman, has its own inherent value and thus has the right to live and flourish; and that the 'industrial revolution' poses the greatest threat to the natural environment.

The way our society is living today is highly destructive and damaging to both our mental and physical health. According to deep ecologists, humans should be returning to an eco-centred relationship with nature, living within the means of the local ecosystem and local seasons (Næss, 1995). An ecological self-concept is one in which a person understands their direct interdependence with the planet. They are driven to live sustainably not just for their own sake, or even for the sake of the planet, but because of the web of intrinsic and extrinsic values and connections among all living things (Weaver, 2015). Thus, it is paramount that environmental awareness and sustainability are taught and demonstrated to tamariki (children) at home and especially in school.

INDIGENOUS SUSTAINABLE VALUES: LEARNING FROM TE AO MĀORI

This 'new' way of thinking has many links with indigenous cultures around the world, including that of Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori have an affiliation to the earth which is reflected in their cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and social structures (Lockhart et al., 2019). Whakapapa (genealogy) is central to Māori identity and understanding of the world. It links individuals and communities to their ancestors, the land, and the natural elements. Māori believe that their genealogy connects them to the earth and all living things, a relationship that underscores the importance of land in their worldview.

Tikanga (custom and tradition) emphasises the importance of living in harmony with the land and sea—for example, kaitiakitanga involves acting as guardians of natural resources, fishing and farming in ways that sustain resources and respect the environment. This is also reflected in spiritual beliefs about Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Sky Father) in whom all things were created. The mythological accounts of their separation highlight the sacredness of the earth and the role of humans as caretakers. Traditional agriculture and land use (environmental stewardship), such as kūmara cultivation, was adapted to the local environment in ways that reflected Māori understanding of and respect for the land (Adds, 2008). For example, soils were modified to enhance the growing conditions for kūmara in New Zealand, a practice that was not previously used in Polynesia (The University of Waikato Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, 2015). The gathering and cultivation of kai and medicines from the natural environment was done in a sustainable way, ensuring availability for future generations and sustaining the mauri (life force) of the ngahere (forest) and moana (seas) (Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, 2007). Seasonal harvesting techniques, regulated fishing, and the use of all parts of a plant reflected their interdependence on the natural world. The tī kōuka tree, to give just one example, was used for fibre, the leaves for weaving, the young tips eaten as a sweet vegetable, and the older branches boiled and then scraped for the porridge-like paste (Department of Conservation, 2024). Pūrākau (cultural narratives) and symbols often feature elements of the natural world and highlight the interconnectedness of all living things (Lockhart et al., 2019).

I strongly believe that we need to reflect on the past and look to mātauranga Māori (the Māori world view and knowledge system) in order to gain insights into how to establish reciprocal respect between humans and nature. I have tried to do this in my own practice, seeking to work in places that shared similar values of sustainability and seasonality. This meant buying from local suppliers, buying produce in season, using compostable coffee cups; supporting suppliers that shared these practices; buying in bulk to save on packaging, and offering food scraps to farmers or for use in garden compost. In England, I worked at River Cottage, a restaurant I sought out for these reasons. They would buy only organic produce and meat, buying direct and supporting local farmers who were actively caring for the soil and their animals, and who were working to create nutritionally dense produce which was better for our health.

I tried to carry on these efforts when I created and opened Sylvia's, a small family-style café in Port Waikato. I planted a small kitchen garden providing basic greens and flowers for the café. I used produce sourced from local people. I only purchased food that was in season and grown as locally as possible. I purchased meat and eggs from animals that were ethically raised. All food scraps were taken to a local farm and fed to animals or composted. I used recyclable or compostable packaging, cups, and utensils. I supported smaller companies making sustainable choices, such as producing juice with natural ingredients, bottled in recyclable glass, and produced by a family-owned and run business. All rubbish was sorted into landfill, recycling, and composting and discarded correctly. I put real thought into the impact the café as a commercial operation had on the environment.

This way of thinking and acting is still very important in my everyday life and in the role-modelling and teaching of these values to my children. We talk about the earth, personifying her as Papatūānuku. In this way I can talk about the impact of rubbish, waste, over-commercialisation, industrialism, and materialism, in the context of respect and concern for Papatūānuku. My children are at the stage where they understand the need for recycling and not littering. They will pick up other people's rubbish and put it in the bin. However, they do not yet understand the bigger picture behind over-commercialisation or why we may not buy that bright yellow plastic toy. This is something that I am learning to be more mindful of, demonstrating small decisions such as buying things in bulk to reduce packaging or making our own bread instead of buying it, so we don't create more plastic waste. Life becomes richer when making the connection with the reality that we are part of something bigger.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION: MY FRAMEWORK OF PRACTICE

From the age of seven, I was lucky enough to grow up on a large bush block, with the ngahere at my doorstep. Being surrounded by nature felt normal, and I was completely at ease within it. Nature became something I unconsciously relied on to recentre and recharge. Whether we were helping Mum in the garden or swimming in the river, we had no choice but to benefit from nature's presence and our interaction with it. The important role that this early exposure played in grounding me has only become clear through recent reflection.

When I left home and moved to the heart of Auckland city, I found myself living in a flat with no backyard and neighbours just a metre from the front door. I knew I didn't like living there, but it was a means to an end—I was studying, then working, and later continuing my studies before becoming a chef. My career path required me to remain in the city. Still, every chance I got, I would seek out nature—heading out for bush walks, finding waterfalls, discovering lakes, or going to the beach. I also began running. These times in nature allowed me to reconnect and reflect, and to recharge for another day. In some jobs I could only run once a week due to my hours, making it vital to walk to and from work to still get that time outside and reset. At the time, I didn't stop to ask *why* I needed these things. I just knew I did. Looking back, I can now see that these moments grounded me. They reminded me of home, connection, and belonging. In a world that was fast-paced, busy, and often lonely, nature gave me stillness and clarity. I believe it was my early interactions with the natural world that instilled in me the need to seek it out and use it as a source of well-being in adult life.

As a mother, I encourage my children to be involved and connected with nature. This behaviour may look like merely running outside barefoot, splashing in puddles, mudsliding down a hill at a park, but it also includes practices such as walking with my children around the garden when they are experiencing big feelings, to ground them and recentre them. We have a weekly 'outdoor day,' rain or shine: for one hour or all day, it is a priority to be outside in nature as a family.

Based on these personal experiences, alongside my new understanding of the deep connection between hauora and the natural world—and in light of the increasingly urban and digital environment today's young people are growing up in—I have come to understand the critical importance of reconnecting youth with nature. Learning about the natural world and our interdependence with it is essential to developing a balanced sense of hauora, one

that can sustain a child throughout life. When these connections are made, belonging, community, meaning, and purpose begin to take root. Children develop deep values that will guide them as they navigate life.

This is the essence of my Framework of Practice: to provide opportunities—through food and education—for people, especially children, to reconnect with nature in ways that foster and enhance holistic well-being.

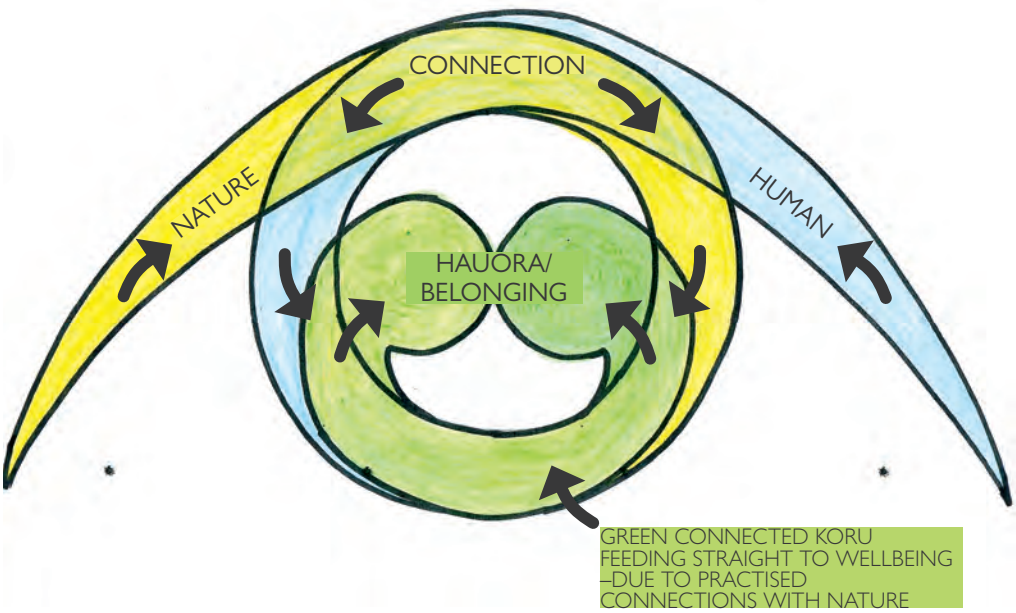

Figure 1. My Framework of Practice.

The koru on the left in Figure 1 represents nature; the koru on the right represents the human as an entity. As the two koru come together, they overlap and form two embracing circles. The outer circle represents all the interactions offered and experienced between the human and natural worlds—specifically, in my context, food and education. The inner circle encapsulates two further circles or nodes, the innermost growth of the koru. This circle represents personal hauora or well-being. It is continually fed by the outer interactions between humans and nature. The bottom of the outer circle (coloured green) houses another connection between human-nature interactions and well-being. I believe the earlier a person is living a life experiencing connections with nature, the more deep-seated and grounded this pathway becomes, and the easier it is to re establish well-being, as the connections have been practised and are familiar.

This diagram provides an overview of the concepts behind my Framework of Practice. What is most important in this context is the outer circle of interactions, incorporating values, beliefs, experiences, opportunities, and learnings that feed into a person's overall wellness. I believe that my aim of providing opportunities through food education for children to reconnect with nature will be best achieved through the public school system, rather than offering such opportunities to a select few. Through establishing gardens and creating meals, children will grow connections with Papatūānuku, with themselves, and with each other. This is what will bring hauora.

These kind of initiatives can be seen in New Zealand and around the world. Those based on food often embody the concept of "farm to table" or "garden to table," reflecting sustainable techniques of food cultivation and transport. Many chefs have realised the importance of children connecting with food and nature, and have instigated programmes to be implemented in schools. In America, Alice Waters was a trailblazer, starting up one of the first garden-to-table restaurants, and subsequently running the Edible Schoolyard Project (Edible Schoolyard Project, 2024). English chef Jamie Oliver started a kitchen garden project (Ministry of Food: Jamie Oliver, 2024). Stephanie Alexander, a chef in Australia, started her own kitchen garden programme (Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, 2024) which has greatly influenced the current Garden to Table programme in New Zealand.

The Garden to Table Trust was established in New Zealand in 2008 and has implemented their programme in over 300 schools. Their website describes their intention clearly:

> We support schools and kura throughout the motu to take the learning out of the classroom and into the māra kai (garden) and the kīhini (kitchen). Our schools teach thousands of Kiwi kids the knowledge and skills that have a transformative and lifelong impact on their hauora (well-being)—and on the world around them.
> (Garden to Table, 2023)

It is through involvement in these kinds of initiatives that I believe I can apply my Framework of Practice and begin to make a difference to the hauora of our young people.

COLLECTIVE ACTION: FINDING 'MY TRIBE'

Reflecting on my time at Sylvia's café, it is very apparent to me that I held strong values and adhered to them to the best of my ability. It is also very clear that in order to adhere to those values I had to be a trailblazer within the community. I feel that I was able to create space for community to grow (I still hear today about relationships that were formed from meeting at the café), and able to introduce customers to a different way of eating and trying new ingredients. However, this came at a cost to my personal well-being. As much as I facilitated community for others, I never really felt supported by people who shared my values.

I now find myself reflecting that I no longer want to be the leader standing at the front of a resistant crowd. Being a sole voice takes a lot of strength—strength that I would now rather direct towards my children or future generations. I now see the value in finding 'my tribe,' reaching out to like-minded people, and becoming part of a movement to use the momentum that already exists. I want to find my 'family' in order to create sustained change, because many voices are stronger than one.

At present, I am trying to facilitate a maramataka gardening workshop in our extended community, based on the Māori lunar calendar. In this way I am able to use my skills of leadership and action, but in a way that will attract only those of a like mind who are genuinely interested. At the same time, the children and I have been continuing our weekly bush walks. Doing what I value for my family, and sharing the experience, has attracted like-minded people. By pursuing these activities, I feel I am slowly building my community or whānau.

Similarly, in an education context, I believe that connections with Papatūānuku can be readily accessed through projects such as hands-on gardening directed by the lunar calendar, growing healthy food, learning to prepare and cook it, sharing that cooked kai with the community, and passing on the knowledge that has been acquired to others. It is through providing a space for these activities within education, with the underlying intention of achieving hauora through connection with the natural world, that our children will be able to flourish, having acquired some deep-seated values and trust in themselves and their place in the world.

On a small scale, I had been trying to implement similar projects in Sylvia's café, but quickly discovered that there was not enough of me to do everything. I had dreams of running gardening workshops, starting a community garden, having regular cooking classes, holding community preserving evenings, giving nutritional talks, and other

such activities. Within my limitations, I was able to offer simple cooking classes for children and adults. The classes emphasised the cooking of seasonal food from scratch, providing a space where people could feel welcomed and accepted and know they were going to eat real, wholesome food.

I have come to see that the real benefits of my explorations will unfold in my immediate future through teaching and in finding educational spaces that align with my values in order to explore how to embed a garden-to-table concept within a school curriculum. I want to be part of a movement of like-minded educators who will inspire and create together, creating a space for real long-lasting change. I look forward to helping children to connect with nature via food and education in order to promote and foster positive well-being.

CONCLUSION

This exploration of nature-based practice grounded in mātauranga Māori, personal reflection, and culinary experience has led me to a central conviction: reconnection with Papatūānuku is both a necessity and a gift. Through this process, I have come to see this relationship not as an abstract idea, but as a lived truth, one that holds the power to transform our individual and collective hauora. The reflective journey underpinning my Framework of Practice has been deeply personal and, at times, profoundly emotional. It has prompted me to re-evaluate the direction of my life, the influence of societal norms, and the way I raise my children. In doing so, I have arrived at a pivotal moment: the opportunity to realign my life with my core values, and to model a way of being that invites others to connect more deeply with the natural world.

My Framework of Practice is grounded in the values of sustainability, reciprocity, and connection. It recognises the vital relationship between people and the planet, and seeks to foster well-being through food, education, and everyday acts of connection. Whether through school garden projects, shared meals, or immersion in nature, I believe the seeds of reconnection can be sown in simple yet powerful ways. By embedding nature-based practices into our homes, classrooms, and communities, we can cultivate a generation who not only value the earth, but understand their role in caring for it.

AI statement
ChatGPT was used to assist with grammar and sentence structure and for final proofreading.

Sylvia Dwen is a Bachelor of Culinary Arts graduate and solo parent to three young children, based in Port Waikato. This revised piece, originally completed as part of her studies, became a transformative assignment that sparked a personal quest to engage and deepen people's connections with and in nature. Currently, Sylvia is exploring ways to incorporate sustainable, nature-based practices into her culinary work, aiming to create experiences that foster deeper connections with the environment.

