

On the Domination of Latino Immigrants in American Restaurants: Sketches of "Symbolic Violence"

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Abstract

This project is an ethnographic exposition of the crucial role of Latin American immigrants in the US restaurant industry. Using "observant participation" (see Wacquant 2006) and interviews with New York restaurant professionals, this paper examines a correlation of social domination and immigrant status that is endemic to the restaurant industry and upon which that industry and its culture profoundly depend. Using Pierre Bourdieu's social theory, specifically his concept of *symbolic violence*, this paper examines the symbolic means by which this type of domination is legitimized, drawing a homological connection from the unequal social structure of the restaurant to that of US-Latin American relations.

Introduction

Labor theorists in the service society of the late 20th and 21st centuries have taken as a central question of their research to be: 'what is the nature of social domination in this new era of labor?' As much as this entire sociological subgenre has at its foundation the class configuration theorized by Marx, its practitioners must question how the development in recent decades of the dominating Western nations' societies from production-based economies into service-based societies may seemingly conflict with such theories, having been formulated in much earlier and different economic times. In the new service society, class relations within the workplace are not necessarily divided into clearly defined segments, such as 'workers' and 'bosses', *the proletariat and the bourgeoisie*. As theorists such as Rachel Sherman (2007, 2005), Amy Hanser (2007), Robin Leidner (2001) and Jeff Sallaz (2008, 2002) emphasize, variously following Michael Burawoy (1979, 1985) and Arlie Hochschild (1983), the now routine interaction of the formerly socially-segregated classes of society has major

implications for how we must today theorize labor. However, there is great opposition between these sociologists' theories.

The contemporary American restaurant—its 'front of house', specifically—is a unique expression of the service society that is a highly relevant, if under-observed, object of study for the labor theorist today. In it, luxury class-affirming services are presented as legitimately worth their cost to the consumer. Hanser calls this *distinction work*, a new type of labor in the service society which "centrally involve[s] the production and consumption of social difference" (2007: 415-6). Yet at the same time that social difference is being produced by restaurant workers for consumption by their customers, social class differences are re/produced between the various segments of the restaurant workforce itself. Across the restaurant industry, there is a concrete pattern of racialized labor segmentation within the front-of-house (FOH). Specifically, Latino immigrant workers are relegated to "support" positions—that of the *busser* and *food-runner* in particular—while their White counterparts enjoy the better-paying and more prestigious "front" positions of *server* and *bartender*. Although the restaurant industry is (commonsensically) championed by many as a perfect expression of meritocratic society, I hold that it is instead an innovator in the creation and maintenance of social-class domination within even just its workforce.

In this ethnographic study, I examine the unique system of social organization created within the typical restaurant FOH from the perspective of one who was once *doxically invested* in it.¹ At the time that I began this research, I had worked in restaurants for seven years. Two years later, my observations are still providing interesting and fascinating findings.

The social-theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu inspire my understanding of the labor-theoretical implications of what I observe while on the job, and guide me in reconciling the rhetorical differences within the field of contemporary labor studies. These differences are centered around the question of how social domination is performed: is it through coercive means—as is often (traditionally) understood to be the

1 The concept of *doxa* refers to a state of subscription to a set of socially-constituted beliefs which one's total perception of reality cannot make sense without.

case in production-based economies—or through some innovative method and degree of consent on behalf of workers?

Michael Burawoy (1979, 1985) provided a new way to understand the workplace in the deindustrializing Western nations by looking at it through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's (1972) concept of *hegemony*. This way, the theorist had a greater ability to understand *de facto* social segregation in the supposedly egalitarian late 20th- and early 21st-century service society.

Such service-society theorists as Sherman (2007, 2005) and Sallaz (2008, 2002) make good use of Burawoy's conceptualization of hegemony. However, as a theoretical concept, it has significant analytical limitations. By definition, 'hegemony' presupposes an *active* process of consent construction between dominant and dominated groups. In practice, however, the process is a matter of *reproducing* consent: in other words, dominant and dominated groups perpetuate and evolve their pre-existing social relations.

Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic violence* fills this theoretical gap. Like the notion of hegemony, symbolic violence is a process in which the dominated consent to the terms of (and actively partake in) their domination. Unlike hegemony however, it does not require active construction, nor is it part of intentional, conspirative efforts of the dominant; instead, it is the product of agents—both dominant and dominated—who operate and interact in accordance with the social categories, roles, inequalities (etc.) that they take for granted:

Legitimation of the social order is not ... the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; it results, rather, from the fact that agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of perception and appreciation which are issued out of these very structures and which tend to picture the world as evident (Bourdieu, 1989:21; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 168 n.123).

The *prereflexive* nature of symbolic violence, being patently more invisible due to its foundation in normative social organization, is even more insidious and powerful than individual acts of coercion: 'Of all forms of "hidden persuasion," the most implacable is the one exerted, quite simply, by the *order of things*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:

168).² In the following pages, I will use examples from my field work which illustrate this point.

Degrees and Variety of Symbolic Violence: Some Empirical Examples from the Field

Symbolic violence is a subtle and pernicious (and therefore very efficacious) means of perpetuating social inequality. It has a variety of manifestations in the service workplace, which I will later demonstrate with my empirical data.

There are clear political roots to the symbolic violence imposed upon Latino labor migrants in the United States. Jorge Bustamante (2002) refers to the dominated position of Latino labor migrants as a state of "immigrant vulnerability", "... a social condition of powerlessness ascribed to individuals with certain characteristics that are perceived to deviate from those ascribed to the prevailing definitions of a national" which "is not an inherent characteristic of individuals who emigrate from the country of origin [or] to racial characteristics, or to a country or an ethnic origin, or to the conditions of underdevelopment of the country or the region of origin" (340). I modify Bustamante's terminology in two ways: first by adding to the notion of immigrant vulnerability that of *a pervasive state of precarity*, and secondly by defining this concept as a state of *power deprivation* rather than one of "powerlessness."

Burawoy (1976) also emphasizes that migrant subordination is a social construction of the receiving country: "the value of migrant labor is not something to be taken as given but is *created and recreated* by the state" (1076). Robert Bach (1978) offers a similar structural analysis, in which the subordination and manipulation of

² Bourdieu claims that the greatest defect of Marx's theory was his failure to identify the political efficacy of culture and cognition. Although symbolic violence is marked in this way as a conceptual break from 'hegemony', there does not appear to be any reason to refute that calculated domination is, in certain cases, also part of the social relations of a workplace. Thus, in adopting the concept of symbolic violence, researchers of the labor process (including those of interactive service work) need not awfully abandon the notion of hegemony. Recently, Sallaz (2008) has advanced an attempt to reconcile the differences between the theory of Bourdieu and that of Burawoy, arguing that their analytical differences stem simply from empirical differences in the two authors' sites and methods of research. See also Lopez (1996) for a convincing analysis of hegemonic regimes in the potato chip delivery industry.

immigrants serves to suppress not only immigrants themselves, but the entire working class. Bach states in no uncertain terms that maltreatment of immigrants is not simply random and individual acts; rather, discrimination and the reproduction of Mexican migration is a crucial part of and endemic to the capitalist structure: "The conditions of exploitation of the Mexican immigrant cannot be erased so easily [as though they are individual acts of maltreatment]. Instead, the processes embodied in the state which contribute to the conditions of exploitation spring from the very nature of the state reproducing capitalist social relations in general" (539).

Similarly, Rachel Ida Buff (2008) explains the racialized subordination of Mexican immigrants as "...a crucial technology of the state"; "a racialized system of... ["post-entry"] social control" (525). To Buff, by criminalizing undocumented immigrants and constructing a pervasive threat of capture and deportation, the state engineers a means of disenfranchising undocumented immigrants and allows for that racialized disenfranchisement to invade the lives of naturalized Mexican (and in general, Latino) immigrants and even their US-born children. This process should also be recognized as one of class construction and class reproduction: as Bustamante argues, criminalizing a social group is to deny its political validity, thereby imposing great obstacles in the way of identity self-determination and making claims on rights in social spaces, including the workplace (see also Flores 2003).

Latino immigrants' precarity exists in various degrees, all manifestations of the same state of vulnerability. Commonly, individual immigrants—in our case, in the restaurant industry—are relegated to occupations of relatively low pay and prestige, high responsibility and low authority. In other words, theirs are generally poor working conditions.

