

The organizational construction of authenticity:
An examination of contemporary food and dining in the U.S.

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Abstract

This chapter attempts to strengthen theoretical connections between interpretive cultural studies of authenticity and organizational studies. Adopting an unstructured qualitative approach, we use the domain of contemporary food and dining to develop a conceptual framework for assessing authenticity. We start by recognizing the two very different classical symbolic interpretations of authenticity: (1) type authenticity, where the question involves whether an entity is true to its associated type (or category or genre); and (2) moral authenticity, where the issue concerns whether the decisions behind the enactment and operation of an entity reflect sincere choices (i.e., choices true to one's self) rather than socially scripted responses. We next suggest that, in response to social change, these two interpretations have each spawned a unique but related different meaning of authenticity. From type authenticity came what we call craft authenticity, which involves whether something is made using the appropriate techniques and ingredients. Idiosyncratic authenticity emerged out of moral authenticity; here the question is whether there is a commonly recognized (usually historical) quirkiness to the product or place. Our analysis then proceeds to develop a general conjecture, namely, that communication and impact of authenticity comes through most forcefully when it is constructed organizationally---tightly and visibly integrated into the structure of an organization. Depending on which of the four meanings of authenticity is operative, the details of the most compelling organizational construction will vary.

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Sociologists and other social scientists have long recognized that certain economic transactions involve more than a simple trade of goods or services for money. A long-standing theme in economic anthropology and sociology emphasizes the symbolic or moral character of certain economic exchanges or transactions (Weber, 1904/1992; Veblen, 1899; Malinowski, 1920; Geertz, 1973; Sahlins, 1976; Douglas, 1966). Some scholars working within the new economic sociology continue in this tradition by examining how cultural beliefs affect economic life, both in the background as institutions shaping social interaction and in the foreground as reflected in market dynamics, including price (Zelizer, 1994; Velthuis, 2005).

A related, specific theme of contemporary interest examines the interpretation and value placed on the perceived authenticity of products and producers to a transaction. For instance, Peterson (1997) examines how authenticity is “fabricated” in country music in order to make it appealing. Similarly, Carroll and Swaminathan (2000) conjecture that the rise of microbreweries and brewpubs resulted from the authenticity appeal of their organizational forms. Likewise, Grazian (2003:17) studies “how different kinds of people within the world of Chicago blues employ the concept of authenticity in their daily rounds in everyday life.” Fine (2004) analyzes how the biographies of self-taught artists define their authenticity. Rao et al. (2005) examine how issues of authenticity affect the social boundaries between classical and nouvelle French cuisine and the implications for restaurants. Finally, Wherry (2006) looks at the different ways authenticity plays out in the Thai market for handicrafts.

While these studies differ significantly in their treatments of authenticity, each addresses questions about how authenticity affects markets---prices, organizational dynamics and consumption patterns. Moreover, each agrees on a foundational issue about the social and economic importance of authenticity: what becomes perceived and labeled as “authentic” imbues an object or service with deeper meaning to its transaction partners, at least its consumers. In other words, authenticity carries with it an almost sacred, cultural type of interpretation that conveys value (Frazier et al., 2009).

What is authenticity? A common sociological observation stresses that authenticity is not a “real” thing or something that can be objectively determined but rather a socially constructed phenomenon. By this view, certain specific aspects of a product, performance, place or producer somehow get defined and treated as authenticity by audiences in a particular social context. Empirical studies of authenticity attempt to document the specific: which aspects are highlighted at which times, what stories are used to justify them, how different groups interpret them and which interests seem to benefit most (and least) from these interpretations (Grazian, 2003; Wherry, 2006). A tone of revelation sometimes ironically notes the fallacious nature of certain interpretations---asserting contrary facts, expert opinions or variations that cannot all be true (Peterson, 1997). Indeed, such assertions provide a convincing way to demonstrate that what is taken as authentic is a social construction rather than an objective fact.

In our view, it is all too easy to conclude from these analyses that what gets socially constructed as authenticity arises arbitrarily in a kind of quasi-random process that cannot be sorted out until after the fact. Given the complex nature of social reality, we recognize that the outcome of any particular social construction process always results

from at least some very stochastic and unpredictable elements. But we also think that sociological theory provides strong clues, and even some answers, as to the impact of some other core elements involved. In particular, we believe that theory and evidence suggests strongly that authenticity “works” best (i.e., accrues greater benefits) in modern society when it is organizationally constructed---that is, when the social construction is visibly or centrally supported by, and embodied in the structure and operations of a formal organization. By our reading of the literature, this key aspect of socially constructed authenticity has been overlooked. Yet we contend that organizationally constructed images of authenticity gain more attention, gather stronger appeal, convey better credibility and persist longer than those which are not effectively organizationally embedded.