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MISE EN PLACE FOR THE SOUL: A CULINARY FRAMEWORK FOR WELL-BEING

Sarj Hada

> Cooking is a *craft*, I like to think, and a good cook is a craftsman—*not* an artist. There's nothing wrong with that: The great cathedrals of Europe were built by craftsmen—though not designed by them. Practicing your craft in an expert fashion is noble, honorable, and satisfying.
>
> Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Born in Kathmandu, Nepal, as a member of the Newar tribe, I am reminded of the richness of my cultural heritage. The Newar tribe is one of the four dominant tribes that, to me, represent Nepal. The Newar people of Nepal excel in various crafts: architecture, building, sculpting, painting, music, poetry, writing, and more (Manandhar, 2018). Craftwork forms our meaning and purpose within the Newar community and culture.

I have been in the hospitality industry for 21 years now, starting at the age of 19 as a kitchen hand. It was only recently that I began to view my work as a craft, as Anthony Bourdain expresses in the epigraph. Previously, it was just a job for me.

One of the significant lessons that I learned from my experience working in restaurants is that kitchens do not discriminate based on a person's past or country of origin, as long as that person follows the group's rules and rituals. In my case, the kitchen felt like a perfect home away from home, where I could socialise, earn a living, and feel welcomed and part of the community. As eloquently stated by Bourdain (2000), the restaurant "underbelly" may seem dark to some, but to those who have lived and breathed it, it offers a way of life that is familiar and comforting.

For many years early in my career, I completely immersed myself within the restaurant kitchen; so much so that it became my family and my life. However, I eventually realised that this confined life was unsustainable. I was burning the candle at both ends and had not been back to Kathmandu in seven-and-a-half years since leaving at the age of 19. I had solely focused on work and socialising with colleagues, at the expense of my roots. I knew something had to change, and that I needed to make more time for myself, my girlfriend, and my family back home. I needed to reconnect with my roots and take time for rest, relaxation, and self-care.

Points raised by chef Ben Shewry recently made me realise the importance of freeing oneself from the yoke of work. After watching Shewry on the *Chef's Table* documentary in an episode about his journey with Attica, I was inspired by his perspective on culinary craftwork. His stance on work-life balance and sustainability left a lasting impression on me. In particular, Shewry's comments about the reasons for developing a four-day working week for his staff at his restaurant resonated with me:

> I'm 40, I've averaged 75 hours per week in kitchens since the age of 14. I've already worked roughly the same number of hours as a person averaging 40 hours per week throughout their career to retirement age. So no, I don't feel 'amazing'. I feel like I'm 65! (Shewry, as quoted in Valmorbida, 2017)

Immersing yourself solely in your work or craft can be destructive. From another recent documentary about Chef Sean Brock, I learnt how he had worked himself to the point of total exhaustion and almost died. Brock, who was 39 at the time, attributed his extreme work habit to one key incident: he had worked for 10 months straight to address a negative review that their restaurant had received. For Brock it took coming close to death to realise that he had to change his entire way of life and how he approached work (Kinsman, 2020).

Chef Magnus Nilsson of Sweden is another advocate for chefs trying to achieve a balance between work and life. Regrettably, Nilsson's attempt to create a sustainable lifestyle for himself while remaining in his career never fully succeeded. In 2019, Nilsson announced he would be shutting his restaurant Fäviken as he still had not achieved balance in his life. After the restaurant's closure, Nilsson was hoping to spend more time with family, fishing, gardening and getting fit, "both physically and mentally" (Street, 2019).

It has been amazing to hear that some of the industry leaders are quite openly talking about the work-life balance issues within the industry and driving the changes required. Shewry, Brock, and Nilsson's views on life and culinary work resonate with my own beliefs. Seeing the bigger picture and learning to balance work and life is important. The failure to reach this balance presents the risk that eventually something in your life will topple: your family, your physical and mental well-being, your creative potential or, worst of all; all of it. Unfortunately, mental breakdown and suicide have become common among professionals within our industry, including a number of well-known Australian chefs in recent times (Harris, 2017).

HOLISTIC BALANCE FOR CULINARY CRAFTWORKERS

As we navigate through the maze of responsibilities and challenges life presents, the concept of holistic well-being emerges as a guiding light, offering a transformative approach to a fulfilling and purpose-driven life.

As Newar, we practice both Hinduism and Buddhism. Growing up in Kathmandu and practicing both religions hand in hand, I have only recently come to realise that I have been following a holistic well-being approach which is deeply rooted in our Newari culture. According to Mahattanadull (2020, p. 111), Buddhist people believe that "the holistic well-beings characterise the innate body, social moral, calm mind, and the awakening wisdom, respectively. They are the fourfold outcome of the holistic well-beings." For me, this holistic well-being or integral well-being is what Purcell (2021, para. 2) meant when commenting that "Buddhism would have us consider another balancing problem, one that might be even more fundamental: the being-doing balance." Such reflection enables me to embrace the beauty of balance and seek harmony within.

MY FRAMEWORK OF PRACTICE

I have chosen to adapt a Newar temple to express my framework of practice as a culinary professional which includes 11 years in the industry and 10 years as a culinary educator. As I reflect on my past, I am reminded of the richness of my cultural heritage as a member of the Newar tribe. Growing up, I was constantly surrounded by our vibrant festivals, which we celebrated with our families, our community, and as a whole nation.

"In Newar culture," Parish says, "a moral god animates the mind, so the efforts of individuals to monitor their inner life often draw on a sense of presence of a divine agency" (1991, p. 316). Within this framework there are three key areas. These areas are the temple foundation, which represents my craft; the main temple room, which represents my family and community, and the ascending towers. These four towers represent my physical/mental well-being; spirituality; the environment/sustainability, and self-actualisation and creativity.

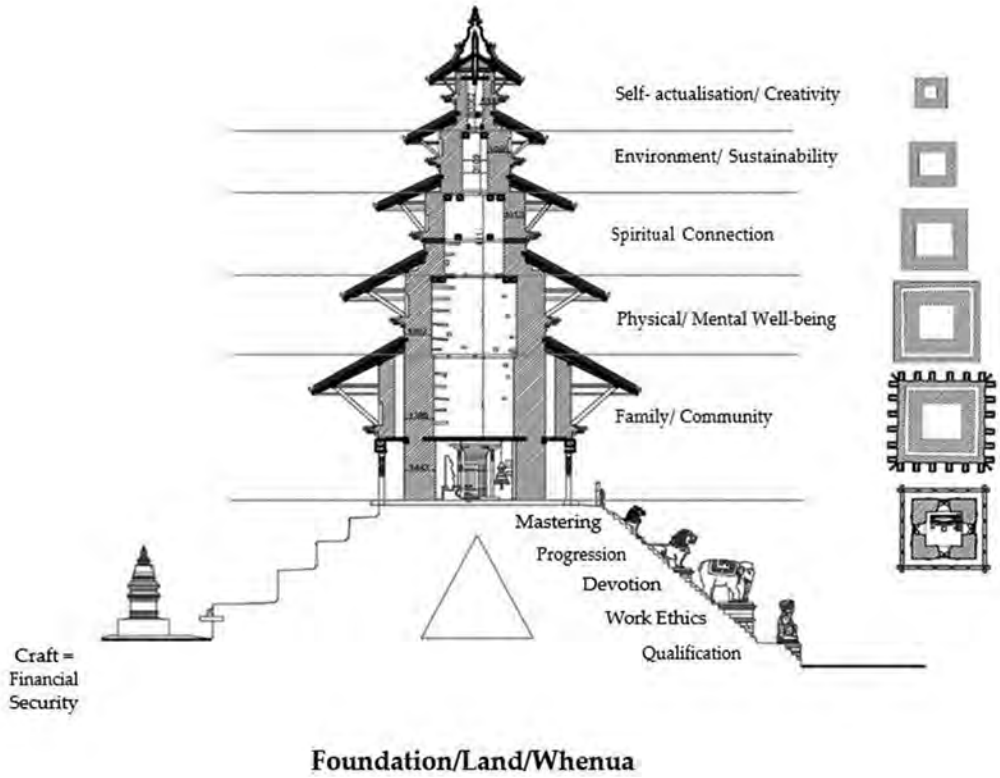

Figure 1. Sarj Hada, Framework of Practice Model (adapted from Shilpakar et al., 2021).

The image above is a blueprint of one of the most important temples for the Hada people of the Bhaktapur Clan, who are all part of the Newar tribe. The Nyatapola Temple is a five-storey pagoda located in Bhaktapur, Nepal. The temple was erected by Nepali King Bhupatindra Malla during a five-month period from late 1701 to 1702. It is the temple of Siddha Laxmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity. Although the temple has suffered numerous earthquakes throughout the centuries, it remains standing strong today.

The temple's entrance features five plinths on each step of the foundation pyramid, each guarded by a pair of stone guardians. Each pair is said to be ten times stronger than the one below them. At the bottom are two Rajput wrestlers named Jai and Pratap, said to be ten times stronger than normal men. Above them are giant statues of two elephants, and further up are the statues of two Singhas, mythical big cats found in traditions throughout South and Southeast Asia. Above the cats are the statues of two Sārdūlas, griffin-like creatures from local Newari mythology. On the topmost plinths are the Tantric deities, Simhanī and Vyāghranī, the lioness and tigress deities who are the strongest of all the guardians (Bhaktapur, n.d.).

Upon reflecting on what the temple foundation means to me, I have come to realise that it stands for professional craft. Metaphorically, the bottom of the pyramid represents the working life, which, for me, is the craft of cooking. While I may not perceive myself as an artist in cooking, I am a competitive craftsman to some degree. Over the years, I have learned to hone my craft, which has helped me establish a strong foundation and financial security, enabling me to build my metaphorical temple upon it. The pyramid's different foundation tiers, guarded by strong deities, represent the values and experiences of my 21-year career: qualifications and apprenticeship; a good work ethic; devotion; progression, and mastery of my craft.

My take on the tiers is simple. The first one is: get qualified, no matter what your age. Secondly, practice a good work ethic and learn soft skills, even something so simple as turning up on time with a positive attitude. Develop a devotion to or passion for the art of cooking. Progression, for me, means understanding one's craft deeply. Finally, mastery is the confidence to expand and explore different routes with your team members, much as a seasoned mountain climber would do.

Reaching the top tier is not the finish line. If one chooses, one can continue building upwards. In my case, the main body of the temple represents a connection with family and community, and the second tier represents looking after your well-being, followed by finding a spiritual connection if necessary. For me, this last step involved reconnecting with my ancestry and appreciating my new home, and being proud of both. Being connected to my environment means spending time outside in nature; and I am fortunate enough to live in Mamaku, where nature surrounds us in abundance. My self-actualisation tier involves immersing myself in visual arts after work and domestic chores. I began painting again in Sydney in 2005. Growing up in Kathmandu, surrounded by various art forms, it felt natural for me to step away from my life in the kitchen and pick up the paintbrush to decompress. Art has brought me immense joy and enriched my life and continues to do so. My paintings have since been exhibited in multiple galleries across Australia and Aotearoa.

Getting back to craft again and describing it with just these five values and the body of the temple is not that easy. Within these values lie numerous sub-values. I often tell our culinary students that cooking is a valuable skill for life, even if they do not plan to work in the industry or eventually decide to leave it. It can help them take care of themselves and their families by knowing how to utilise commodities, maintain balanced nutrition, and save money. As Michael Rhulman (2020) attests, cooking is a fundamental element of human survival, and is a skill that can be passed on to others as a social tool to bring families and communities together. The kitchen should be a place of nurture and balance, where one wants to be, not a place where we are forced to work extreme hours. We should not feel guilty for taking time off to work on the main body of the temple and the upper tiers of the temple as represented in the framework of practice model.

As illustrated in this reflection, many leading chefs are challenging the traditions of the past and reimagining how we work in kitchens. Taking inspiration from Ben Shewry, Sean Brock, and Magnus Nilsson, along with my own experiences, I have learned to appreciate the craft of cooking while maintaining a balance in my life. I now understand that life extends beyond work, and prioritise my physical and emotional well-being to continue building upon the foundation I have created. The pyramid's foundation, where we practice our craft, needs to be a sustainable environment which contributes to holistic well-being.

APPLICATION OF MY FRAMEWORK IN THE TEACHING SPACE

My core Newar values, centred on the interconnected well-being of people and the environment, have always guided my career, especially as a culinary educator. My journey through teaching has not been smooth sailing; I have faced many challenges and continue to. The world of academia and the trials our learners face, both in and out of the classroom, seem to change every year. I still remember my first day teaching Level 3 STP Secondary-Tertiary Programmes students in Ōtara and watching the movie *Dangerous Minds* that evening to prepare for the next day. My time in commercial kitchens, contrasted by the positive experiences of later years in Australia, really highlighted the need for a more balanced professional existence. That is a philosophy I now integrate into my teaching in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

A 2020 study at the University of Queensland (Robinson & Bremmer, 2020), which involved interviews with 53 chefs (39 with teaching experience) and 148 culinary students, directly explored the question of whether culinary educators act as agents in the socialisation of toxic kitchen cultures. The findings of this research were concerning, highlighting a clear mirroring of aggressive and negative industry practices within culinary education itself. This

exposure to toxic behaviours in what should be a safe and supportive learning environment highlights the critical need for educators to actively disrupt this cycle.

As an instructor, while large-scale industry reform is complex, my direct influence comes from first being aware of these harmful behaviours, then demonstrating positive conduct, and actively combating discrimination. My pedagogical journey over the past ten years has been about moving away from negative industry traditions to create a supportive space for the holistic growth of my learners, directly addressing the issues highlighted by studies like the one by Robinson and Bremmer (2020), from the University of Queensland. Understanding how vulnerable newcomers are, and acknowledging research showing that harmful industry norms often continue in educational settings (Lee et al., 2018; Robinson & Bremmer, 2020), my main goal is to create a fundamentally different learning environment. Creating such an environment involves a deliberate focus on work-life balance and fostering respectful dialogue. Embracing manaakitanga (hospitality), kotahitanga (unity) and whanaungatanga (relationship), my classroom celebrates diversity, encourages collaboration, and prioritises strong interpersonal connections.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND WHAT COMES NEXT

Over the last few years, I have consciously strayed from traditional teaching norms, embracing my own style and recognising my distinct approach compared to those of many peers. In my classroom, I emphasise the importance of interests beyond the kitchen and a healthy work-life balance, highlighting the unsustainability of a life solely focused on work and the challenges of transitioning out of a career without supportive external connections. I have also recognised the vulnerability of newcomers to potentially unhealthy industry socialisation. While the culinary industry faces long-term sustainability challenges, I believe that we as culinary educators can play a role, however small, in fostering positive change.

Extensive, compelling statistics reveal significant challenges within the hospitality industry: concerning suicide rates in Australia (Burnett et al., 2022), high rates of abuse in New Zealand workplaces (Williamson et al., 2022), and a link between bullying and negative outcomes (O'Driscoll, 2012), all stemming from a historical reliance on abusive motivational tactics (Hoel & Einarsen, 2003).