At least two extreme examples of immigrant vulnerability stick out from the time period of my formal participant research, manifested in two separate acts of physical violence against Latino men employed at a large corporate-owned Italian restaurant in a New York City suburb, "*Trattoria*":

Aldo

A 27 year-old Mexican busser, Aldo, came to work one afternoon with a cuts and bruises all over his face, and a black eye. As it turned out, Aldo had been at a nearby Latino nightclub the night before when he was attacked (“jumped”) by a group of Latino men. News of the attack came to me from Tina, an assistant floor manager at *Trattoria*.

A career restaurant manager in her early thirties, Tina possesses a Bronx Italian accent and very relaxed, populist affect that gained her a level respect among the bussers at *Trattoria* unlike that which I’ve ever seen between a Latin American support staff and a white/non-Hispanic manager. Because of this, Tina often served as something of a broker between the support staff and upper management when favors needed to be arranged, and it also earned her uncommon insight to events such as Aldo’s attack.

Tina told me in a tone that expressed equal distress for Aldo’s well-being and irritation with his stubborn irresponsibility and recklessness “I told him, he needs to stop going to that damn place, all the Spanish [sic] guys who work here keep getting themselves in trouble there.” Thinking of this particular establishment as being one of the nicer-looking Latino nightclubs in the neighborhood (a suburb of New York City with a large Latino immigrant population and many family-owned Latino businesses), I was surprised to here not only that the attack had happened there, but that it was the site of many similar occurrences with other Latino men who worked with us. When asked why there and why so often, Tina nonchalantly told me that it was a matter of Latino gangs staking claim to a desirable hangout.

José

The management at *Trattoria* felt compelled to hold an emergency meeting to inform and alert the staff of what was understood to be an old but intensifying pattern of violence in the area, following an even worse attack on another one of the restaurant’s Latino employees. On the night before—a Friday—a middle-aged dishwasher named José was cornered and beaten by a group of “five or six black guys” (in the words of Jimmy, the chef and part owner) just yards away from the kitchen

doorway as he was leaving work. After breaking one of his hands and numerous ribs, José's attackers demanded his money; when he surrendered a newly-issued paycheck, one of the attackers crumpled it up and threw it in his face before the group retreated. José then got into his car to drive himself back to the restaurant, where one of the members of the kitchen staff called the police.

The officers who responded to the call expressed no surprise, and assumed that José's attackers were looking specifically for undocumented kitchen workers who would be carrying their week's pay in cash; thus, the attack was not seen as random, but was in fact deliberately perpetrated on a pay-day.

Jimmy announced that the restaurant would be employing police officers to patrol each of the two adjacent street corners during times that future attacks would be more likely, but I was only ever aware of this happening that evening. As a further precaution, Jimmy insisted that employees enact a policy of escorting each other to their cars every night. Jimmy closed the meeting with these words:

"We're trying to do good things for this area, but there are people here [in the neighborhood] who don't wanna see that happen. They want it to stay the same. Let's make sure that they don't succeed."

Implicit in Jimmy's statement is the belief that the presence of *Trattoria*—a large employer of Latino immigrants in a traditionally working-class (but currently gentrifying) town—would pull up that town socially and economically. What I witnessed, contrarily, was that the restaurant was frequented almost exclusively by a well-heeled White clientèle from wealthier towns in the area.

Following Jimmy's instructions to implement a 'buddy system', I offered to walk with Tina to her car after work a few days later; she sincerely thanked me, but told me it wasn't necessary. Uncomfortable with her decision, I asked why she thought she would be safe walking by herself. As it turns out, Tina was the closing manager when José was assaulted and so she had much of the dealing with the police herself. Tina recounted highlights from the hours after José stumbled back into the kitchen, including the police response.

As the officers filed their report and José was cared for by paramedics, one of the

officers (who, Tina made a point of telling me, “had an Italian last name”) sought out Tina for questioning. However, the officer’s interest was in the large, custom-built wood-burning brick oven around which the kitchen’s floor plan was designed. Startled and somewhat offended by the officer’s indifference, Tina tried to bring the topic of conversation back to the attack, expressing fear for her own future safety (“oh great, so now I have to worry about being attacked when I leave work every night!?”) The officer answered that Tina should not worry about herself, explaining that such attacks are “Black-on-Mexican”, evoking the stereotype that Latin American immigrants are all Mexican.