In developing this general argument, we examine authenticity within a particular social context---food, restaurants and dining. As we conduct our analysis, we draw on the emerging scholarly literature of food (Levenstein, 1988; 1993; Fine, 1995; 1996; Ferguson, 2004; Johnson & Baumann, 2007; Balinska, 2008) as well as years of experience in professional writing about food and restaurants, often undertaken in ethnographic mode.

As we report below, we find that concern over authenticity in this domain has increased over the last decades, and remains at a high level. In looking at specific foods and restaurants in the U.S. over the last three decades, we find evidence that authenticity played out differently according to each of its two classical meanings: (1) an interpretation of authenticity as indicating something is true to its type (or genre or category) classification (we call this “type authenticity”---an example would be Morton’s

in the Steakhouse type); and (2) an interpretation of authenticity as signifying that the choices behind something reflect the morally sincere beliefs of those involved (labeled “moral authenticity” here---an example would be the early Ben & Jerry’s ice cream company, which emphasized its social mission).

We also propose that as social conditions changed during this period, and these interpretations bumped up against their inherent constraints, two conceptually related alternative interpretations became increasingly prevalent. First, a true-to-craft meaning of authenticity (called “craft authenticity” here) emerged out of the true-to-type interpretation. It relies on sophisticated craft techniques, personnel and ingredients to emanate a sense of authenticity (an example would be Anchor Brewing Company, the pioneer of American microbreweries). Second, a rendering of idiosyncrasy as authenticity (“idiosyncratic authenticity”) evolved from the moral sincerity interpretation. Idiosyncratic authenticity uses the unique and often quirky aspects and history of an object to make it seem authentic (an example would be Chicago’s Billy Goat Tavern, origin of an alleged curse on the Cubs baseball team, preventing them from reaching the World Series) We contend that these two expanded meanings of authenticity operate culturally with increasing prevalence in the contemporary social world for food and dining, in part because they face fewer constraints. However, we also recognize that all four meanings of authenticity still operate, and suggest that their distribution and respective appeal depends on the context (Geertz, 1983).

We propose generally that authenticity of a product or restaurant---whichever of these particular meanings or interpretations is relevant---projects most clearly and saliently from a producer (and conveys strongest advantage) when it is organizationally

constructed, embedded in the structure of an organization in a visible or central way. Based on examples, we suggest ways that each of the four meanings of authenticity might be organizationally constructed in compelling manner.

1. Interest in authenticity over time

Since at least the nineteenth century, authenticity, or its apparent absence, has fascinated some intellectuals. Philosophers (Heidigger, 1927; Sartre, 1943) and social critics (Trilling, 1971) debated the meaning of authenticity and its potential role in guiding moral behavior (Taylor, 1992).

Social scientists have occasionally entered this fray, often noting the apparent fascination of American society with authentic goods and services. For instance, Eco (1986) among others attributes the American obsession with authenticity to the country's immigrant roots. In this view, concern with authenticity seeped into American culture in its formative days; it is a long-lasting legacy of the culture's origins. Accordingly, we might expect Americans to display a steady, persistent concern with authenticity since the great immigrant waves of the 19th and 20th centuries, sort of like a background bass drumbeat.

At least two other lines of argument imply that interest in authenticity might exhibit greater temporal variation. In the first line, theorists (Benjamin, 1936; Trilling, 1971) hold that authenticity becomes a pressing matter precisely when it is under threat. So, for instance, in times when mass production techniques take over furniture manufacture, a backlash develops which emphasizes craft-like hand made furniture (Orvell, 1989). Similarly, Peterson (1997) notes how country music rises in appeal after most Americans have moved off the farm and into cities and suburbs; traditional

winemaking becomes a rallying point when “modern” French and Californian wines penetrate and dominate the market (Negro et al., 2006); and handmade bamboo fly fishing rods take on symbolic value after graphite rods appear (Eig, 2007). Although these kinds of arguments imply temporal variation in how much people care about authenticity, they do not necessarily imply simple temporal trends, because the alleged underlying forces (that threaten authenticity) do not vary regularly and the applicable contexts come and go. To predict a trend, the argument needs to be coupled with a second claim about the threatening force’s intensity over time (e.g., increasing in nature).