As a culinary educator, I see it as my crucial responsibility to disrupt this cycle. By consciously modelling positive behaviours and cultivating a learning environment built on respect, empathy, and well-being, I aim to equip future culinary professionals with the resilience and ethical compass needed to adopt and drive positive change. Despite the profession's systemic issues of unsustainable hours and exploitative practices, education has the transformative potential to be a "circuit breaker" to halt the perpetuation of harmful cultures. My ultimate goal is to empower my students not only to achieve technical mastery but also to become advocates for a more humane and sustainable future for the culinary world.

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CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY INTERNATIONAL TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY STUDENTS IN LARGE CLASSES

Yunzhen Zhang, Sandra Prebble, Michael Rodriguez, Lauren Moyes, Roger Martin and Sarj Hada

INTRODUCTION

Active marketing, greater globalisation, and the increasing mobility of students have led to changes in both the demography and size of tertiary classes worldwide (Grawe, 2021; Maringe & Sing, 2014). According to data released by Education New Zealand, polytechnics have seen a rebound in international student numbers since 2023 (Education New Zealand Manapou ki te Ao, 2024). At Toi-Ohomai Institute of Technology (hereafter, Toi-Ohomai), there has been a significant increase in student numbers on the Bachelor of Applied Hospitality and Tourism Management (hereafter, BAHTM), especially from the international markets of India and Nepal. The current classes are predominantly international in composition. This means that for the majority of students, English is a second language and most newly arrived students are unfamiliar with the New Zealand style of teaching and assessments. Given that the BAHTM degree seeks to provide students with 'hands-on' experience of the local tourism and hospitality community with assessments that link to 'real-life' scenarios, the teaching team is faced with the task of delivering an applied programme, meeting industry needs, and seeking positive student learning outcomes.

Although large classes with over 40 students are not unusual in a university setting, it has been observed that students attending a technical institute often bring with them multiple learning challenges (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). An increase in class size has been argued to lead to less effective teaching and learning outcomes (Nyagope, 2023; Xu & Harfitt, 2018). As educators we aim to achieve fairness and inclusion. We want to witness our students grow and be successful. This research is based on the delivery of the 2024 BAHTM papers in a lecture style with between 50 and 100 students. Its purpose is to identify and understand the challenges faced by international students in large-class learning environments. In doing so, we aim to help tutorial staff and management in technical institutes to understand these challenges while enabling them to facilitate and deliver more effectively on similar kinds of applied programmes.

METHODOLOGY

Our research followed an interpretivism paradigm focusing on understanding the meaning-making processes and experiences of individuals within the context of tourism education (Okamoto, 2021). The project employed a qualitative approach to explore international students' learning experiences. Positioning this research project as exploratory, we used semi-structured interviews to capture students' thoughts and perspectives through open-ended questions. This article addresses the research question: What challenges did the students face in large-class learning environments? Ethics approval for this research has been obtained from the Toi-Ohomai Ethics Committee.

To recruit participants, we distributed research information sheets to our Level 5 and Level 6 students who had been in both large classes (over 40 students) and small classes (fewer than 40 students). Fourteen international students expressed interest and signed the research consent form to participate. The face-to-face interviews were conducted by a tutor who had had recently joined the programme. They had not taught or interacted with the students, which, to some extent, overcame the power imbalance that may arise from a student being interviewed by tutor they know. The average duration of each interview was about 30 minutes. After transcribing the interviews verbatim, the research team adopted Richards and Hemphill's (2018) six-step guide to collaborative qualitative data analysis. Using such a method of analysis, every transcript was coded and analysed independently by two members of the research team, followed by discussions to reach consensus. In doing so, the trustworthiness of research findings was enhanced through peer discussion and researcher data triangulation.

FINDINGS

Fourteen international students participated in this research, with a population comprising of five females and nine males, across Level 5 and Level 6 papers. The qualitative data collected was collaboratively analysed.

Table 1 highlights the major difficulties experienced by international students studying in large classes. Four significant themes have been identified with corresponding sub-themes. It was found that interruptions and distractions caused by certain students in class were a considerable challenge. They impacted the tutor's rhythm of delivering the lecture or diverted some students' attention away from the lesson.

Additionally, teaching and assessment practices were also affected by class size. This meant the tutor's ability to accommodate various students' needs, cultivate a positive class learning environment, and ensure students met the learning outcomes was compromised.

Another challenge that students expressed was related to the provision of feedback, whether this referred to the method tutors adopted to provide feedback, or the involvement of multiple tutors in the delivery of the feedback. From the student perspective, it was apparent more individualised one-on-one feedback with the tutor who delivers the lectures and marks the assessments was desired. The above three challenges were amplified because English was the students' second language and they were new to New Zealand's curriculum style.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research is to understand the specific challenges that our international students have faced in the large-class learning environment. As the findings demonstrate, large-class environments bring a series of challenges for both international students and tutors to tackle during the learning journey. With the study being contextualised within our own institute, the main strength of this research is that it enables us to examine and review our own pedagogical practices based on the student voice (Murtagh, 2012). Moreover, it also allows us to reflect on our teaching practices, identify implications for the future, and thus make improvements to our programmes to meet the needs of our current and future students.

To enhance international students' learning experiences, three approaches have been identified with specific procedures to consider for the years ahead, and which may also be applied to other international student-dominated programmes in other institutions.

Pre-programme preparation

The research findings spotlight the importance of preparing international students for this applied bachelor's programme. By implication, this means a need to introduce information and skills in the early papers that will form the basis of all subsequent papers. At present, one springboard course on professionalism and core skills is

THEMES	DEFINITIONS	SUBTHEMES	EXAMPLES FROM PARTICIPANTS
Interruptions and distractions in class	Various sources that impact the effective delivery of lessons or divert students' attention away from the lesson	•Murmuring and whispering; •Side conversations; •Late arrivals; •Digital device use.	"… hard to hear what the teachers are saying in big class because of lots of talking and mumbling from other students." (P4) "… other students are disruptive – talking during class and arriving late – difficult to hear tutor and [I] miss information." (P14) "As the majority of students are International, they talk in their own language during the class, they talk a lot, they disrespect the teacher and each other. They have no discipline." (P8) "There are many, like more than 30 percent of the class, getting distracted by their phones, like me too, sometimes." (P10)
Impacted teaching and assessment practices	Changes occurred to approaches to class teaching, student engagement, and assessment in large-class environments	•Repetitive delivery of information; •Time spent on class management; •Reduced attention to each student; •Less interactive in class activities; •Group-based assessment.	"In larger classes there is not much interaction between the student and the tutor because in the larger classes the students don't interact as much." (P1) "Big classes [are] frustrating because the tutor spends a lot of time trying to make people stop talking or talking about AI and repeating over and over again … Students pay a lot of money for the course and don't want to spend the limited time waiting …" (P4) "Having to do group work with students who do not contribute to the assessment." (P6) "… group assessments were challenging because of the different nationalities and the same effort was not made by all." (P13)
Tutor-student feedback support	Approaches and practices used to support students and provide feedback on assessments	•Time slots allocated to one-on-one feedback; •Multiple support tutors for workshops on assessments.	"… have to wait for feedback during workshops because there are a lot of students in [a] big class." (P5) "Different tutors come to the same paper to give feedback but may have different perspectives ..." (P11) "Tutor feedback makes it easier for the students to work on the assignments as they [course tutors and learning facilitators'] view[s] differ … We need to utilise the facilitators when the tutors are busy." (P7)
New Zealand-based student challenges	Language barriers, cultural considerations, and academic expectations and requirements	•Second language; •Assessment-based courses; •Academic requirements; •Less engagement with course materials such as Moodle, library databases, and class activities; •Limited student diversity.	"In the beginning, I couldn't understand like English so much … I also failed two of my courses in first semester just because I was lacking [proficiency] in English language. And also the forms of assignment that we submit in here are very different from what we used to do back in India." (P3) "Learning and assessment here are very different. It takes time to get used to NZ academic requirements." (P14) "Don't feel like I am respected because I am not Indian or Nepalese and struggle to communicate with them [other students]." (P4) "Starting the course in the second semester is tough because a lot of content has been missed, due to being taught in the first semester." (P6) "… researching is a new concept to many of us from Nepal, so we don't really know what that means and how to do it." (P9)

Table 1. Challenges faced by international tourism and hospitality students in large classes.

delivered concurrently, and the students struggle to learn these essential skills in a large classroom environment. One possible way forward is to provide and elaborate all relevant and requisite information in a student orientation, particularly for a predominantly international cohort. One key aspect of orientation is academic preparedness for independent learning in tertiary education (Murtagh, 2012) and setting clear expectations around what students can expect in terms of student feedback. Building on Wright and Schartner's (2013) study on international students' interactional engagement, we argue that such an orientation also provides international students with opportunities for social interactions which facilitate language proficiency and sociocultural adaption. As such, orientation should be thoughtfully designed to ensure that international students can develop a comprehensive understanding of their learning journey and gain academic preparedness, in a preferably smaller class setting.

Classroom management

To resolve the challenges faced in the large class environment, students have expressed the need to split big classes and create a smaller learning space. Such a practice can help reduce the tensions on tutors when interacting with students and facilitate student engagement.

As an important part of classroom management, clear parameters and expectations around attendance and attentiveness should be elaborated to international students. We also recommend a set of holistic and consistent team practices for student management, ensuring that all classes adhere to the same classroom management strategies. This approach could, over time, foster a positive and productive classroom climate and improve student productivity.

Assessment support and feedback

Given the fact that completing the BAHTM requires passing assessment and achieving all the learning outcomes, one of the major needs for international students is to access and gain tutors' guidance and feedback on their assessments. As with other studies (for example, Gray et al., 2022), this research also recognises the potential for feedback to enhance students' performance on tasks and improve their learning. However, providing one-to-one feedback outside the classroom has proven impractical for large classes. One pedagogical practice that has been implemented by some of our tutors, and which has been demonstrated to be effective, is incorporating workshop or feedback sessions as part of the class lesson. Such sessions with verbal face-to-face feedback centre on the student's needs (Gray et al., 2022; Olave-Encina et al., 2020) and encourage them to come with drafts or work that has been completed. By doing so, students can have close interactions with the tutor (Olave-Encina et al., 2020) and receive specific advice on the assessment.

However, as mentioned earlier, it is also important to manage students' expectations of feedback prior to the course beginning. We agree with Gray et al. (2022) that the alignment of expectations between students and tutors requires a shared responsibility, which plays a significant part in achieving success together. As such, making sure students have accurate expectations of assessment support, and providing tutors' verbal face-to-face feedback via class workshops and other channels, can enable them to better understand their progress, identify areas for improvement, and engage more effectively in their learning process.

Limitations

Considering the fact that this research is exploratory in nature, and contextualised within Toi-Ohomai, the findings cannot be specifically applied to other polytechnics or tertiary education providers. Furthermore, the sample included only undergraduate students from Asian countries who were studying overseas for the first time and whose first language was not English. Thus, the findings are not generalisable to all international tourism and hospitality students. However, this study offers valuable insights into the learning experiences and challenges faced by this specific group. Future research using a similar approach would be welcome, and could scrutinise various factors influencing student learning journeys across different demographics, institutions, and regions.

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CRAFTING CULINARY IDENTITY: A FRAMEWORK OF PRACTICE ROOTED IN REFLECTION AND GROWTH

Will Mordido

INTRODUCTION

As a Kiwi-Filipino chef with a background spanning competitions, industry, and educational settings, my practice has been shaped by a diverse range of experiences, mentors, and environments. My recent studies on the Bachelor of Culinary Arts have provided me with an opportunity to reflect on these influences, leading me to develop a professional Framework of Practice (FoP)—a conceptual model that captures the values, principles, and strategies guiding my approach to the culinary arts. This reflective journey has not only helped me to articulate my professional identity but has also provided a structure for ongoing reflection, growth, and leadership within the field.

This paper presents my own evolving FoP, rooted in the intersections of tradition and innovation. It explores how my journey through various culinary roles has led me to identify four core values that consistently underpin my work: the pursuit of mastery, constant learning, creativity driven by curiosity, and a commitment to structure. By examining the development of these values and their application within my professional context, I aim to offer insight into how personal and professional experiences converge to shape a meaningful and intentional culinary practice. In sharing my own Framework of Practice, I hope to contribute to broader conversations about culinary design processes.

MY FRAMEWORK OF PRACTICE

I have chosen a culinary 'tree' model to illustrate the structure of my Framework of Practice.

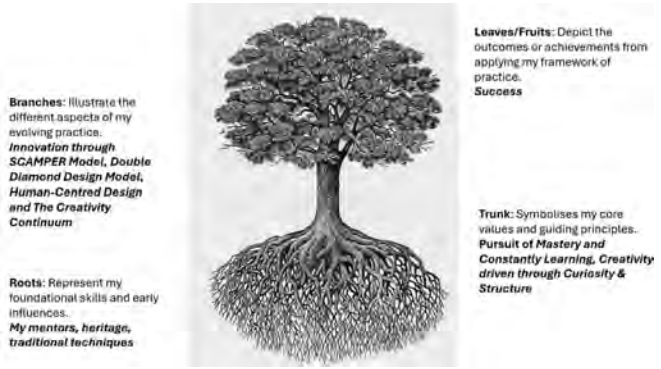

Figure 1. My Culinary Framework of Practice.

Roots: Foundations and early influences

Just as a tree relies on its roots for growth and nourishment, my culinary practice is deeply anchored in the foundations laid by my heritage, experiences, and mentors. These roots provide stability and sustenance, shaping the core of who I am as a chef and guiding my professional journey.

In my early years of creating dishes, drawing inspiration from my Filipino heritage was pivotal. I come from a background where food was central to daily life—flavours, rituals, and techniques were passed down informally through generations. This heritage continues to shape who I am as a chef. Respecting tradition and mastering techniques were further emphasised by one of my early mentors, Peter Ray, during my apprenticeship. Peter ingrained in me the importance of perfecting the basics. Under his guidance, I learned a wide range of traditional (French) techniques. Mastering skills such as seasoning and classic cooking techniques like clarifying, emulsifying, and timings is crucial to applying them successfully in new ways. Peter believed that mastering fundamentals was crucial before exploring new territories.

The creative component of my practice was influenced by my time working as an Assistant Head Chef, following my apprenticeship. During this phase of my career, I was encouraged to constantly push the envelope with dishes, balancing this innovation with a deep respect for the dishes' origins. I also respected their ability to nurture, a value I inherited from my mother. This new creative lens allowed me to re-imagine traditional recipes, transforming them through innovative techniques to present them anew. This balanced approach to dish design and innovation laid the foundations for my practice, ultimately leading to the creation of my own pop-up restaurant—Buko—which embodies my food philosophy of reimagining Filipino cuisine through the application of cutting-edge culinary techniques.

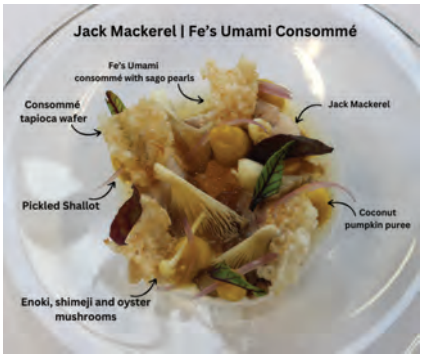

Figure 2: This is a dish that embodies the duality of my early influences. Here, I have taken my mother's traditional version of the dish, and transformed it through a contemporary, creative lens.