Evidently, Tina trusted the officer’s judgment enough to risk walking to her car alone that night, believing that her race was sufficient protection against such attacks. Individuals can internalize the deprivation of a group’s rights and political validity, leading to a diminished sense of one’s own rights in general. This may lead to lower expectations for income, job promotion, and working conditions. And, when undocumented immigrants, naturalized immigrants, and even US-born Latinos are conflated into an artificial category, their marginalization becomes less national or cultural in nature and more a matter of race construction.

The precarity of immigrants does not, however, manifest as often in the form of physical attacks as it does in other, more subtle and insidious ways. Vulnerability can be more like a *structural violence* (Walter et al, 2004), which is defined as the demographic likeliness of particular groups (e.g. Mexican labor migrants) to occupy segments of the labor market that entail greater risk of acute physical injury (e.g. line-cooks who work with and in extreme heat and with extremely sharp knives; dishwashers who routinely carry heavy bags of garbage that have broken glass mixed into them, etc.). Even more subtle is the occurrence of more pernicious (as opposed to acute) structural violence, such as physical and mental stress. For example, “Tier II” workers often make up for low hourly earnings by working multiple jobs. Yet another busser from *Trattoria*, Ernesto, exemplifies this last group of those who suffer structural violence, as well as the structural precarity associated with many Latin American immigrants.

Ernesto

For a number of months before I moved to an apartment that was closer to *Trattoria*, Ernesto drove me home after our late Friday and Saturday night shifts. This allowed me to speak with Ernesto in ways that I never could have at work, and I learned a great deal about his history and family life. During our 15-25 minute drives, Ernesto would talk about work, the good and bad aspects of each of his jobs, fixing his truck, life since El Salvador, and his education (which ended after the fifth grade).

Ernesto, at this time, was 46 years old, and he lived with his wife and their daughter, who was 15. Ernesto left El Salvador in 1982 to escape that country's civil war, and jokes that, in moving to South Central Los Angeles, he had traded one war-zone for another.

To Ernesto, restaurant work is his part-time job, where he works 30 hours each week. The average \$400 weekly earnings from this job is more than the salary from his full-time job doing building maintenance which he has held for eight years.

Working a 70-hour week and being the father of a 15-year old daughter requires a good deal of coordination and a little luck. With Tina's help, the management at the restaurant has agreed to make an exception to Ernesto's "in-time" so that he can come to work for dinner service directly from his other job. There is very little free time between his two jobs already; in the event that a manager writes him into the schedule for one of the few days that he is not available—which seemed to happen often—means Ernesto would have to work two weeks without a day off, as the schedule at *Trattoria* is written two weeks at a time. One night while he drove me home, Ernesto told me that the schedule was wrong twice in a row, leading him to work for four weeks with no break. Ernesto is afraid to mention the scheduling errors because he feels that they are already doing him a great favor by letting him come in about half an hour late each day. However, in that coming in late means staying as the 'closing' busser—at least a half-hour later than everyone else—the exchange seems fair and beneficial to both Ernesto and the restaurant.

At the end of one of these grueling four weeks, Ernesto said to me, relieved:

Ernesto: "Tomorrow, though, I have off."

ET: "That's great! What are you going to do?"

Ernesto [nonchalantly]: "Work."

On his days off from his jobs—of which he likes to have one, but never more than two per week—Ernesto does odd jobs for friends, either as favors or for a modest amount of cash. I tell him that working so much is physically and emotionally unhealthy. He agrees, but doesn't see any alternatives, exclaiming, "what other choice I have!? I'm no a doctor; I have to work. *People like me, we don't have no choice* [emphasis added]." Ernesto explains that because he is 46 already, he wants to work now, while in good health; he does not know what he will do for money when he gets older and weaker.

The experiences of these three people, although all quite different, provide us with a broad sample of Latino labor migrants' states of precarity. Although their experiences emerge in different manifestations, all are ultimately due to a structural devaluation of the Latino labor migrant experience.

This paper deals with the more subtle expression of precarity, embodied by Ernesto's experience, rather than the more sensational examples of physical violence. The state of anxiety and constant fatigue that Ernesto's 70-hour work weeks induce is not a random predicament, but a structural affliction that Ernesto suffers both bodily and emotionally. He is part of a labor market in which his labor is rewarded with a wage so insufficient that he struggles financially despite that there are no more hours left in the week to work. Having escaped two war-zones in the course of his life, Ernesto is now subjected to a violence that only the critical observer can identify.