The second line of argument is based on a phenomenological observation. It contends that (for whatever reason) contemporary society values authenticity more highly than previous life did. As Gary Alan Fine (2003: 153) puts it: “The desire for authenticity now occupies a central position in contemporary culture. Whether in our search for selfhood, leisure experience, or in our material purchases, we search for the real, the genuine.” Fine does not expound at length on the underlying reasons for the appeal of authenticity but he does claim that it is especially pronounced in the U.S.: “Americans yearn for authenticity, linked to a rejection of the plastic culture in which the speaker feels he or she is embedded.” In examining cultural identities, Cheng (2004: 3) agrees and claims that the phenomenon occurs broadly: “modern and contemporary cultures---especially First World cultures---are increasingly marked by an anxiety over authentic cultural identity.” He speculates that the concern over authenticity stems from globalization, which has pushed many persons away from their traditional identities.

It is useful to examine these claims more systematically, to learn whether the concern over authenticity is increasing or decreasing across modern history. To this

point, most analysts have based their observations on micro analyses of particular contexts--the direction of any general temporal trend has been mainly a matter of speculation. Although compelling evidence on such a matter is difficult to come by, the prevalence of authenticity concerns should be reflected in the frequency with which the word itself comes up in influential public texts---how often it creeps into the public discourse.

1.1. Trends in public discourse on authenticity in food and dining

To prevent such an exercise from becoming unwieldy and vacuous, we limited our focus to the specific domain of food and dining. Specifically, we attempted to document the degree of attention paid to authenticity in the food and restaurants in the U.S., as indicated by usage of relevant words in the discourse of important and widely read public texts (newspapers and other publications). Our efforts involved searching electronic versions of the historical texts of the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post. After considerable experimentation, we searched for articles (excluding advertisements and classified advertisements) containing the word stem “authent-“ (so as to include the word authentic, authenticity, authentically, etc.) and any of the three words: dining, restaurant, or food. Inspection of a sampling of the articles revealed that this search template was broad enough to include many relevant articles as well as some others. Because the various publications show slightly different counts (likely owing to which edition was archived and the like) when the same template is deployed, we conducted the search for each database for all periods for which the paper was available to us. This turned out to include three sources for the New York Times (Proquest from 1851-2004; Factiva from 1981 to 1980 -2007; Lexis Nexis Academic

from 1981-2007), two for the Wall Street Journal (Proquest from 1890-1991; Factiva from 1984-2005) and two for the Washington Post (Lexis Nexis Academic from 1977-2007; Proquest from 1843 to 1991). We then counted the number of articles found for each year for each publication (we excluded advertisements and the like). We report the raw number of articles published rather than a standardized count (of course the total number of articles published rises during this period) because we want a measure of the amount of public discourse, not prominence.

Figure 1 plots the time series resulting from this exercise. The y-axis indicates the frequency of articles matching the search specification in a given year (shown on the x-axis). The Wall Street Journal contains far fewer relevant articles, no doubt because of its focus on issues of finance and commerce; both the Washington Post and the New York Times published many more relevant articles throughout their histories.¹

(Figure 1 about here)

As the figure clearly displays, references to authenticity in the food domain increase dramatically across the period in all three publications, despite some occasional jumping around in adjacent years. By this data, contemporary society appears to be rampant with concerns about authenticity in the food domain, reflecting a long-term heightening of sensibilities.

1.2. Who cares about authenticity?

An interesting question asks how this interest in authenticity is distributed throughout the population. We seriously doubt that it is evenly distributed across various social groups and societal segments but also think that this particular topic may be more segregated than interest in authenticity is generally.² We speculate that, in contemporary

mass society, numerous domains exhibit an interest in authenticity that remains confined primarily to persons with an attachment to the domain. So, because intense interest in food and dining resides primarily among highly educated, upper middle class persons living in the urban areas (also the main readers of the newspapers examined above), we imagine that interest in authenticity in food and dining also resides there primarily. Similarly, interest in, and discourse about, authenticity in classical music (Davies, 2001), oriental rugs (Spooner, 1986), self-taught art (Fine, 2003), handcrafted tile, and handcrafted furniture (Orvell, 1989) probably rests primarily with similar affluent or elite groups. However, the authenticity of hip-hop music appears to be a matter of great concern to those who listen to it---youth, urban and suburban, as well as African-Americans in general (Judy, 2004; Light, 2004; Samuels, 2004). Likewise, we would conjecture that authenticity in weapons (guns, knives, swords, etc.), to the extent it is a concern, holds fascination mainly for those with intense interest in weapons---working class persons and those from rural areas, especially in the South and the West. It also seems likely that the authenticity of cosmetics would stir greatest interest among women, and ethnic art objects and practices would be of high interest to (at least some) members of the relevant ethnic groups.