With these strong roots in place, my culinary practice could grow and evolve, leading to the development of the core principles that form the 'trunk' of my Framework of Practice. The trunk represents the sturdy, central values that support and connect all aspects of my professional journey, enabling me to branch out into new areas while remaining grounded in my foundational beliefs.

Trunk: Core values and guiding principles

The trunk of a tree channels nourishment from the roots and provides stability. Similarly, the core principles of my culinary practice serve as the central support system that sustains and strengthens my professional journey. These principles are deeply rooted in my foundational experiences and have evolved to become the guiding forces behind my approach to the culinary arts.

Pursuit of mastery and constant learning

My parents disapproved of my career choice as a chef. They had expected me to pursue a more academic path, influenced by their own backgrounds, which included periods of financial struggle, and their desire to provide their children with more financially stable career options than they had enjoyed. However, being naturally competitive, I was determined to prove them wrong and pursued my passion for cooking anyway. My culinary achievements and the financial viability of my career exceeded my parents' expectations. As I progressed in the industry, my journey evolved into a continuous process of mastering everything I put my mind to and constantly learning. This commitment to excellence ensures that my work consistently meets the highest standards of quality.

As my career progressed and I took on more challenging projects, my pursuit of mastery remained strong. A good example of this is my recent involvement with the Bocuse d'Or, a biennial world chef championship named after Paul Bocuse. While innovation and presentation are highly respected in the competition, mastery of the basics—good seasoning, correct execution of techniques, and clean and precise cooking practices—is what ultimately wins the judges over. I paid homage to Peter's teachings by ensuring that the fundamentals were well covered in all aspects of the competition.

In general terms, deliberate practice plays a key role in the pursuit of mastery in my Framework of Practice. Deliberate practice is a focused and purposeful approach to skill development, first theorised by psychologist Anders Ericsson in 1993. His work emphasises that expertise is achieved not merely through experience, but through structured and intentional practice designed to improve performance (Ericsson et al., 1993). For me, this process begins with learning in depth about a skill or an outcome I want to achieve, and setting out practical, systematic and structured steps to get there. This is then followed by repetition, getting every aspect of the dish or a concept right and evaluating at each step, seeking where improvements can be implemented. Irrespective of an individual's internalised desire for perfection, I believe that 'perfectionism,' especially in a culinary context, simply doesn't exist. There are always areas to improve, tweaks to make, or someone's palette that you can never satisfy. However, the desire to inch closer and closer to 'perfection' forms part of this pursuit of mastery and being in a constant state of learning to achieve it. Reflecting on my career, I place great importance on this aspect of my practice as it constitutes the integrity of a chef, instilled in me by my mentors. The fact that I have gone through the process of getting every aspect right, or at the very least trying to do so, gives me the satisfaction that I have given each task the thought and care it deserves and given myself justice by mastering this craft.

Creativity driven by curiosity

Creativity, driven by my naturally curious nature, guides me to continually explore and innovate within the culinary landscape. Influenced by the mentorship I received when working as an Assistant Head Chef, this principle encourages me to push boundaries while respecting the integrity of traditional dishes. This also takes me back to some foundational influences: to my childhood days as that young 'chef,' wanting to know what my mother was doing in the kitchen, and to my time as a young up-and-coming chef, experimenting with different techniques and ingredients as I geared up for culinary competitions.

Spanish chef Ferran Adrià, renowned for his innovative approach at elBulli, emphasises the call for creativity in haute cuisine: "There's always been art in haute cuisine. What's happening now is that there is a demand for the art to be surprising, to have a greater design factor" (Lubow, 2003). Adrià's commitment to continuous innovation challenges culinary conventions and inspires me to re-imagine and transform classic recipes into contemporary masterpieces. This approach was evident in my creations at the Bocuse d'Or, where traditional flavours were re-imagined through innovative techniques, with creativity reinforced through the bespoke vessels the dishes were held in. In this way, I tried to echo Adrià's influence on modern gastronomy: "It is a movement in Spain. It is not only me. In a culture with a very strong traditional gastronomy, there is a cuisine for the first time with new techniques and concepts. It is a new nouvelle cuisine," Adrià affirms (Lubow, 2003). Adrià's ability to integrate tradition with innovation resonates deeply with my own culinary philosophy.

Through my research, I also began diving deeper into a chef I had looked up to since I was an apprentice. American chef and restaurateur Grantz Achatz has a very interesting approach to creativity, much of which still resonates with me today. Achatz describes his process as beginning

> somewhere in the back of my mind: what ingredient, what manipulation, and how many permutations. The equation becomes more complicated, and usually takes a few wrong turns, before we find the answer. But it all boils down to the same logical process that can often only be identified in hindsight.
> (Achatz & Kokonas, 2008, as cited in Kudrowitz et al., 2014)

In my creative practice, I ask myself similar questions—what can I do with this ingredient that is different? How many technical or even textural manipulations can I make to make something 'new'?

As my understanding of my creative practice has evolved, I have come to understand what differentiates my practice from some of the culinary greats I look up to and their approaches to creativity. Chefs such as Ferran Adrià, Rene Redzepi, and Grant Achatz have made names for themselves because of their highly original, innovative approaches to creativity. The differences in our approaches can be explained in the context of the creativity continuum (Figure 3).

Jablokow's paper "Thinking About Thinking: Problem Solving Style in the Engineering Classroom" explores the influence of cognitive styles on problem-solving, highlighting Kirton's Adaption-Innovation (AI) Theory (Jablokow, 2000). This theory suggests that while everyone is creative, individuals differ in their problem-solving approaches, ranging from adaptive, which favours structured and efficient solutions, to innovative, which embraces unstructured and unconventional methods that challenge the status quo.

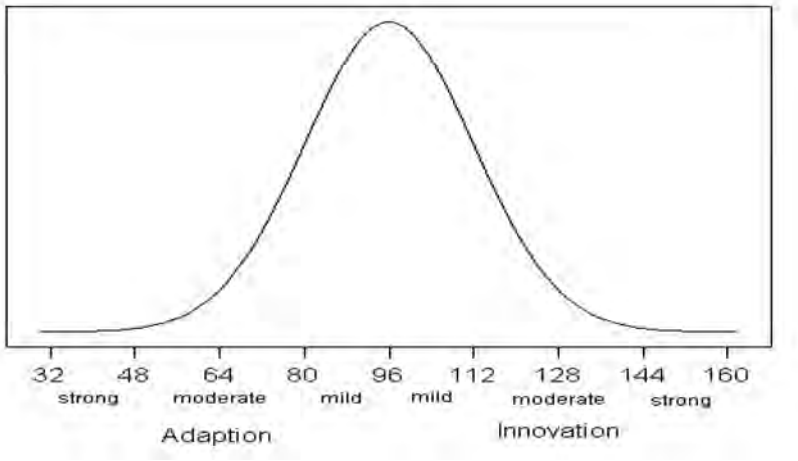

Figure 3. The Creativity Continuum as measured by the Kirton Adaptation-Innovation Inventory, a test to score problem-solving styles (Jablokow, 2000).

The creativity continuum illustrates adaption at one end and innovation at the other. While the chefs I look up to sit near the higher end of innovation, creating novel concepts and approaches, I would place myself somewhere in the middle. This is evident in my work where I favour original concepts, flavour combinations, and techniques, reimagining, reinterpreting, and adapting them to create something that is uniquely my own. I place great importance on the need for structure, setting me apart from these chefs who thrive outside the confines of limitations, rules or set criteria, or choose to question or ignore them. In contrast, I flourish in an environment where clear guidelines and structure are in place. This is where I find my creativity.

An important tool that allows me to create new dishes by adapting and re-imagining existing concepts, techniques and combinations is the SCAMPER model, theorised by Bob Eberle in 1972. SCAMPER is an acronym that stands for Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify/Magnify, Put to other use, Eliminate/Minify, and Reverse/Rearrange. All these elements are about making incremental changes to known entities to produce something novel (Kudrowitz et al., 2014).

In a broad sense, I will adapt existing concepts and use elements of the SCAMPER model, making relevant tweaks to create something new. Figure 4 shows an example from the Bocuse d'Or competition, where I used a range of SCAMPER tools to re-imagine and push the boundaries of what a tartlet can be.

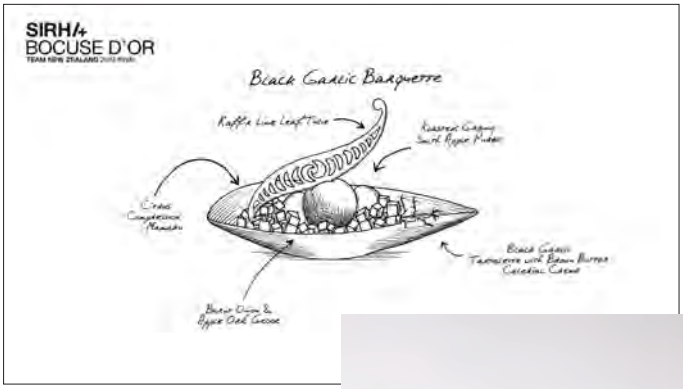

Figure 4. "Tartlet" entered by the author for the Bocuse d'Or competition.

Substitute: Instead of the usual cucumber, I used mamaku, adding a distinctive New Zealand touch. This substitution not only introduced a local ingredient, but also redefined the tartlet's flavour profile and texture.

Combine: I blended traditional flavours like apple, celeriac, onion, and black garlic in innovative ways. This combination enhanced the dish's complexity and depth, creating an intriguing culinary experience.

Adapt: I adapted the tartlet concept by experimenting with different shapes and textures. By incorporating 3D printing technology, I transformed the traditional tartlet into a new form that challenges conventional presentations.

Modify: My use of 3D printing represented a significant modification in the presentation of the dish. It was a departure from using standard plates, creating a novel canvas for showcasing the tartlet that reflected a more modern and creative approach.

Put to another use: The 3D printing technology, typically used for applications that do not include food, was repurposed here to craft an entirely new kind of tartlet. This new use of technology pushed the boundaries of culinary presentation.

Eliminate: By moving away from traditional tartlet designs and conventional ingredients, I eliminated the expected and introduced a fresh perspective. This elimination of standard practices opened up new possibilities for how dishes can be conceived and enjoyed.

Reverse: I reversed the traditional role of a tartlet by re-imagining its form and function. Instead of a simple, conventional tartlet, this dish embodies cutting-edge innovation that challenges and expands the traditional boundaries of culinary art.

Figure 5. Final plating of the tartlet.

Structure

Structure provides the necessary 'box' for organising my creative thoughts and expressing these ideas logically and systematically. I find comfort in the confines of structure, as it allows me to approach projects with a clear set of rules, criteria or guidelines. Whether these guidelines are predefined or ones I set myself, they help me navigate the creative process more effectively.

As someone who comes from a big family, my upbringing was somewhat chaotic, and I had an often disorganised household to cope with. Later, when I started my job with Restaurant X, I found similar conditions there, with no real systems or procedures in place. This experience reinforced my need for structure and became part of why I value it in my practice.

There is a stark contrast between my upbringing and past professional experiences and my current practice framework. Today, clear goals and desired outcomes are laid out, and the necessary steps to achieve them are broken down into practical, attainable milestones.

This approach helps explain my love of competitions, which give me the framework I need and crave to succeed: a theme to follow, and specific requirements, rules, and criteria, all under strict time constraints. This structure helps to break down the journey from ideation to execution into small, attainable milestones that lead to success. While some might view this approach as restrictive, these constraints and structure provide me with a framework to fuel my creativity and ambitions. This links closely to Damadzic's research, which suggests that "constraints may enhance creativity by limiting the problem space. Limiting the problem space, in turn, eliminates typical solutions and forces those working on a creative task to engage in a deep search within a small set of potential solutions" (Damadzic, 2024, p. 3).

Earlier, I described my need to "prove my parents wrong" and show them that the career choice I made was indeed the right one. Fast-forward to today, and I still hold this belief. And while the accolades and the thrill of culinary competitions are important, what motivates me the most is being in that constant state of learning and creativity. This is what fuels this career that I have been fighting for most of my life—to prove that it was the right choice all along. Being so strongly driven means that I carry a heavy workload, managing many projects simultaneously and keeping multiple stakeholders accountable. Having detailed structures around my work also reassures me that tasks are being completed to the high standard I hold myself to.

Branches: Design process and innovations

From the sturdy trunk of my culinary practice, which is rooted in core principles, extend the branches of design. In these branches, the Double Diamond Design Process and Human-Centred Design play pivotal roles, enriching my approach to culinary innovation. These principles of thoughtful design and user-centric approaches drive the development of new culinary techniques and dishes, showcasing the dynamic growth and diversification of my culinary career. As Parreira (2024) highlights, the chef's creative process is rooted in an intimate understanding of the audience, ensuring that each dish not only meets but exceeds the expectations of those who experience it. My design model mirrors the creative dynamics of haute cuisine as discussed by Parreira (2024), where each dish undergoes a transformative process from concept through execution.

My approach is also anchored in the Double Diamond Design Model, a framework that emphasises iterative cycles of divergence and convergence throughout the creative process. This model comprises four key phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. In my culinary practice, the Discover phase parallels the initial exploration of ingredients, techniques and cultural influences—broadening the scope to gather inspiration and insights. This reflects my commitment to deepening my understanding of both traditional and contemporary culinary practices, ensuring that my dishes are not only innovative but also deeply rooted in a rich context.

The Define phase corresponds to refining these ideas into a clear culinary concept or theme. Here, I converge on specific goals, such as flavour profiles or presentation aesthetics, much like the decision-making process in Human-Centred Design, which focuses on users and their experience. The Develop phase then involves the experimentation and iteration of these ideas, where dishes are tested, adjusted, and perfected, capturing the hands-on, iterative nature of culinary creativity.

Finally, the Deliver phase aligns with the execution and presentation of the final dish, where the culmination of the entire process is revealed to the audience. This mirrors the conclusion of the Double Diamond process, where the focus shifts from internal development to external impact.

Both my model and the Double Diamond Design Model emphasise a cyclical and iterative approach, ensuring that each phase builds on the previous one to refine and enhance the final outcome. However, a key difference lies in the application: while the Double Diamond Model is often applied broadly across design disciplines, my model is specifically tailored to the culinary arts, incorporating sensory elements and a deep understanding of audience expectations, as highlighted by Parreira (2024). This tailored approach aligns with the Double Diamond framework but also extends it by integrating the unique demands of culinary innovation, ensuring that each dish resonates on both a creative and emotional level with the diner.

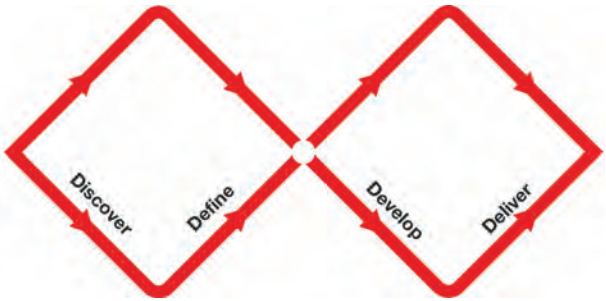

Figure 6. The Double Diamond Design Model
(British Design Council, 2005).