The acceptance that there is no alternative to one's socioeconomic condition, exemplified by Ernesto's case above, is central in the joint performance of symbolic violence between the dominant White segment of the FOH and the dominated Latino segment. In restaurants today, ethno-racial inequality is perpetuated not under the noses of both the dominant and dominated, but indeed *by* those very people. At the same time, the façade of meritocracy—that fundamental feature of American capitalist egalitarian ideology—is upheld.

Another foodrunner/busser at *Trattoria*, Julio, found himself in a constant cycle of work between two jobs.

Julio

Having worked in restaurants for fifteen years—first as a cook and then as a busser and a runner—Julio is an extremely experienced and intuitive worker. As a busser there is rarely anything that he needs to be told to do. Built short and thick, as though he was bred to sustain long, physically- and emotionally- demanding and punishing workdays in service-capacity positions, Julio moves fast and impeccably around the dining room floor. When a party finishes a course, he ‘clears and crumbs’ and always makes a point of reading the table’s order ticket to ensure that he sets each guest appropriately (steak knives for those with a grilled meat, spoons for those with brothy or soupy dishes, shell bowls for those with clam dishes, share plates for each guest if the party is sharing a dish, etc.). He can de-bone a whole-roasted fish faster and more neatly than most of the servers and managers on staff, and he could often see issues that needed my attention before I did. Of all the workers I have known and seen in any service capacity and any level of status, Julio is among the best.

Julio worked at least forty hours per week at *Trattoria*, and approximately twenty hours per week behind the bar at a much smaller, family-owned Italian restaurant in an adjacent town. When he told me of this bartending job, he immediately qualified this fact by explaining—with a shockingly apologetic tone—that it wasn’t like a ‘real bar,’ not like the kind of bartending that I do, he said. At his bar, there was very little in the way of mixed drinks, mostly wine and some bottled beer, and the volume, quality and style of service was lower.

Dealing with less liquor requires less of a bartender indeed. But that fact is irrelevant when compared to the revelation that Julio felt compelled to describe his professional pedigree as less valid, or valuable, than mine. I never asked if the bartending job was better work, or more lucrative than food-running, but the fact that Julio eventually left that job to run food at another restaurant nearby indicates the answer.

During the time that we worked together at Trattoria, Julio and I came to hold each other in high esteem, both professionally and personally. I once appealed to him that his labor is every bit as valuable as mine and that he deserved more recognition and better pay. He felt compelled to defend me from my own statement, enumerating the reasons why he thinks I am an excellent server and deserving of my higher pay scale. Remarkably, Julio spoke very little of my actual work ethic and very much of my *habitus*.³ He noted that I am very good in conversation with my guests and very well-spoken. Further, he praised my bodily capital, telling me that it is clear that I have a history in good restaurants by my posture and demeanor. He also cited how I hold a tray of drinks (balanced on my fingers, which are splayed, and my palm not touching the tray), and by how I grasp a dish (with only the pad of my thumb touching the rim, never with the thumb itself) and how I strategise serving my tables (all food served from the left hand, all drinks from the right, everything cleared with the right hand, ladies always first, by age).

Of course, these qualities that I possess as a worker required years of cultivation. But, before I could begin to cultivate them, I was placed into such a position to do so by virtue of the social and linguistic skills that I inherited much earlier in life. Julio's ability to identify my service style evinces that he possesses the skills of proper table service, too: it takes a practitioner, one who *embodies* the mechanics of proper table service, to recognize them as such. Yet, he was still relegated to lower-paying positions under the pretense of *inability*.⁴

³ *Habitus* is a classificatory "system of schemes of perception and appreciation of practices, cognitive and evaluative structures which are acquired through the lasting experience of a social position" which "implies a 'sense of one's place' but also a 'sense of the place of others'" (Bourdieu 1989: 19).

⁴ Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* also refers to the actual *embodiment* of one's experience. At the heart of this paper is the idea that the embodiment of one's social class is manifest in their actions and largely aids in the reproduction of class as the structure of life opportunities. The point here is that Julio embodies all the experience necessary to make him an outstanding foodservice worker, but the outward expression of his background—classed and ethnoracial—in turn limits his opportunities in the restaurant industry. In a previous paper (Thornton 2011) I expound on this topic, using language skills—*linguistic habitus*—as the centerpiece.