1.3. Why do people care about authenticity?

What drives the interest in authenticity? Again, we adopt a phenomenological approach—while we know that authenticity appeals to many persons, we can only speculate on what might cause consumers to be attracted to or to purchase mainly on the basis of perceived authenticity.³ We imagine at least three possibilities. First, fascination with authentic products made by traditional methods might reflect a reaction against the

perceived loss of a personalized self in contemporary mass society, in its production techniques and its corporate organizations. Such behavior would be consistent with Inglehardt's (1997) claims about "postmaterialism" and associated lifestyles, which purportedly emphasize self-expression and quality of life (see also Holt, 1997). Among other things, this reaction would explain the persistent appeal of these products in light of obvious imperfections and quality defects. Second, individuals may be engaging in self-expression in purchasing the products of small, obscure producers who are not widely known. Such action might also be seen as a reaction against mass society but we would be hesitate to call it a general post-materialistic one, if for no other reason than the preponderance of affluent young professional consumers with an interest in some traditional and authentic products who otherwise embrace materialistic values and mass-produced objects such as Italian sports cars. The anti-mass production sentiment for these persons seems to be confined to certain isolated parts of their lives, usually related to private personal consumption (see Carroll & Thorafson, 2007). Third, individuals may be using authenticity as a forum for status generation. Many allegedly authentic products are inherently difficult to categorize and evaluate because of their subtle and ambiguous complexities. Detailed knowledge may be required to identify authentic varieties of products; however, expert status is subjective and relative—one appears knowledgeable simply by virtue of knowing more about particular types of products and their characteristics than others. Public displays of such esoteric knowledge can yield social approval and confer status. With products associated with personal taste and lifestyle, the status conferred is more general than that of expert: it accords an overall image of sophistication and refinement. Consumers may seek obscure specialty products

particularly because they are believed to possess unusual but attractive qualities; however, the fact that they potentially generate status for knowledgeable consumers may also constitute a large part of their appeal.

Spoooner (1986) provides a rich interpretation that incorporates all three of these lines of argument. He claims that authenticity has, “become an issue more and more in modern life because of our social experience of ever-increasing complexity...in the numbers and types of interaction we have to enter into” (p. 226). By his view, societal complexity prompts individuals to enhanced self-expression, which in Western society often involves choices about the use of objects to make personal statements. He argues that “authenticity, though stated in terms of objects, bears implications about the person. [Commodities potentially endowed with authenticity]...are used to negotiate not just relative social status, but quality of personality, or how one should be understood and appreciated as an individual by others, and on a scale that has significance only for the individual’s sense of social identity, not for the structure of the society as a whole.” (p.227)

These interpretations of rising contemporary concern with authenticity help distinguish it from tradition (Sokolov, 1998; Levine 2005). Of course, something following a tradition might evoke symbols and feelings similar to that aroused by something regarded as authentic. But conformity with historical usage is not by itself enough to do this—witness the many traditions that certain families and corporate entities practice without ever crossing into this kind of cultural territory.

2. The meaning of authenticity

What is authenticity? What does authenticity mean to most individuals? Although definitions abound, philosophers and social scientists (Baugh, 1988; Grazian, 2003) often apply either of two common but very different general meanings of the term when used with respect to social or cultural objects.⁴ The first meaning signifies that an object clearly fits some particular classification which it has been assigned or someone has claimed for it. When observers agree, for example, that the food at a restaurant is authentic Thai cuisine or that the sound of a group of musicians is authentic Chicago blues, then this meaning is being invoked. Baugh (1988) refers to it as artistic authenticity but we might appropriately call it genre or type authenticity. As Davies (2001: 203) explains, “something is an authentic X if it is an instance or member of the class of Xs.” He continues by noting generally that “an interest in authenticity reflects a concern with correct classification.” Grazian (2003: 10) gives a more sociological interpretation to this meaning of authenticity. He refers to “the ability of a place or event [or object] to conform to an idealized representation of reality: that is, to a set of expectations regarding how such a thing ought to look and feel.”

In this first general meaning of authenticity, the focus is on whether the object meets the criteria for inclusion or membership in the type or genre or category. Of course, this usage presupposes the existence of the associated type or genre, which is a culturally defined classification about which there might be more or less agreement among audience members (Douglas, 1986; DiMaggio, 1987). Moreover, evaluations of the type authenticity of a particular object often vary by observer. So disagreement among a set of persons about type authenticity potentially enters the process with regards

to both the classification criteria and their application to specific objects. As a result, many classifications are matters of degree (Davies, 2001).