With all these elements in mind, I have compressed a number of steps and factors to illustrate the different aspects of my evolving practice. Whether I am designing new dishes, gathering ideas for an event or participating in a culinary competition, the practice evolves accordingly. While the process begins as a linear model, it evolves into a circular one, which mimics the lifecycle of my 'culinary tree' Framework of Practice.

THE BRANCHES OF MY EVOLVING PRACTICE

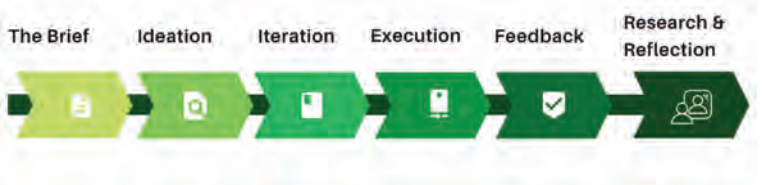

Figure 7. My design process.

The brief

This is the stage where I process the task at hand, along with its criteria, rules, and limitations. This step is akin to what Parreira describes as "a creative process start[ing] with information gathering and applied knowledge" (2024, p. 86). It involves a lot of fact-finding to fully understand the brief, evaluating any foreseeable hurdles and creating the necessary steps to overcome them. I also analyse external factors beyond my control that could hinder me in achieving the desired result. This is where I build the framework for the end result. Having the necessary structure is so important to me, as it ultimately dictates the outcome. Additionally, I investigate who the end user is, which is why incorporating Human-Centred Design into my culinary practice is crucial. It helps me create the most meaningful impact.

Ideation

At this stage, I start prototyping what the outcome could look like, based on the brief or the framework I have created for myself. I am often inspired by existing concepts and use elements of the SCAMPER model to start creating the early stages of a dish or parts of it. I form an initial proposal of what an event or pop-up might be, or just conceptualise ideas on paper. There is an aspect of collaboration at this stage, as I often bounce ideas around within my team and play on their strengths to get the best outcome.

Iteration

This is where my pursuit of mastery plays a key role, as the original concepts will always go through many stages of testing, changes and improvements, rigorously reflecting Parreira's (2024) emphasis on the iterative and experimental nature of haute cuisine. I will consider the original brief so that I do not stray too far from the task at hand, while still maintaining a high level of creativity. Parreira observes that the chef's creative process involves "the ability to generate compromises between what is desired and what is possible, and to find a balance" (2024, p. 88) that allows for culinary innovation while working within the constraints of the brief. Crafting and refining play a crucial role at this stage. Here is where I also evaluate any potential risks that could compromise the outcome and devise necessary steps to overcome those should they occur.

Execution

At this stage of the process, I do not deviate much from the latest iteration phase and 'execute' as close to the plan as possible. The execution could take the form of recreating a dish I have spent time conceptualising, or executing an event based on a carefully detailed outline.

Feedback

Gaining insight into areas for improvement is crucial for me to stay in a constant state of creativity and growth. Evaluating the impact of my outcomes and reflecting on feedback provides new frameworks for enhancing future projects, fuelling my ambitions as a culinarian.

Research and reflection

Research plays a key role in all aspects of my evolving practice, including at the end of the process, where I seek ways to improve. I also reflect on the completed project or task and ask what could have been done differently or better to constantly stay on the path of improvement. This reflective practice, which is critical in Human-Centred Design, embodies Parreira's idea that "evaluation brings together a set of concerns expressed by the chefs" (2024, p. 88) and is essential for continuous improvement. I then take key learnings into the next 'brief,' where this cycle restarts, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8. My evolving practice: A cyclical process.

Leaves and fruits: Outcomes and achievements

Reflecting on my Framework of Practice, I cannot help but feel proud of the many achievements and opportunities it has enabled. My career has been a great platform to help me maintain a constant state of creativity, enriching my knowledge as a culinarian. One achievement I would highlight is the creation of my own pop-up restaurant business, Buko. The idea was floated during my days at Restaurant X, a particularly challenging period during my career when a lack of structure and autonomy prevented me from being able to thrive in my work or make a significant positive impact upon the business. Buko allowed me the autonomy to continue creating and expressing ideas through different dining experiences. I was finally able to create and provide the necessary structure that enabled me, and others involved, to thrive. It also helped me right some of the wrongs that I had experienced at Restaurant X. Although it was stressful building a brand and a business from the ground up, my experience at Buko was in stark contrast to the negative feelings I had endured at Restaurant X and allowed me to accelerate my leadership skills and career.

Participating in culinary competitions has also been a big part of my career and represents the "fruit and leaves" of my Framework of Practice. On reflection, my FoP encompasses what competitions are all about: pursuit of mastery, creativity, structure, and working with constraints. I took part in the Bocuse d'Or, dubbed "one of the world's most prestigious cooking competitions," and this competition has shaped how I view food and create and design dishes.

The new sapling: My evolving Framework of Practice

The 'fruits' of my labour hold the seeds of my future Framework of Practice. They fuel my motivation to keep learning and offer the structure necessary to embark on new projects. Each new endeavour opens doors to future growth and creates an environment in which I thrive. As these fruits fall, they give rise to fresh iterations of my FoP, a new sapling, signalling opportunities for further development as a culinarian. While this conception of my framework is bound to evolve, the seeds it plants will give rise to new saplings, carrying the DNA of the original tree yet evolving into something new and unique, demonstrating the continuous nature of learning and adaptation in the culinary world.

This evolving framework reflects my ongoing journey as a culinarian. It embraces new influences, techniques, and philosophies, shaping my professional identity. As I take on new challenges and opportunities, my practice evolves, reflecting a deeper understanding of my craft and a commitment to innovation and excellence.

Much like a sapling grows and matures into a robust tree, my Framework of Practice will continue to adapt to the changing landscape of the culinary industry. This process involves integrating new technologies, sustainability practices, and diverse culinary traditions while staying true to my core values of mastery, creativity, and structure.

CONCLUSION

The journey of my culinary career illustrates the dynamic and evolving nature of my Framework of Practice. By reflecting on my experiences, mentors, and the values that shape my professional identity, I have developed a unique approach that blends traditional techniques with innovative practices. The roots of my practice are firmly planted in the foundational experiences and mentorship that have guided me, while the trunk represents the core values that sustain my professional journey.

Through the branches of evolving practices and innovations, I've explored how design principles like the Double Diamond Design Process and Human-Centred Design intersect with culinary arts. These principles have enriched my approach to culinary innovation, allowing me to create dishes that resonate with both cultural authenticity and contemporary appeal.

The leaves and fruits of my framework represent the achievements and outcomes that have marked my career, from creating a pop-up restaurant business to participating in prestigious culinary competitions. These experiences have reinforced the importance of continuous creativity and learning within my practice.

Looking to the future, the new sapling symbolises the ongoing evolution of my practice. It reflects my commitment to growth, adaptation and the pursuit of excellence in the culinary arts. By embracing new influences and opportunities, I will continue to refine and expand my Framework of Practice, ensuring that it remains relevant and impactful in an ever-changing gastronomic landscape. As I move forward, my focus is on staying true to my core values while navigating the ever-changing landscape of the culinary industry in a sustainable way.

Will Mordido is a Kiwi-Filipino chef, known for being the first ever representative at the prestigious Bocuse d'Or as well as his pop-up restaurant, Buko. His career is marked by a commitment to creative innovation, competition excellence, and expanding the boundaries of what is means to be a chef.

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Opinion Piece

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1029002

RETHINKING BAKING EDUCATION: FROM TECHNOCRATIC TRAINING TO INDUSTRY-RESPONSIVE LEARNING

Noel Remacle

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY AND PEDAGOGICAL ORIENTATION

My professional journey began in 1980 in Belgium under the tutelage of my father and grandfather in our family bakery. Since 2007, I have occupied various roles in New Zealand and internationally, including bakery manager, consultant, product developer, and production lead for Guylian Belgian Chocolate Cafés worldwide. These positions have shaped my understanding of industry demands, operational scalability, and cross-cultural team management.

As an educator in New Zealand and Egypt, I draw on over four decades of industry experience to inform a practice that balances tradition with innovation. My ongoing commitment to reflective teaching ensures that learners see both the craft and the complexities of contemporary baking. In this opinion piece, I offer a practitioner's perspective on current assessment practices in New Zealand bakery education and propose pedagogical directions for the future.

REASSESSING VOCATIONAL BAKING EDUCATION IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Vocational baking education in New Zealand stands at a pedagogical crossroads. Despite rapid advancements in the culinary and hospitality sectors, educational frameworks continue to be anchored in traditional, learning-outcome-based models. These models emphasise technical accuracy and standardised performance measures, often at the expense of critical soft skills, adaptability, and real-world readiness. Learning outcomes are designed to measure knowledge against qualification standards, yet there are questions within the sector whether these outcomes align with the day-to-day realities and evolving needs of the industry.

In this piece I briefly critique the limitations of technocratic training and advocate for a recalibrated model grounded in project-based learning (PBL). Drawing on theoretical literature and my own observations as a bakery educator, I outline a pathway for integrating practical expertise with pedagogical innovation to produce future-ready baking professionals.

FROM TECHNOCRATIC TO CAPABILITY-BASED APPROACHES

Conventional competency-based education often separates the mastery of discrete skills from the broader context in which they are applied. Although this approach is dependable for measuring reproducibility and precision, it falls short when it comes to nurturing wider attributes such as creativity, resilience, and leadership. To address these limitations, Hager and Holland (2006) advocate moving away from a purely competency-centred curriculum towards one that fosters capability, prioritising learners' capacity to navigate complexity and to transfer their knowledge across diverse settings.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the bakery workplace, where supply chains shift, customer tastes continually evolve, and production deadlines loom large. Here, adaptability is indispensable. In my view, educational strategies must extend far beyond teaching students to follow recipes or to replicate techniques; instead, we ought to cultivate reflective practitioners—individuals who can think on their feet under pressure, adjust their approach on the fly, and devise creative solutions when plans unravel.

PEDAGOGICAL RATIONALE FOR PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-based learning (PBL) is in alignment with a capability-oriented approach to education. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2008) contend, PBL not only heightens student motivation and fosters profound learning but also cultivates transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and metacognitive awareness. Unlike the traditional technical competency-based model, which centres on repeating predefined recipes, PBL encourages students to think critically, innovate, and adapt. This is crucial in today's baking industry, which is rapidly evolving with trends such as gluten-free baking, plant-based alternatives, and sustainable production methods.

PBL focuses on active learning—students engage with real-world challenges by researching, experimenting, collaborating, and reflecting. It supports deeper learning by encouraging students to integrate knowledge from multiple sources, engage in problem-solving, and apply their skills in meaningful ways (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008). These qualities—technical proficiency, critical thinking, and leadership—are the skills today's bakery industry requires of its workers.

Motivation and engagement also increase with PBL. Blumenfeld et al. (1991) found that students working on projects that reflect real industry challenges are more likely to persist through difficulties, take initiative, and develop a stronger sense of ownership over their learning. When learners design contemporary pastries, adapt recipes for dietary needs, or develop sustainable bakery business models, they connect more deeply with their education.

Another major benefit of PBL is its emphasis on teamwork and communication—essential skills in any bakery. Whether coordinating with a bakery team, interacting with suppliers, or serving customers, bakers need to collaborate effectively. Research by Hmelo-Silver (2004) suggests that learning in a collaborative PBL setting improves knowledge retention and the ability to apply concepts in new contexts.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN PRACTICE: AN INTEGRATED BAKERY MODEL

At Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, project-based learning is woven into the baking curriculum through a weekly, student-run retail bakery on campus. Learners in the New Zealand Certificate in Baking (Level 4) rotate systematically through inventory control, customer service, and production planning, while those in the New Zealand Diploma in Baking (Level 5) move into supervisory roles. Diploma students mentor their junior peers. They manage daily operations and assume full responsibility for wage calculations, product costings, and financial reporting. This deliberate scaffolding ensures that technical skills develop in tandem with the managerial and interpersonal capabilities required in a commercial setting.

Soft skills are thus treated as essential outcomes, not incidental by-products. Within the PBL framework these skills are explicitly taught and rigorously assessed. Teamwork is fostered as students coordinate live production schedules under time pressure; problem-solving emerges when they confront ingredient shortages or special-diet requests and record their decisions in reflective logs, and leadership is cultivated as senior learners manage shifts and coach their colleagues. Detailed rubrics, peer- and self-assessment, and 360-degree feedback loops render these behaviours visible and measurable, embedding critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—Levin-Goldberg's (2012) "4 Cs"—at the heart of the programme. Regular industry placements complete the cycle by showing students how classroom-honed capabilities map directly onto professional practice.

ADAPTING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING UNDER PANDEMIC DISRUPTION

COVID-19 lockdowns forced a rapid redesign of the campus retail bakery, yet the PBL ethos remained intact. Face-to-face trading was replaced by a contact-free "click-and-collect" model that mirrored the adaptations of commercial bakeries nationwide. Diploma students processed online orders, scheduled socially distanced production teams, enforced public-health protocols and organised safe customer pick-ups. Certificate students supported these operations remotely, ensuring continuity of learning across both cohorts.

Learners documented every procedural decision, adaptive strategy, and collaborative effort in digital portfolios. Each entry required them to narrate the experience, reflect on outcomes, connect insights to theory, and plan their next experiment—an explicit enactment of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. These portfolios both satisfied assessment criteria and reproduced the experience of responding to the operational volatility of the pandemic era, reinforcing the programme's shift from narrow competency testing to genuine capability building.

IMPLICATIONS OF EMBEDDING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING WITHIN CAMPUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Although project-based learning has been widely lauded for deepening engagement and cultivating transferable capabilities, embedding it in vocational settings such as bakery education also reveals a series of challenging realities. At an institutional level, purpose-built training kitchens rarely mirror the immediacy, unpredictability, and throughput of a commercial bakery. Timetables are fixed to semester blocks, equipment usage is shared across programmes, and strict health-and-safety protocols restrict the spontaneous workflow changes that give real-world commercial production its edge. Procuring ingredients at pedagogically opportune moments is equally fraught: procurement cycles, budget ceilings, and storage limitations can prevent learners from experiencing authentic supply-chain volatility—the very context in which adaptability is most keenly tested. Collectively, these structural constraints risk reducing PBL to a series of staged exercises rather than the fluid, client-driven projects envisaged by its advocates.

Pedagogical demands present an additional layer of complexity. Project-based learning requires educators to relinquish the comfort of directive instruction and assume the role of facilitator, coach, and critical friend—shifting from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side" (Boud & Feletti, 1997, p. 4). Such a pedagogic transformation is neither automatic nor trivial: tutors steeped in product-outcome-centred demonstration must master new skills in supporting learning through failure, while also safeguarding food safety and production quality.

Class size can also compound difficulties around the implementation of project-based learning. For instance, my own class cohort of 17 learners exceeds the staffing level of many artisan bakeries, diluting the realism of the learning environment and constraining opportunities for authentic, hands-on engagement. Taken together, these institutional, pedagogical, and logistical factors illustrate why translating the promise of PBL into vocational bakery curricula is far from straightforward.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A RECALIBRATED CURRICULUM

In light of an evolving industry and the limitations of traditional competency-based models, it is clear that there is a role for project-based learning bakery education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing on over four decades of international industry experience, I have seen firsthand how the complex realities of contemporary baking demand more than technical precision—they require adaptability, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership. Although embedding PBL presents logistical and pedagogical challenges, the benefits far outweigh the constraints. If we are to prepare learners for the uncertainties of the bakery industry and of our world more broadly, then PBL must move from the margins of our programmes to become its foundation.