Reproduction of Inequality in Life- and Economic-Opportunity

At the heart of this research is the mostly uncontroversial idea that social inequality is reproduced. In all of the ethnographic sketches I provide here, I intend to show *how* it is that the existing state of inequality in restaurants is reproduced, and how all participants involved contribute to this reproduction—subtly and perniciously. In this final sketch, I attempt to recount a series of events from an evening at *Trattoria* of even greater subtlety.

As I have shown, the concepts of *cultural capital* and *habitus* (embodied capital) are useful for analyzing the means and legitimation of social inequality in restaurants. To Bourdieu, “the link between the qualifications obtained by individuals and the cultural capital inherited by virtue of their social background” is concealed in the exercise of symbolic power, which preserves the appearance of meritocracy (Thompson, in Bourdieu 1991:24). Thus, individuals enter situations with a certain amount of inherited cultural capital — in direct relation to their social position — but they also accumulate cultural capital through social “labor”. This speaks to how capital remains concentrated within certain social groups.

To explore this concept in the restaurant context, I will evoke one way in which opportunities to acquire an especially valuable form of cultural capital in restaurants—wine knowledge—are routinely concentrated within the group that already possesses the most valuable cultural capital (which, of course, is the front staff). A daily part of each service shift in most restaurants, the “pre-shift” meeting.

Pre-shift is crucial for the general success and well-being of the restaurant, but it’s also recognized as an important opportunity for front staff to increase their ability to earn tips, and to gradually improve their overall value as front-of-house workers. Much of the formal training that becomes part of front workers’ cultural capital, especially wine knowledge, is acquired over the course of their careers in these meetings; in a very real way, this is the service professional’s education. During pre-shift, the front-of-house, management, and the chef sit and address logistical problems, steps of service, and very often, taste from the wine list and any new additions to the menu (e.g. “specials”).

However valuable this moment may be for some, it is also a moment of exclusion and deprivation for others, where pre-existing disparities in cultural capital are reproduced and deepened. Wine knowledge—what we may justly call *wine capital*—is among the most valued resources of front-of-house workers; thus, it is also a very efficacious means by which the subordinate portion of front-of-house workers is held back.⁵

A Pre-shift Wine-Tasting at Trattoria

One evening before dinner service, management called upon a few staff members, among whom I was included, to fetch and distribute wine glasses for a pre-shift wine tasting. Setting glasses in front of our coworkers, I approached a table of bussers (every member of the Trattoria bussing staff were Latino men) to give them their glasses.

I cannot honestly say that this felt *right* to me, because I'm well aware that support staff are normally excluded from wine tastings. On the occasions that this opportunity *is* made available to the support staff, many will pass it up as though it would be presumptuous to participate precisely because they *recognize the unspoken fact that they are not actually welcome to participate*. (However, it is interesting that I have never noticed a member of any support staff forgo the opportunity to participate in a food tasting, except for observant Muslims who would abstain from tasting a dish if it did or may have contained pork. Public displays of hunger—hunger as eminently masculine—as performed by bussers on the occasion that they get to taste a dish in pre-meal, Bourdieu would likely say, would be intended to evince a classed characteristic that the bussers would desire to display.) Yet, despite that I knew it was not expected for me to pour for them, my recent commitment to researching restaurant inequality prompted me to behave toward less privileged workers in more egalitarian ways.

⁵ Phoebe Damrosch, a writer and former fine-dining professional has commented on this phenomenon: "They always say, 'They're not ready'...That's always the phrase: 'She's not quite ready.' They always hide under wine knowledge" (Severson and Ellick, 2007; see also Damrosch, 2007).

The sommelier Maryann handed me a bottle of wine so that I could go around the room dispensing small 'pours' (about one ounce) for the staff to taste and discuss, and ultimately learn about this wine. It was a new addition to the list which came in at around \$80 per bottle, so many of the wine enthusiasts on staff were eager to try it. Making my way around to all the tables, I stopped again at the group of bussers so as to pour for them, too, but a number of these bussers showed some discomfort, even embarrassment at the thought that they would be included in the tasting. (As it would turn out, their embarrassment evinced a better sense of the situation that I was expressing.) I poured for the one or two of the bussers who would accept: they did so giddily, as if they were misbehaving.

I continued to make my way back around the room toward Maryann, whom I poured for last out of custom. Seeing that the bottle was nearly empty and worried that there wouldn't be enough for her to taste, she criticized me under her breath for having wasted the wine on the bussers.