The second general meaning of authenticity derives from the existential philosophy of Heidegger (1927) and Sartre (1943). In this usage, authenticity conveys moral meaning about the values and choices embedded in an object. A person, for instance, is said to be authentic if he/she is sincere, assumes responsibility for his/her actions and makes explicit value-based choices concerning those actions and appearances rather than accepting pre-programmed or socially imposed values and actions.⁵ By analogy, an organization would be authentic to the extent that it embodies the chosen values of its founders, owners or members rather than simple convention. The early Ben & Jerry's ice cream company, which followed its founders' values and stressed social responsibility and quality over profits, would be an example (see Lager, 1994). So, too, would the contemporary clothing company Nau (which advocates "the balancing of beauty, performance and sustainability....from developing better, more environmentally friendly fabrics to raising the bar for functional, elegant designs") and the eco-luxury furniture maker Maria Yee, Inc. (which embraces "green" values by the use of sustainable woods and non-toxic glue).⁶ In Grazian's (2003: 110) view, this meaning of authenticity refers to "the credibility or sincerity of a performance [or an object] and its ability to come off as natural and effortless." Dutton (2003) calls this "expressive authenticity" and explains that it connotes "an object's character as a true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs."

In this second meaning of authenticity, the focus is on first whether the individuals or collectives involved in the establishment and maintenance of the object

have sincerely attempted to enact their true morals and second on whether the object actually embraces them.⁷ Following Baugh (1988), we call it moral authenticity. Examples might include a restaurant that features food sourced only from producers who treat their animals humanely, or who grow their crops in some special sustainable way (e.g., organic or biodynamic). The presumption behind such attribution is that the owners/operators behind these enterprises have made certain choices based on their own morals and values. To the extent this is not true, and the choices simply reflect a marketing strategy, then moral authenticity is undermined---but definitive determination is often difficult. As with type authenticity, two sources of ambiguity or dissensus among observers about moral authenticity might arise, about either the sincerity of morals or the object's expression of them.

Analytically, we regard the two basic types of authenticity as Weberian ideal types, theoretical constructs reflecting common aspects of particular social phenomena.⁸ As detailed below, we find ample evidence within the contemporary domain of food and dining that both types of authenticity operate in the construction and interpretation of organizational identities and associated discourse. We also see evidence that as social conditions have changed, each type has spawned an additional conceptually-related ideal type, craft authenticity from type authenticity and idiosyncratic authenticity from moral authenticity. The evidence we review is selective and based on cases, examples and assorted facts, as well as our professional impressions of what modern consumers regard and interpret as authentic. In attempting to understand interpretation, we tend to the thoughts, emotions and actions evoked by things regarded as authentic. Our efforts here are speculative, and are intended as theoretical interpretations and conjectures rather than

as proof of any kind. Our goal is to develop a more elaborated conceptual framework for understanding authenticity in modern society, the ways it enters into the collective consciousness, the reasons why some things come to be regarded as authentic, and the social impact implied by such designation.

2.1. Type authenticity in food and dining

Pick up any restaurant directory and you will be sure to encounter somewhere within it a listing of restaurants by types or genre. Some of the types may vary but in the U.S. they are almost certain to include the following: Chinese, French, Italian, Mexican and Steakhouse. For these familiar, well-established categories, culturally defined schema set the expectations for what the restaurant should look like, what kind of food it should serve to diners, how it should operate and numerous other interpretative cues.

Figure 2 gives our descriptive renderings of the traditional category-defining schema for a selected set of these restaurant categories in the U.S.: Steakhouse, Jewish Deli, Sushi Restaurant and Barbecue Joint (for the latter, see also Trillin, 2008: 66). We base these renderings on years of systematic observation and professional reviewing in restaurants. Notice that depending on the category or type, the emphasized criteria differ, some based on food, some on ingredients, and some on atmospherics. Like Davies (2001), we also recognize that there are varying degrees of freedom in the omitted or unmentioned criteria. For instance, it would not be surprising to encounter a sommelier in a steakhouse but it likely would be jarring in the other three types. In general, this kind of classification system accords generally with the conceptualization proposed by Hannan, Polos and Carroll (2007) for defining organizational forms and their associated schema. What we have described here is properly linked to the “minimal test code”

which Hannan et al. (2007) envision as used by individuals to decide whether an organization fits a particular schema for a socially agreed upon category or form.

(Figure 2 about here)

As mentioned above, any given schema will be more or less agreed upon within an audience; the four that we describe here are, in our view, fairly well accepted and institutionalized among knowledgeable consumers in contemporary American society. Assessments of whether an individual restaurant fits one classification type well or not will also vary. Hannan et al. (2007) regard these as fuzzy classifications and attach a “grade of membership” function to each entity under classification; this function varies from 0 to 1 depending on the degree of perceived fit with the schema. With respect to these examples, we imagine that there are some clear cases where almost all audience members would assign a score of 1.0 or so, such as Morton’s in Chicago for steakhouse, Katz’s Delicatessen in New York for delicatessen, etc. We also imagine that most restaurants would receive a 0.0 score for most categories. For many others, any specific classification may be partial, as with a restaurant that is “kind of” or “sort of” a sushi house (suppose it serves Chinese dumplings as well). Of course, the criteria associated with particular types may change over time.