Noel Remacle is a third-generation Belgian baker with over 40 years of experience. He has mastered traditional craft, led global product development, and now shapes future pastry chefs at Toi Ohomai and Pharos University in Alexandria. Always learning, he is pursuing a master's while sharing his passion through teaching, social media, and hands-on industry experience.

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INSPIRATION AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN PRACTICE IN PŪMANAWA FOR THE SWEET KITCHEN

Hayley Dodd

INTRODUCTION

The idea that chefs are designers is not new (Betts, 2023; Kern et al., 2015; Kudrowitz, 2014; Ottenbacher, 2007; Page, 2017), and is a foundational principle for the Bachelor of Culinary Arts (BCA) programme at Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand (Mitchell, 2018; Woodhouse, 2017). Instead of merely recreating and reproducing the same dish, as is typical of traditional cookery pedagogy, the courses within the BCA focus on developing not only a student's technical skills, but their approach to design processes embedded in contemporary dish creation and development through project based learning (Mitchell, 2018; Woodhouse, 2017). At the foundational level, the programme embodies the concept that "everything is a remix," an idea popularised by documentarian Kirby Ferguson (2023). Ferguson speaks to the concept that there is no such thing as an original idea—creative ideas are derived from the inspiration of existing work and the act of remixing is not about replication, but transformation. It is known that chefs often look to other chefs' practice for inspiration in their own work (Kudrowitz, 2014). In practice, culinarians also bring their own experiences as inspiration to the table, making their process and their final dish unique.

Building on established culinary design practices, the Pūmanawa for the Sweet Kitchen course in the first year of the BCA programme is designed to introduce ākonga (learners/students) to fundamental design processes for pūmanawa toi kai (food creative practice), within the context of bakery and dessert skills and design. The word "pūmanawa" can loosely be translated to mean skill and talent (Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 2016) and is often associated with creativity and strength in learning. The Pūmanawa for the Sweet Kitchen course emphasises skill development and using fundamental design processes, design tools, and critical thinking to fulfil a specific design brief.

The project brief challenged ākonga to "design, develop, and create a sweet kai item and stylised photograph inspired by a contemporary culinarian of their choice." Ākonga were tasked with investigating the cookery techniques and approach to dessert design of their chosen culinarian. They also researched the way in which those dishes were presented in different media formats, and then drew on their findings to emulate their culinarian in their own practice and final dish and photograph outcome. For ākonga, this project offered a chance to merge their personal stories with the methodologies of contemporary dessert masters, allowing space for personal influence and autonomy, and thereby enabling them to create dishes that were as innovative as they were meaningful.

This paper will review some BCA students' work, in relation to the specified brief, and provide examples of how the inspiration and design process emulated the real-life practice of dish design in industry, and demonstrated clear student engagement.

THE PROCESS

Following an adapted "double diamond" design process model of "discover, define, develop and deliver" (Mitchell et al., 2013), ākonga first investigated their chosen culinarian. This phase involved researching and documenting the culinarian's approach to food design; including the materials they use, how they practice, and why they approach dish design and delivery in this way.

As part of the course, ākonga explored how chefs use design tools such as SCAMPER (substitute, combine, adjust, magnify/minify, put to other uses, eliminate, rearrange), mind-mapping, flavour bouncing, and research to develop their dishes. Based on this real-world practice, ākonga brought some of their own stories to the table, using sources of inspiration such as nostalgia, existing desserts, dietary restrictions, seasonal produce, and food science to generate multiple dish ideas that could meet the brief.

The idea generation phase resulted in a final dish concept that was taken forward for prototyping and testing. The development of the students' dishes was an iterative process aimed at refining techniques, sensory balance, and food styling, culminating in a food photography session. The images of their dish were to be used in a food media presentation in a style typical of their culinarian. All ākonga in the cohort completed the process. While the final food media piece was not the key focus of the dessert design, some revelled in the creative freedom this task allowed and produced exceptional results, some of which are featured below.

Figure 1 and Figure 2. "Chemistry" by Emily Gilbert.
Photographs: Hayley Dodd.

THE WORK

By studying the methods of established chefs and adapting them through lenses such as molecular gastronomy, dietary restrictions, nostalgia, and classic flavour pairings, five culinary students created the diverse dish creations featured below. These dishes demonstrate how different creative processes can intersect to produce innovative culinary outcomes from ākonga that reflect both original takes on existing ideas and intentional design. The final works showcase not only technical growth, but also a deepening of creative confidence and individual expression, qualities that can be identified in chefs around the world.

Scientific remix: Designing with molecular gastronomy and place

With a family history of working in chemistry and the sciences, ākonga Emily Gilbert created a dish inspired by experimentation, the pH scale, and certain ingredients known for their reactive and transformational properties. Their practice evoked the style of Reynold Poernomo, an innovative Australian chef known for incorporating elements of surprise in his desserts. Emily's dessert, "Chemistry" (Figures 1 and 2), leans into molecular gastronomy. Butterfly pea flower tea, an ingredient that changes colour depending on the acidity of what it is combined with, was used to create a dish with blue, pink, and purple hues, tied together with a flavour profile inspired by ingredients from Aotearoa New Zealand such as mānuka honey and kawakawa. This dish not only looked visually stunning but offered a range of textures and intense flavours on the palate with fizzing sherbet, gummy lemon 'caviar,' chewy stained-glass pear, fluffy mānuka honey sponge, and delicate creamy kawakawa mousse; inspired twists on some classic dessert and pastry components. Emily's work epitomised pūmanawa, by merging scientific precision with artistic creativity and talent.

Storytelling with flavour

Looking to childhood memories of her home garden and highlighting a strong flavour profile of lemon and lavender, Georgia Anderson created cupcakes in the style of renowned New Zealand blogger Erin Clarkson and her blog, *Cloudy Kitchen*. Georgia's practice of meticulous testing and making small incremental changes to perfect a recipe, along with her final dish and her food writing piece, were so much in the style of Erin Clarkson that one would struggle to tell the resulting blog post apart from a *Cloudy Kitchen* original (Figure 3). In keeping with the theme of transformation, this dish was based on some of the *Cloudy Kitchen* recipes but tweaked in the development process to produce a different dish entirely—a practice that Erin often employs in her own work (Clarkson, n.d.). Georgia's final blog post, styled and written in the tone of Clarkson's platform, demonstrated not only technical skill but a deep understanding of storytelling through food.

Figure 3. Anderson's version of a *Cloudy Kitchen*-style blog post (see Clarkson, 2023).

Creativity driven by constraints

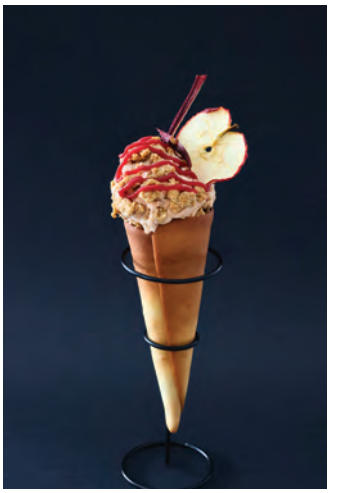
Global culinary trends highlight the growth of dietary inclusivity (Mellentin, 2025), inspiring Aaliyah Lovatt's twist on the classic macaron; a dessert popularised by Pierre Hermé, "The King of Macarons." This ākonga drew from Hermé's use of bold flavour combinations to create feijoa-ginger and elderflower-lemongrass flavoured macarons. Moreover, these dishes were developed to suit a keto diet, which is characterised by minimal to no sugar and carbohydrate content. Lovatt's innovative approach to removing sugar and carbohydrates while maintaining texture and flavour pushed the boundaries of traditional pastry-making. While the outcome visually resembled macarons, the student reflected that the transformation process may have resulted in something entirely new, highlighting the importance of open-mindedness in innovative dish design. This work reflected both contemporary culinary trends in dietary inclusivity and the core principle of transformation inherent in our Pūmanawa for the Sweet Kitchen course.

Figure 4. Feijoa and ginger keto macaron
by Aaliyah Lovatt. Photograph: Hayley Dodd.

Figure 5. Elderflower and lemongrass macaron
by Aaliyah Lovatt. Photograph: Hayley Dodd.

Transforming tradition

Drawing inspiration from Giapo, a renowned Auckland-based gelato innovator, and in a similar fashion to the students discussed above, Reuben Hanna utilised a well-established flavour profile in his dessert creation—a twist on the humble apple and rhubarb crumble. Transforming this comforting, warm dessert into an extravagant ice-cream in the style of Giapo required this ākonga to use a wide range of design tools and cookery techniques to problem solve during the iterative process. Creating a dish with several components, but two main flavours, resulted in a highly experimental testing phase to work out which flavour went best with each element. Through extensive experimentation with textures—dehydrated crisps, purées, and crumbles—Reuben created a visually striking and intensely flavourful dish. The experimentation continued to the photoshoot day, where he adjusted his final dish with different elements. His ability to iterate and problem-solve throughout the design process exemplified the deliberate practice and refinement of ideas that are integral aspects of the BCA programme.


Figures 6, 7, and 8. Same same but different: Reuben's Giapo-style adaption of apple and rhubarb crumble. Photographs: Hayley Dodd.

Value driven design

Core values along with childhood memories of a favourite bakery inspired Ruby Lawes to develop her lemon-raspberry twist on a tiramisu. After establishing constraints based on insights gained from her research into Kim Evans from Little and Friday Bakery, she then worked to create a sharing-style dessert that utilised accessible ingredients. Lawes also created a detailed recipe and step-by-step images to help those at home who might want to re-create this recipe—all important aspects of Kim's work (Evans, 2021). Keeping sustainable practice and mindful cooking at the forefront of recipe development was as important to Lawes as it is to Evans. Lawes reflects in her portfolio that developing the dish prompted a deeper respect for ingredients and flavours, an appreciation for listening to them, and a desire to celebrate those she enjoys by sharing the results with others she cares about.

As with the others, within Lawes's work, there is the sense that by transforming other culinarians' processes and outcomes and emulating their practice, one's own dish creation process can benefit from a deeper understanding of one's own practice and self.

Figure 9. Lawes's twist on classic tiramisu, in the style of Kim Evans from Little and Friday.

Figure 10. Lawes's Lemon and Raspberry Tiramisu.

CONCLUSION

This Pūmanawa for the Sweet Kitchen project served as more than a creative exercise—it was a structured invitation for ākonga to step into the roles of culinary designers. One of the most profound outcomes of this project was the way in which ākonga deepened their understanding of their own creative identity. By immersing themselves in the work of established culinarians and reflecting on their own practice, our ākonga, like many chefs around the world, not only refined their technical skills but also discovered new avenues for creative expression. This process of transformation was highly personal, intertwining nostalgia, storytelling, and constraints with design thinking to mirror the students' values and cultural roots.

As showcased in this review, our ākonga connected process with purpose, explored how media and presentation shape the perception of dishes, and learned to communicate meaning through flavour and form. This project not only resulted in a diverse range of work but highlighted differences in approach to the dish design process and to working with sources of inspiration in the transformation of existing recipes into something novel, even at an emergent level.

This review of work stands as a testament to the power of design thinking in culinary education. Through practice, deep reflection, and creative autonomy, ākonga not only produced technically exceptional and visually stunning dishes but also developed a profound connection to their own practice and identity. This review of student work offers a glimpse into how pūmanawa toi kai (food creative practice) can be nurtured through an environment that values creativity, collaboration, and cultural expression (Mitchell et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2018; Woodhouse, 2017). By transforming the work of contemporary dessert masters and embedding their own narratives, these ākonga have taken their first steps as creative and skilled contributors to our industry.

AI statement

ChatGPT was used to assist with grammar and sentence structure and for final proofreading.

Hayley Dodd is a lecturer on the Bachelor of Culinary Arts programme, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand. She has previously worked as a chef, recipe writer, food stylist, and photographer, and holds a Master of Science in Human Nutrition (University of Otago). She has ancestral ties to Rakiura (Stewart Island) and Kāi Tahu. Her interests include environmental sustainability, emerging culinary trends, education, and health.

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CURRICULUM DESIGN IN THE AUSTRALIAN FOOD TRADES: PLACING INDUSTRY AT THE HEART

Warren Guest

INTRODUCTION

Australia is currently undertaking a national review and reform of its Vocational Education and Training qualifications (VET). This is also true for New Zealand, with both countries considering the role of industry as designers of their VET curricula. This study presents a case investigation of the design process for the curriculum used to train apprentice bakers in Australia. It examines the decision-making processes of Australian VET curriculum design, illuminating industry's role in this design and the contested space between stakeholders. The case study uses interviews with 13 key curriculum designers representing industry, governments, and training colleges, alongside discourse analysis of 29 public submissions and government policy documents. This case study is an extract from a larger research study published by the author (Guest, 2022) which examined the design of Australian VET curriculum, from its conception by governments and industry, through to its implementation by college trainers, and its ensuant influence over the vocational identity of learners. A more detailed elaboration of the case study can be found in the original publication (Guest, 2022).

The findings of this research identify industry engaging in competitive interactions where stakeholder negotiations are self-serving and focused on ensuring industrial competitive advantage. The findings also show industrial designers mandating assessments for teacher accountability, rather than as an educative tool for assessing learner knowledge and subsequent gap training. These outcomes present larger questions for both countries' national VET curricula as they prioritise industry's voice and move deeper into a competitive market model for VET education.

THE FOOD TRADES

The term "food trades" in Australia refers to occupations involved in the preparation, production, and handling of food (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021). These include chefs, cooks, bakers, pastry chefs, butchers, and smallgoods makers, all assessed for the 2021 Skills Priority List (SPL) and found to be in shortage (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2021). Apprenticeships remain the primary educational pathway for employees entering these trades. However, apprenticeship completion rates continue to decline, drawing attention to the VET curriculum used to train people for these occupations (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

To address apprenticeship non-completion and declining VET enrolments, the last thirty years have seen significant changes to the Australian VET system. Politicians and bureaucrats reasoned that the previous system was poorly positioned for a globalised economy and rapid technological changes (Dawkins, 1988a). It was argued that the 'new world of work' would require an agile VET system to keep pace with rapid changes to skills and knowledge required by future industries (Dawkins, 1988b). Subsequently, in 1994, the nation moved to Competency-Based Training (CBT) whereby complex trade practices were atomised into discrete actions and explicit knowledge clustered within "units of competency." These units could be arranged into agile qualifications, adaptive to industry needs. As qualifications needed modernising, units could be added or replaced, with industry driving the creation of these components.

It was also argued that the existing vocational education sector had become over-reliant on Commonwealth government funding and systemic cost-efficiency changes were required (Dawkins, 1988a). In 1998, a "User Choice" market-based approach to funding training providers was implemented (Smith & Keating, 2003, p. 3). Under this policy, employers and apprentices would select a training institute, rather than defaulting to the nearest local training college (Nobel et al., 1999). The Commonwealth Government posited that competition would create a VET system more responsive to industry client needs and a marketplace that would use price competition to reduce costs (Ryan, 2011).