After years of "free-pouring" wine and liquor, I developed an impeccable sense of liquid volume, which has always been a source of pride for me. Lucky for me, my judgment that day was up to par, and there was just enough wine so that the very last ounce in the bottle was left for Maryann, as though it had set itself aside for her. In a jokingly self-aggrandizing manner, I commented that she should have more faith in my pouring skills — a recovery which enabled me to diffuse a suddenly tense situation. But this tension emerged from the fact that, although the wine tasting is meant to be available to all for the benefit of the whole, the bussers weren't, in fact, welcome to it.

The issue of *inherited* social class and taste (in the Bourdieuan sense) is perhaps only tacitly present in the above case, taken from field notes that I took the night of this highly-charged event. The pattern that I recognize, in which support workers sometimes turn down the opportunity to taste wine even when it is offered, can be said to speak to their inherited social class position. Appreciation for wine is, after all, most closely associated with 'middle-' and 'upper-' class lifestyles (at least, in the US). Here, we also see how social class is reproduced through inclusion and exclusion of who it is that is *supposed* to participate in and benefit from wine tastings. *Inclusion* normally

presupposes an appreciation for wine, awarding them with the opportunity to accumulate even more wine capital. On the other hand, *exclusion* hinders those who may not have a taste for wine from developing one. Despite that these bussers ostensibly had the right to improve their knowledge and competitive value through such training experiences, both they and the sommelier (whose job it is to develop the staff's wine knowledge) took for granted that they did not have the right to be included in this restaurant ritual. This has real implications for these support workers' opportunities for promotion and economic advancement.

To paraphrase Bourdieu's claim on *symbolic domination*, cultural capital that is earned and accumulated through social "labor" (one's actual efforts) requires that one have a certain amount of *inherited* cultural capital to begin with. This seemingly abstract idea is brought into concrete reality in the empirical example above.

Conclusion: Putting Theory to Work: Towards Practical Solutions

In discussing my observations of the American restaurant industry, I have put forth evidence for the theoretical argument that concrete, material social inequality reproduced in the service society occurs through a set of social relations in which both the dominant and dominated participate to uphold the order of things—a state of *symbolic domination*. We call the process one of *symbolic violence*.

Very well, but does that finding in itself contribute anything to struggles against the perpetuation of that condition? No, not *unto itself*. To fight the reproduction of this inequality, however, we can use this knowledge to shape our understanding of possible paths of resistance.

This struck me as a conundrum for some time. For, the ethnoracial organization of the restaurant as I know it, *and I know it well*, is so integrally part of the fabric of that industry, that I have trouble seeing the industry as existing without that inequality. I do not mean to overstate—there are exceptions to the ethnoracial rule. Some Latino restaurant workers enjoy mobility into the upper echelons of the restaurant industry. Yet, when we look at class fractions within the restaurant industry's Latino population, we see similar configurations of inequality; see Dávila (2001) and Waterston (2006),

who suggest that Whiteness as we know it in the US is in a process of reconstruction that is inclusive of middle- and upper-class Latinos.

It eventually occurred to me that there was a flaw in my thinking: while I found everywhere examples of the symbolic means of domination, I was looking (unsuccessfully) only for material paths of resistance. It was, namely, only organizing and unionizing that I was looking for, and restaurant workers are notoriously difficult to organize. What I eventually realized was that I was at fault for not also searching for examples of *symbolic resistance*.

This shall be the next phase of my research. In this next phase, I will seek to analyze how Latino cooks and dishwashers at a small family-style Italian-American restaurant in Brooklyn, New York make symbolic claims on their value and validity as workers. My hypothesis at the time I am writing this is that these workers collectively accomplish these claims through nick-naming and other unilateral methods of invalidating and humiliating FOH workers. This dynamic is made possible by the rare open-kitchen plan of the restaurant enables through constant interaction as well as other idiosyncratic features of this restaurant. These features make the restaurant's Latino cooks and dishwashers less vulnerable and disposable than is typical of their counterparts in other restaurants.

The question to ask now is *how do workers subvert the order of things and make claims on their legitimacy of their rights by symbolic means, and how can the researcher and the organizer use this knowledge to help them do it?* For, ultimately, the political motive of the observant participant researcher is not to merely observe and report, but to 'twist the stick in the other direction,' to radically and justly transform.

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