Moreover, the types themselves come and go over time, as new forms are invented or established and become institutionalized while other ones become unpopular or obsolete (Ruef, 2000; Zuckerman, 1999; 2000). Indeed, over the last 20-25 years, it is widely recognized that the accepted and agreed upon types or genre classifications for restaurants in the U.S. experienced tremendous change.

2.1.1. Evolution of restaurant types in Chicago

To try to get a more precise handle on these changes, we looked at the categories used in past issues of Chicago magazine from 1975, a leading local journal that features objective restaurant reviewing as one of its major selling points. This monthly magazine covers the restaurant scene in the greater Chicago area, regularly reviews all notable restaurants with anonymous reviewers, and is highly regarded for its serious, comprehensive and urbane coverage of restaurants. As a popular magazine intended for the general public, Chicago's classifications reflect widely recognized and agreed upon types. So, we have taken the data as given by the magazine and have not re-categorized restaurants based on our views, or combined categories over time. It is our belief, based on considerable familiarity with the Chicago restaurant scene, that the published reports reflect a widespread consensus in the culinary community about what the prevailing types are at the time of publication, and how individual restaurants fit into them. In general, the magazine works with the establishments to obtain mutually acceptable categorizations.

Table 1 gives a list of the categories used at each five year interval (except for the last) from 1975 to 2009, as well as the numerical distribution of reviewed restaurants classified into each category (zero restaurants in a category implies that it was not in use at that time). Of course, these listings represent the elite establishments of the Chicago restaurant scene--the best of fine dining--a fact that accords with our belief that authenticity issues gravitate around educated and moneyed persons. The numbers of restaurants in these various types may or may not be reflective of the total population.⁹

(Table 1 about here)

Over the period covered in the table, the most obvious changes in the distribution consist of: (1) the rise and decline and disappearance of the Nouvelle cuisine and Eclectic

types; (2) the decline in numbers in the American and Chinese types; and (3) the rise to prominence of the Contemporary type.¹⁰ These changes are especially striking given the relative stability of numbers in the types for French, Italian, Japanese and Mexican.

In 1990 Contemporary was not yet used as a type or category; eclectic was used instead. Most of the entries in the Eclectic type are listed in at least one other type as well. Similarly, the 1990 type of Nouvelle cuisine is about half French and half not listed elsewhere---Charlie Trotter's, Tallgrass and the like are now classified as Contemporary. But the Nouvelle label has fallen out of use and is not even considered a viable type anymore—it is passé. We venture that no respectable American chef would admit today to committing Nouvelle.

2.1.2. The contemporary “type”

Over this period, the most significant development involves the emergence and dominance of the Contemporary type. Although used by the magazine and by many other publications, we believe strong consensus does not yet exist about this type, its relevant schema or inclusion criteria, or even its name. For instance, besides Contemporary, it has been called Contemporary American, Progressive American, Avant Garde, Progressive Modern, and simply Modern. Whether you mark its birth with Charlie Trotter's or another ground-breaking restaurant of the 1970s and 1980s (or even reaching back to Nouvelle cuisine), what is clear is that chefs cast off their moorings in traditional national cuisines and, while keeping fundamentals grounded in haute French technique, made creativity and originality the guiding force of their cooking. That approach brought a whole world of flavors into play, many made more accessible by the easy Internet spread of information and air transport of fresh ingredients globally. American chefs still

nodded to regional styles, but manipulated traditional New England chowders and Southwestern spices to fashion totally new experiences.

At the far reaches, Ferran Adria at his innovative El Bulli in Spain profoundly influenced a new generation of American chefs—Thomas Keller at his French Laundry in Yountville, Calif. and Per Se in New York, Wylie Dufresne at his WD-50 in New York, and Grant Achatz at Alinea and Homaro Cantu at Moto in Chicago—with what is becoming known (not endearingly to some) as Molecular Gastronomy.¹¹ Here, kitchens operate more like laboratories, and high tech chemistry and physics tools are brought to play on foodstuffs using liquid nitrogen, high pressure, dehydration, and other techniques to create colloids, foams, emulsions, powders, gels, and other sensations on the plate--and often, newly fashioned serving instruments--never before seen. Whether this will become a lasting separate category or subsumed into a more general Contemporary type is uncertain.