These reforms have been contested since their introduction thirty years ago; however, the framework remains. To analyse industry's role in shaping the Australian national VET curriculum, and the influence of competitive neoliberal markets over vocational education, this study uses a curriculum framework of the intended curriculum (Billett, 2011).

THE INTENDED CURRICULUM

The intended curriculum refers to aims, goals, and objectives of learning developed by influential stakeholders situated externally to the classroom (Billett, 2011). Governments, industry, enterprises, communities, and individuals are all stakeholders in vocational curriculum purposes and outcomes yet have divergent objectives. Government interests manifest in policy objectives, social development, and fiscal considerations (Goozee, 1995). Industry interests focus on skilled labour supply (Smith, 2010). Enterprise interests develop from human capital needs (Ashton, 2004). Communities require vocational courses that sustain development (Giroux, 2011), while individuals seek vocational knowledge and skills for personal goals (Dewey, 1938; NCVER, 2019).

These stakeholder interests emerge in competitive and complementary ways. Governments and industry groups may view vocational curricula as a mechanism for labour development and prioritise skills over developing good citizenry (Giroux, 2014; Kincheloe, 2005). Conversely, communities may call for a curriculum that develops critical and analytical skills for active participation in society (Dewey, 1916; Wheelahan, 2016). Such a 'student-centred' approach may be favoured by communities and individuals requiring a more generalised vocational curriculum with occupational emphasis (Dewey, 1938; Rushbrook, 2010). These divergent objectives are evident in the development of contemporary Australian VET curriculum known as "training packages."

Each training package contains numerous VET qualifications, with each qualification constructed on a framework of units of competency (Australian Industry Skills Council [AISC], 2019). Industry advisory bodies create training packages through consultation with industry stakeholders. These packages contain skills and knowledge required for worker participation within prescribed occupations and endorsed qualifications (ASIC, 2019). They are nationally endorsed qualifications and standards for vocational qualifications, intended to deliver a more agile system responsive to industry needs and better serving VET learners (Guthrie, 2009; NCVER, 1999).

Critics identify the training packages' purpose as extending beyond the vocational syllabus, positioned within broader political, ideological, and economic objectives (Billett, 2011; Toner, 2018a). Billett argues the packages transferred control of curricula from vocational institutions and teachers to industry (2011). Toner (2018b) argues these changes were part of a broader macro-economic shift toward cost-reducing free-market education based on neoliberal objectives. However, research examining the confluence of these macro contextual factors' influence over Australian VET curricula remains scarce, prompting this study.

What is evident is that the creation of training packages involves extensive industry consultation, which in turn creates its own set of challenges. Smith (2010) notes that the consultation process "can involve literally thousands of people and take extensive amounts of time" (p. 58) and stakeholder groups can pursue vested interests. Smith (2010) also identifies manipulation by training colleges lobbying for inclusion or exclusion of units to increase

their own operational profitability. These two issues raise questions about the intended purposes of industry and training colleges in designing the Australian National VET curriculum. Whose interests do these colleges serve? How has the confluence of competitive education markets and industry drivers shaped the Australian VET curriculum? These questions frame this investigation.

METHODOLOGY

This research examines training package creation, focusing on the bakery training package FDF10 Food Processing (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). Of all food trades apprenticeships, apprentice bakers had the lowest completion rates at 42.6 percent as of 2024 (Service and Creative Skills Australia, 2024). For this reason, the curriculum for bakery apprentices was selected. The study uses in-depth interviews with 13 curriculum design participants throughout various design stages. Participants are labelled as Representatives (for example, Rep. 1). Representatives from all levels of government involvement were interviewed, from State and Federal government bodies through to college trainers, large industrial chain bakery managers, and retail bakery owners. The research question asks:

> How do the industrial parties within vocational education design and negotiate the intended curriculum of training packages?

The sub-questions are:

> Whose interests do these industrial parties serve?
>
> How has the confluence of competitive education markets and an industry-driven curriculum shaped the Australian VET curriculum?

Beyond interviews with key stakeholders, the research draws on published government and industry literature and 29 public consultation submissions that informed the process (VETNet, 2015). Data extracted from submissions are labelled accordingly (for example, Submission 5). Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the Human Ethics Sub-Committee of La Trobe Univesrity (Application No. E16-020).

The study uses discourse analysis to identify conceptual themes in submissions and interview data, focusing on the intended objectives of curriculum designers with the goal of understanding why certain knowledge is included in a training curriculum. Inductive methods interpret economic, political, and cultural meanings in the data discourse. A theoretical framework of the intended curriculum (Billett, 2011) has been used to analyse findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

> There's different sectors in the baking Industry. There's the retail sector, there's the artisan bakers and a supposed kind of in between, like just your Main Street baker and things like that. So, there was a lot of things going on in that sector where the Coles and Woolworths of this world wanted to have people go through training in baking and say that they are a baker, but they couldn't even bake a loaf of bread because they weren't required to for the jobs that they were actually going to fulfil. And then there were the artisan bakers who were saying "how could you be called a baker if you can't bake a loaf of bread?" (Rep. 5)

As Rep. 5 identifies, there is ongoing friction and influence between subcultures over the design process. The following section examines interview data from participants involved in the design process, clustered into sub-cultures with their cultural interests investigated.

Industry subcultures

The VET training package design process involves many committees and participants representing different sub-cultures with divergent interests. The negotiation of the FDF10 Food Processing training package was disputed by four main interest groups:

- Small retail and artisan bakers, referred to as "Artisan retail bakeries"
- Large manufacturing and supermarket chain bakeries referred to as "Large chain bakeries"
- Public state government-run colleges referred to as "Public TAFEs"
- Privately owned Registered Training Organisation colleges, referred to as "Private RTOs."

Artisan retail bakeries

Artisan retail bakeries perceived graduating apprentice bakers as having low skill levels and not being 'industry ready.' This is evident in the following interview response: "That's where there's been a systemic failure right across the board and we see ourselves with this dumbed-down version of training that at its worst delivers absolutely valueless training" (Rep. 2). Their solution was lobbying for complex technical units such as Produce Artisan Bread Products as 'core' or compulsory subjects.

The artisan retail bakeries saw poor training practices facilitated by colleges as an issue. They viewed mandating more complex skills sets as core units and including more assessments as solutions. They were concerned with 'tick and flick' practices, where colleges prematurely pass students to access government funding. Under funding arrangements, colleges receive funding when students pass each unit and again upon certificate completion (Burke, 2018). To safeguard skills acquisition, they argued for workplace assessments under business owner supervision: "They had things in there like mandatory workplace assessment, that had to be done so many times, it worked out a couple of hundred workplace assessments .... it was unrealistic the number of assessments the student would need for a unit" (Rep. 3).

Declining skills was considered by the artisan retail bakers to be a future industry issue. They were concerned apprentices wouldn't be equipped with necessary skills required to ply their trade. Their solution was prescribing excessive assessment supervised by employers in workplaces—an attempt to regain curriculum control and improve training outcomes.

Large chain bakeries

Conversely, large chain bakeries opposed including more complex core units, such as Produce Artisan Bread Products, arguing they would no longer be able to train apprentices exclusively onsite. In the subsequent upgrade of the training package that followed these negotiations, the Produce Artisan Bread Products unit remained an elective and was therefore a flexible inclusion.

> It [vocational training] has been designed over the period of time to just be delivered in the workplace and be versatile enough that it can be delivered in any workplace. Because of that, we end up with young bakers who only have the skills that they know in the one workplace. They do not have the skills required by other workplaces. (Rep. 3)

In Australian apprenticeship training, employers can elect for entirely on-site training without college attendance, as is evidenced in the above quote from Representative 3. This Workplace Training and Assessment (WTA) model is popular with large chain bakeries like Woolworths, Coles, and Bakers Delight. These industry members saw complex skills inclusion such as those found in the Produce Artisan Bread Products unit as detrimental to business interests. The training provided required specialist equipment, requiring apprentices to complete the unit at the RTO college and removing them from their workplace. The large chain bakeries believed that off-

site training would impact their business productivity. They wanted apprentices to remain in the workplace and learn only relevant business skills. These identified negotiations between large chain bakeries and artisan retail bakers demonstrate instrumental purposes where apprentice education is restricted and subordinate to industry interests. While artisan retail bakeries concerned themselves with cultural decline through disappearing trade skills, large chain bakeries focused on material and economic business priorities.

Registered Training Organisations: Public TAFEs and Private RTOs

Public TAFE representatives were concerned with low skills and knowledge levels in performance criteria and joined artisan retail bakeries arguing for more complex core units. "It didn't have 'you make bread from scratch' and some complained about that" (Rep. 8):

> If we just looked at bread alone, forget everything else, but just bread training could actually be delivered by an RTO in as little as one three-hour lesson on white bread alone. At its absolute worst, that's what it looks like. (Rep. 2)

However, not all colleges agreed with the argument made for more complex skills sets. The private RTOs who operated WTA models of delivery disagreed. Under the WTA model, all training is delivered by the college informally at the apprentice's workplace. The college is not required to maintain a training campus and would be unable to conduct training in units containing complex skills if the business could not provide the equipment and expertise. This would mean that they could not train apprentices in units such as Produce Artisan Bread Products and subsequently would not be able to train an apprentice to completion. As a consequence, they would lose funded training hours and apprentice student numbers, imposing a significant financial impact on their business model. The private RTOs voted against the inclusion of the unit Produce Artisan Bread Products and were ultimately successful in having the unit excluded.

The political mediations between private RTOs and public TAFEs over knowledge inclusion that would affect their enactment of their curricula speaks to a commodified understanding of vocational education, where the material interests of designers shape the knowledge inclusions of training packages. The prevailing economic context of competitive markets is shown here to influence how complex and important skills and knowledge can be removed when impacting with the profitability of private colleges.

NEGOTIATED ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

For public consultations, training package designers sought public opinion through website announcements and industry bodies. Twenty-nine submissions were received from RTOs and baking industry businesses. Thematic coding identified a heavy focus on the topic of assessment, with "assessor" and "assessment" mentioned 177 times, compared to minimal mentions of "skills" (28), "knowledge" (8), or "performance" (5) (VETNet, 2015).

Assessment was all submitters' primary concern. Baking industry businesses argued for increased assessment volume to manage graduate capability outcomes. RTOs argued against assessment due to delivery model costs. Notably, little mention was made of skills, knowledge, or apprentice learner advocacy, with only two RTOs addressing learner needs. The artisan retail bakeries concerned with low skills and knowledge specification saw strict assessment criteria as quality assurance for graduating apprentices. They argued for more assessments in workplaces, witnessed by qualified tradespeople. Public submissions stated:

> Using 'FDFRB3005 Bake Bread' as an example—observing 10 times and assessing a minimum of 5 times seems excessive. Suggest a minimum of 3 assessments is more reasonable. There seem to be a large number of units with this level of proposed rigour, and I suggest they are all reviewed. (Submission 5)

> Following discussion with yourself [*sic*] I fully appreciate your comments that our funding model is not your concern. However, if we don't work together and lobby the government on this, then TAFE will always have difficulty providing the Industry with the training it desires and is seeking from us. (Submission 5)

Stricter RTO assessment impositions were viewed as political manoeuvres to manage teacher performance. Large chain bakers didn't support the arrangement, believing employer co-assessors would distract tradespeople from work: "When they are at work, they work. We don't want the trainers to be in the workplace interfering with our machinery or production line" (Submission 10).

Both public TAFEs and private RTOs opposed assessment increases, believing financial impacts would render their business models unworkable. In a VET curriculum, assessment serves several functions. For educators, assessment tools integrate quality teaching and learning by serving diagnostic, formative, and summative purposes. The evidence from the submissions identifies assessments being used for the purposes of control and accountability when prescribed by industry, rather than seeing assessments as educational tools for knowledge evaluation and gap training. Consequently, the curriculum narrows towards exam-relevant content rather than broader competencies like problem-solving or adaptability. The Australian context further narrows the curriculum towards the goal of collecting evidence for government funding and competitive marketplace survival. Findings of this research indicate that the inclusion of assessment was considered an opportunity to manage RTO and teacher performance rather than the purpose of reporting student progress.

> The [named government department] is grappling with this all the time with these competing interests (of the sub-cultures. The time lags and the interest groups having dug in to achieve particular sets of outcomes are really quite involved; it's quite a complex negotiation. (Rep. 11)

At the time of this case study, training packages were reviewed based on four-year rotations. That is, every four years, it was a policy requirement that training packages be reviewed and updated. The negotiations over the design of the FDF10 training package extended over a period of 13 years, an extraordinary length of time for a training package review. The political tensions between designers had meant that when viewed against the current government's own standards, the skills and knowledge contained within this training package were out of date by nine years. This identification brings into question the initial introduction of a CBT curriculum and its ability to produce agile qualifications which adapt to industry needs. Its also questions the role of industry at the heart of the intended curriculum, where the designers' purposes and objectives can be seen to prioritise employer outcomes, rather than apprentice learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The vocational education curriculum is shaped by the intended purposes of its designers (Billett, 2011). Billett's definition of an intended curriculum asks the reader to question the intended purposes of the designers of the vocational curriculum. Australia is in the process of reviewing and reforming its national VET qualifications, a movement mirrored in New Zealand. This study provides an important reflection point for both countries as they undertake reforms.

The study examines the negotiation between designers and identifies examples of how self-interests are prioritised in the process. Due to the conflict between subcultures in the design process the training package review process had taken 13 years, leaving the curriculum outdated. Artisan bakers were focused on the cultural survival of their craft skills and sought comprehensive control of the curriculum content, its implementation, and the use of assessment to ensure quality. Large chain bakeries were not interested in training that would equip apprentices for their future vocations as bakers and employment in diverse business models. Craft skills were of no use to their business, and they would not fund training in complex skills and knowledge which had no clear benefit for their business models. While both public TAFEs and private RTOs were aligned in their concern for the use of assessment by industry as a tool for quality control, they disagreed over the inclusion of units containing complex skills and knowledge. Notably, they disagreed not because of concern for student development, but rather because of their business models and ability to survive within a competitive market.

The findings show the intentions of industry to represent interests that are complex, divergent, and far from univocal. In Australia the government intentions for VET curriculum place "industry at the heart" (Joyce, 2019). It is argued that with industry as the designing drivers of the skills, knowledge, and learning outcomes of our VET qualifications Australian graduates will develop the contemporary capabilities they require for the future world of work. Furthermore, the government creation of a competitive marketplace is promoted using the neoliberal terms of user choice, and client-driven and economic rationalist language of efficiency and agility. Yet this case study identifies that employers make the choices over training curriculum design and implementation, and the decision-making process is lengthy and delayed by political manoeuvring over its control.

The dynamics of this case study make an important contribution towards a theoretical understanding of the intended curriculum of Australian VET, with important reflection points for our neighbours across the water. It demonstrates how prevailing global economic ideologies can influence government policymakers. Government policy is influenced by global economic ideologies, and curriculum designers may adopt paradigms that prioritise workforce needs at the expense of holistic individual development. Ultimately, the findings show how social and institutional structures influence which forms of knowledge are legitimised and embedded within training packages, particularly in apprenticeship education.