In other words, in a sociological sense, the Contemporary “type” is not now a type at all, or at least is not now an institutionalized one. We cannot write a succinct description of the criteria for inclusion, as we did for those types in Table 1. Instead, Contemporary is a sort of nominal catch-all label for restaurants bearing some particular characteristics.¹²

The rise to dominance of the nominal Contemporary label represents an erosion or partial breakdown of the genre or type classification system. We think that Chicago is not unique in this respect; we would expect that most American cities and restaurant scenes (and many international ones too) exhibit such a trend. We also believe that the trend has far-reaching consequences for the display and interpretation of authenticity in

food dining. Indeed, this must be the case, if for no other reason than type authenticity obviously becomes more difficult to claim, represent and perceive when the type classification system begins to erode or breakdown. Under such conditions, type authenticity might get undermined entirely because classification generally becomes more ambiguous (even if an object remains readily classifiable into a persisting type, it may also qualify for the newer less structured type.) At a minimum, erosion of the classification system would seem to relegate type authenticity claims to a subset of (perhaps minority or vintage) types or categories.

But with food and dining, recall from the trends documented above, discourse about authenticity rose dramatically exactly when the classification system was eroding. As we explain below, some of this elevated discourse has likely been prompted by a rising interest in moral authenticity with respect to food and authenticity. But we also believe that something else important is going on as well, namely, that type authenticity has been transformed or replaced or subsumed by a conceptually related generic dimension of authenticity that emphasizes skill and craftsmanship rather than fit to a specific type or genre. In essence, we think that highly skilled craftsmanship and its associated trappings represent a kind of fit to a general super-category of authentic cooking or cuisine. In an interesting speculation, Arouh (2006) suggests that this development reflects a reversion back to the “master code” underlying classical French cuisine (and thus much fine dining).

2.2. Craft authenticity in food and dining

This alternative interpretation of authenticity works itself out as what we call craft authenticity, implying that the focus becomes centered on whether the food and its

preparation are “true to craft” rather than true to some particular institutionalized type or genre. Craft authenticity celebrates the artistry and mastery of the chef, the cooking staff and the service staff. It recognizes that the knowledge, skills and techniques of the chefs and other staff are beyond the normal person’s reach, requiring special training and apprenticeships and a range of specialized experiences.

Craft organization implies a craft socialization system to impart tacit knowledge and skills; it also carries with it an expected degree of professional autonomy and self-administration in many aspects of the operation (Stinchcombe, 1959). Indeed, we think that craft authenticity commonly extends to include the identification and sourcing of appropriate tools, supplies and ingredients. Critical praise and consumer interest in the now widespread use and cultivation of artisanal and local producers and their products, a development often attributed to Berkeley’s pioneering Chez Panisse (McNamee 2007), resides in the attraction to craft authenticity. Other restaurants with this kind of appeal would include the aforementioned El Bulli, Charlie Trotter’s, and the French Laundry.

Food purveyors whose products appeal on the basis of craft authenticity would seem to include Acme Bread Company (an early artisanal bakery using only organic ingredients and working with farmers to evaluate grains), Nueske’s Applewood Smoked Meats (a Wisconsin family-run meat provider dating from the 1930s that handcrafts its products), Anchor Brewing Company (San Francisco’s pioneering microbrewery), St. George Spirits (a craft distillery in Alameda, California where fruit is hand selected and distilled), Hudson Valley Foie Gras (a New York farm where stages of foie gras production are centralized in one facility), Scharffen Berger Chocolate Maker (a Berkeley boutique chocolate maker that selects its own beans and makes each batch to taste), Saint

Benoit yogurt (a Sonoma, California family dairy farm where hand-crafted yogurt is made in small batches to reflect the terroir), Laura Chenel's Chevre (a California-based early maker of handcrafted goat cheese), German-Robin Fine Alambic Brandies (an early craft distiller in Mendocino using premium wines and ancient hand-made methods), Cowgirl Creamery (an organic artisan cheese producer in Point Reyes, California), and Italian winemakers Franco Biondi Santi and Gianfranco Soldera (producers of traditional style Barolos).