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"IS THIS TUNA?" AND "WHAT THE FUCK IS A CHEF KNIFE?": UNLEARNING CULINARY ARTS

Nohema García-Castañeda and Kai-Sean Lee

Is this tuna?
A vignette by Nohema García-Castañeda

I remember one of my first lessons as a culinary student. It was in Puebla, Mexico, in 2008, a time when molecular gastronomy swept through culinary programs. Students weren't just interested in knife skills and mother sauces anymore, they were obsessed with liquid nitrogen, sous vide compressions, and turning everything possible into edible foams and spheres. But for many of us, the most mind-bending transformations weren't the ones involving agar-agar and sodium alginate. They were the ones that challenged what we thought we knew about food.

Most of us had never been outside the country. What little knowledge we had of global cuisines and ingredients came from paid TV; late-night reruns of *Iron Chef*, and Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations* were our culinary points of reference. We watched in awe, but it was all abstract—mere images on screen.

"Gather your mise en place and grab your tuna—we'll be working with it today," our instructor announced.

My partner, a fellow first-year student, walked over to the ingredient table. Only to return a moment later empty-handed.

"I couldn't find the tuna," he muttered.

"Okay," I said, assuming he'd just overlooked it.

Minutes passed and frustration crept into his voice. Finally, he turned to the chef, and somewhat hesitantly admitted, "Chef, I can't find the tuna."

The chef cocked an eyebrow, walked over to the fridge, and came back holding a sleek, ruby-red fillet on a quarter-size sheet pan.

"This tuna?" he said, pressing the sheet pan into my partner's hands.

My partner stared at it perplexedly, turned to me and held it up like an alien artifact.

"Is this tuna? I've only ever seen tuna in a can."

No, tuna does not originate from a can. But the food systems that we are exposed to and grew up with would make us believe otherwise. A person's relationship with food is shaped by the environment they are raised in. As Lee (2022) notes, we are all carriers of different "culinary worlds"; and by "world," Lee is referring to a metaphorical domain socially constructed upon our accumulated experiences with food—a culmination of one's gustemic knowing (p. 7). A person's culinary world is unique, personal, and incomparable to another's.

As two U.S. culinary educators of immigrant backgrounds—one from Mexico, the other from Malaysia—we have witnessed firsthand our students' varying culinary worlds. We once had a student searching for "dry white wine" on the spice rack, mistakenly expecting it to be in powdered form. We have witnessed another meticulously peeling the skin off a green zucchini, only to say that "this cucumber doesn't look right." We have even seen students hold up both a green and red bell pepper in confusion, asking us, "Chef, which one is considered black pepper?" While it would be easy to dismiss these students as uninformed or naive, their confusion is well-founded. The industrialization of food, the dominance of processed and pre-packaged ingredients, and the erasure of food literacy in education have left many disconnected from the raw materials of cooking. In a society where food is increasingly commodified, where fish comes in rectangular frozen blocks, vegetables are pre-diced, and "home cooking" often means assembling pre-made components, the fundamental nature of ingredients is obscured.

Culinary education today, circa 2025, is hence not just about teaching techniques. It is about rebuilding lost relationships with food. It is about reintroducing students to the raw, the unprocessed: the origins of what they consume. Without such a foundation, how can we expect our students to understand the true depth of a cuisine, let alone master it? The lack of culinary acumen and food literacy is a major concern. We are witnessing a growing disconnect between us as humans and our natural, cultural environments. It is no surprise, then, that students today are more likely to recognize a Starbucks Peppermint Mocha over fresh peppermint tea, a McDonald's McFlurry over a freshly churned vanilla ice cream, and instant ramen over hand-pulled noodles.

Each student's culinary worldview is shaped continuously and, at times, distorted by the prevailing food environment and shifting consumer trends. Consider, for example, the decline of home cooking and how it has disrupted vital connections to the natural world and weakened ties to family and community (Pollan, 2014). In the U.S., the growing reliance on food consumed away from home has fostered dependency on a mass-produced, industrial food system—one that is often impersonal, unsustainable, and concerning to public health (Baldwin et al., 2023). Even for those who still cook at home, the landscape is troubling: grocery stores and supermarkets are overwhelmingly stocked with processed and ultra-processed foods, accounting for 60 percent of the average American's caloric intake (Ravandi et al., 2025). Let us not forget that access to food, and the hierarchies embedded within food systems, are also systemic issues. Not everyone has equitable access to "good" meals. This disparity of access is often rooted in the intersections of race, class, geographical location, social status, and income (Herrington & Mix, 2021). As educators, we must acknowledge these forces, for they allow us to better equip students—not just with skills, but with the critical awareness needed to navigate and challenge today's food systems.

Beyond concerns of food equity, the *Is This Tuna?* vignette also reveals a deeper issue within our culinary programs: the enduring colonial presence embedded in our gastronomy curricula. In a recent viral rant in the tourism field, Benjamin et al. (2024) call for a much-needed review of our academy and the colonial values we hold. The authors urge us to decolonize our curricula by critically examining how they may perpetuate the marginalization or devaluation of minority cultures. The next vignette illustrates how dominant cultural assumptions persist.

What the fuck is a chef knife?

A vignette by Kai-Sean Lee

> I come from a family that valued good cooking and eating. My mom single-handedly raised a family of four out of near poverty. During the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and economic recession in Malaysia, a period marked by mass layoffs and corporate upheaval, mom started a small catering business to support us. With very few options and an urgent need for income, she began catering lunches for a small corporate office. She started modestly, cooking just ten home-packed meals each day, collecting payments in cash, and slipping one ringgit (about 20 cents USD at the time) into my hand as a reward for behaving well during our afternoon drives together. Ten meals soon turned into twenty, and eventually, she expanded into owning her own restaurants.
>
> My mom was an extraordinary cook. One of my earliest childhood memories, from when I was four, is of her rhythmically drumming a cleaver onto a wooden cutting board. She used that cleaver for everything she prepared. The sound was distinct and resonant: *Tock … Tock … Tock …*, a steady clock-like beat produced from nothing but the twist of her wrist.
>
> I had never used a knife other than a cleaver until I enrolled in a culinary program in Malaysia—a French culinary curriculum ironically taught by only Malaysian Chinese chefs. On the first day of school, we collected our culinary bags and tools. I was eager to finally have a cleaver of my own—only to be disappointed. The blade I received was sleek, curved, and unfamiliar. It was a "chef knife," my culinary instructor told me. I remember looking at it and thinking: *What the fuck is a chef knife?*

Culinary education is often steeped in implicit assumptions about what constitutes legitimate culinary knowledge. The standardized curriculum in many culinary schools privileges Eurocentric gastronomy and culinary techniques (for instance, French knife cuts or mother sauces) as the foundation of professional cooking. This foundation is not neutral; it reflects a colonial legacy that marginalizes other culinary traditions and ways of knowing (Janer, 2007, 2022).

For Kai-Sean, who grew up in South East Asia, a cleaver was not just a tool but a tangible cultural heritage. Thus, the chef's knife in culinary school was not simply a new instrument, it was an explicit signal to which culinary traditions were valued, and which were seen as secondary, even invisible. Introducing this knife represented a form of "intellectual imperialism," wherein the dominant culture's knowledge continues to overshadow and marginalize another's long after the end of colonial rule (Alatas, 2000). The curriculum never questioned why the chef knife was considered the "preferred" tool, nor did it leave space to explore alternative culinary tools and techniques that reflected the lived experiences of students from varied backgrounds.

Standing in a classroom filled with shiny chefs' knives and feeling the weight of an unfamiliar blade illustrates how coloniality persists in shaping what we teach, how we teach it, and whose knowledge is centered. Students from non-Western backgrounds are often asked to adapt, conform, and suppress parts of their culinary identities to fit a predetermined mold. Their own culinary worlds are rendered invisible, sidelined in favor of a curriculum designed around Western gastronomy's perceived universality (Janer, 2007, 2022; Lee, 2020; Lee & Bucher, 2023; Lee & Carmer, 2024; Woodhouse, 2016, 2018; Woodhouse & Rodgers, 2024).

As educators, we must ask ourselves: Whose body of knowledge and techniques are we privileging over others? What culinary knowledge is excluded when we enforce a singular, colonially informed standard of excellence? Why aren't we introducing the techniques of the non-West? Why isn't Chinese noodle-making part of the lesson plan for understanding gluten development, whereas pasta-making is? Why aren't the fermentation techniques behind Korean kimchi as rigorously incorporated into our curriculum as those used to make European cheeses

and wines? Why aren't Indigenous methods of open-fire cooking recognized as foundational skills when grilling and sautéing dominate the curriculum? Why is a French omelet the "preferred" way to learn about protein coagulation when *tamagoyaki* and *omurice* are equally valuable and challenging techniques to master? Why do we emphasize Western stocks and consommés while overlooking the depth and complexity of Southeast Asian broths like pho and laksa? Why isn't the Japanese philosophy of *mottainai* (Japanese: もったいない for "no waste") integrated into lessons on sustainability and food waste, while European nose-to-tail butchery is emphasized? Why isn't mastering chopsticks part of a curriculum, but Western dining etiquette is?

We (both the first and second author) once worked with a chef who advised our students to master French cuisine before exploring any others, insisting that "French techniques are the fundamentals, transferable across all cuisines." Yet, the student receiving this advice was of Chinese heritage—a culinary tradition that not only differs profoundly in philosophy and technique from those of European cuisines but also predates them by centuries. The origins of Chinese culinary traditions go back at least 4,000–5,000 years, with records of sophisticated cooking techniques and regional variations appearing in ancient texts like the *Rites of Zhou* (c. 1100 BCE) and *Shiji* (c. 100 BCE). The Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE) already had a structured approach to cuisine, including dietary classifications and culinary philosophy (for instance, theories of flavor balance and yin yang principles), and cooking methods that were well-developed long before many European culinary traditions took shape. What we now recognize as "French cuisine" began developing from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. France's cuisine evolved later, shaped particularly by Renaissance and Enlightenment currents, and rose to global prominence between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet even during its ascension, French kitchens eagerly absorbed Eastern influences, often without crediting their origins. From the porcelain and tea rituals of the East Asian elites to imported citrus, spices, and cooking vessels that quietly reshaped European technique, they each remind us that culinary authority is never straightforward and that privileging French "fundamentals" often means overlooking the traditions on which they stand over. The bottom line is, if we are comparing which culinary system has documented, continuous foundations stretching furthest back, Chinese cuisine still precedes French gastronomy by millennia.

Why does this chronology matter? Because it reveals how "fundamental" status is less about merit and more about whose culinary knowledge became canonized through imperial power and Eurocentric taste-making. Teaching European methods as the baseline therefore risks reinscribing historical hierarchies and marginalizing equally rigorous traditions. A contemporary curriculum should treat European techniques as one influential dialect among many, and invite students to engage with multiple culinary heritages, including those that predate and have quietly nourished European gastronomy itself.

Unlearning culinary arts: Towards a culinary pedagogy of *sondering* and *world-traveling*

In *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, John Koenig (2021) introduces the term "sonder," which he describes as:

> The realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries, and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk. (cover page)

Sonder is the humbling recognition of the vastness of human experience, the understanding that we can never truly see life through another's eyes, only our own. What if we embraced culinary education through sonder? What if we shift our lenses away from mere delivery and depositing of information, and towards embracing each student's culinary world with curiosity? What if we leaned into the multiple, untold culinary stories in our classrooms, and leveraged them towards our curricular goals?

As educators we often mistake a standardized curriculum and lesson plans for a universal, one-size-fits-all framework; this is a false impression, especially in gastronomy and culinary education when students arrive at our classrooms with different levels of access to food (especially in the flawed and inequitable food systems we live in today). We need to lean into our "sonders" (Koenig, 2021), understand that our students' "inner culinary worlds" are unique and non-universal (Lee, 2022), and figure out ways to travel into their respective worlds. Doing so will not only enrich the student's experience and growth but also ours as instructors.

To embrace the idea of sonder and world-traveling, we must first unlearn the culinary education as we know it, and work towards rebuilding the fabric of new culinary curricula that enables us to see the world through the diverse lenses of food. We need to work towards helping learners lean into their own intersecting understandings of taste and culture, allowing each learner to tap into their individuality before gazing outwards (Lee, 2022, 2023; Lee & Carmer, 2024). In addition, we must foster a safe and brave space for culinary dialogues to occur; one that does not discount one culture's culinary knowledge but understands each culture's role in the grand scheme of our global gastronomy. Fostering such a space moves the domain a step closer towards Benjamin et al.'s (2025) call for a decolonized academy. Culinary arts and gastronomy do not belong to a singular cuisine, culture, or framework (Bucher & Lee, 2023; Lee & Bucher, 2023; Woodhouse & Rodgers, 2024). Thus, a critical eye needs to be cast on our current culinary curricula.

A simple step towards this goal is to incorporate currently marginalized flavors, ingredients, and culinary techniques into our lesson plans. For example, we can introduce *Shaanxi Biangbiang* noodle-making in classes that emphasize gluten-development and starch gelatinization (which in the U.S. often focus solely on Italian pasta-making). Why not incorporate *masa de maíz* into the lesson as well, especially when gluten-intolerance is becoming a widespread epidemic? Why not show how *lengua* (beef tongue) is cleaned, prepared, and eaten, and not just overindulge in "preferred" meat cuts? Why not introduce students to how *salsa de molcajete* is crafted, and how charring poblano peppers over an open flame brings out depths of flavors that would otherwise remain buried? Why not incorporate wok-frying and the science of *wok hei* (the breath of the wok) in searing and sauté classes, since wok-frying is recognized as the most efficient cooking method in many Eastern cultures? If we take the time to unlearn our current ways of teaching culinary arts, we may just be amazed by the depth of our sonders. Culinary education then becomes an opportunity for learning and sharing: a "world-traveling" endeavor with our students (Lee, 2022).

Another step towards a decolonized curriculum is to curate our learning materials (such as recipes, readings, and textbooks) from more diverse sources. We should move away from textbooks that glorify certain cuisines and foodways over others. In doing so, we can acknowledge the contributions of global food cultures and eliminate the tendency to label them with blanket titles such as "foreign foods," "international cuisine," and "Asian cookery." More importantly, as educators, we need to reflect on how our own culinary backgrounds and training influence our teaching practices, ensuring that we do not exacerbate divisions or reinforce hierarchies between culinary traditions. In other words, we need to understand our own culinary worlds and the blind sides that come with them.

Our role as educators is not to impose a singular narrative of culinary excellence but to cultivate an environment where diverse traditions are not only acknowledged but centered and valued. By leaning into our culinary sonders, perhaps one day a student will not be shamed for mistaking tuna for merely canned food, and a Chinese cleaver will be included in a standard culinary school knife kit.

Nohema García-Castañeda (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3883-5306) explores food and beverages as a cultural, educational, and societal influence. Her research focuses on understanding how food shapes people's life, educational, and work experiences, while also enhancing hospitality education and practices in food and beverage operations.

Kai-Sean Lee's (ORCID ID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1899-7219) research interests rest in the crossroads of philosophical aesthetics and gastronomy. In simpler terms, he studies the nature of good food and good eating, and what "good" means to different people. On a lighter note, Kai-Sean also identifies as a w(h)ine enthusiast, meaning he loves to drink wine and whine about life.

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