At first blush the difference between type authenticity and craft authenticity appears to involve mainly a shift in focus from outcomes to processes. Rather than focus on the food and its presentation as is done under type authenticity, craft authenticity might encourage diners and others to pay attention to the skills, equipment and credentials of the cooking staff. Organizational theorists have long recognized this kind of shift as a way that organizations dodge "hard" evaluation and enhance survival through ceremonial display of a set of facts or compliance with a set of criteria that an unknowing public mistakenly interprets as quality (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

While the craft orientation does generally push the focus back in the in the production stream, this is not necessarily the case. The institutionalized sushi type or category, for instance, already emphasizes craft-like elements: it requires the employment and display of skilled craftsmen. Moreover, in our view, the craft orientation to authenticity does not imply any looser or closer intrinsic connection to outcome quality than does the type orientation—it is simply a focus on more general aspects of some types. An analogy for schools would be an interest in the training and purported skills of the teachers rather than the philosophical foundation of the curriculum in certain types of

schools, say, Montessori ideas or Baptist theology. In addition, as we explain below, we believe that the transparency of the production system helps promulgate the sense of authenticity for craft producers.¹³

2.3. Moral authenticity in food and dining

We now turn to the second widely used interpretation of authenticity, what we call moral authenticity. How does this meaning of authenticity play out in food and dining? We start this discussion by examining some recent analyses of authenticity by two organizational sociologists, Joel Podolny and James Baron.

In the first analysis, Podolny and Hill-Popper (2004: 94) contrast a transcendent conception of value with a hedonic one. In hedonic value, “a consumer’s perception of the value of an exchange offering is contingent on how that offering directly compares to other exchange offerings on a set of abstracted dimensions.” So, for instance, one might prefer one beer to another because of its hoppy smell, dense creamy head, amber color, and smooth but bitter taste. By contrast, with transcendent value “the value that the parties derive from the exchange depends on the extent to which each becomes invested in the vantage that the other has regarding the object.” Value here comes from the ability of the parties to the exchange to be “able to fully understand and empathize with the other’s experience of their mutual exchange.” So, for instance, in the case of beer, the consumer takes into account not just the actual look, smell and taste of the beer but also the brewer’s goals (say, attempting to produce a nineteenth century German style ale), the ingredients used (organic malt and hops grown in a special region) and the production techniques (small batches made in old refinished equipment and using no chemicals or modern quality controls).

Podolny and Hill-Popper go on to speculate that organizations attempting to gain advantage through an “authentic identity” typically rely on the transcendent conception of value. Examples of companies they cite with such identities include Apple Computer, Ben & Jerry’s and the Body Shop (today they would perhaps add Google). In each case, the company’s products appeal to many customers because of what they perceive them to represent abstractly rather as much or more than specific product characteristics. As they write: “Ben & Jerry’s invites the consumer to not only contemplate the taste of the product, but to contemplate the way in which the product was produced as well as the personal objectives of those leading the company. The more that the consumer knows of and identifies with the values and practices of the Ben & Jerry’s, the greater will be the value that the consumer derives from consumption of this particular product” (Podolny & Hill-Popper, 2004: 96).

By this view, a food producer’s or restaurant’s identity would entail authenticity to the extent that clients are attracted to and experience the producer’s or restaurateur’s intended abstract message, whatever it may be (usually a symbolic interpretation or a set of values). Podolny and Hill-Popper stress the cognitive and emotional bonds to the producer that develop in such cases, as the consumer enacts his/her understanding and empathy with the producer.¹⁴

In the second analysis, Baron (2004: 14) makes some related observations in his analysis of organizational identities in the labor market. He too focuses on authenticity as an element of organizational identity. As he explains it:

. . . authenticity refers to the power of the organization’s commitment to clientele and mode of relating to its constituencies, not simply to the stability of its product

offerings, clientele, and mode of operating. The most authentic identities—or credible commitments—are ones that invoke a non-economic logic for action, inasmuch as they require that actors do certain things that cut against their narrow self-interest (and not do certain things that might further their own interest).

Baron (2004) goes on to illustrate his concept by making a comparison between a “soup kitchen serving the homeless and an urban eatery serving freshly prepared soups.” He claims that the soup kitchen possesses a more authentic identity.¹⁵ The reason why is “serving soup to homeless people is a means of doing good, not of making a profit,” and the restaurant is “thereby working against its own self-interest.”

In our opinion, Baron’s analysis agrees in essence with that of Podolny and Hill-Popper. Both emphasize authenticity as the symbolic playing out of choices someone inside the organization made with respect to moral values. Perhaps the biggest difference between them arises from Baron’s sharper delineation of non-economic, or at least non-self-interested, values as residing at the moral core of what gets interpreted as authentic. Podolny and Hill-Popper seem to grant greater latitude to what the core value(s) might be so long as it conveys strong symbolism. However, as large commercial firms such as The Body Shop and Whole Foods enjoy great marketplace success even Baron’s interpretation becomes debatable: cynics and others argue that featuring values that appear initially as non-economic or non-self-interested might simply be a shrewd way to market upscale products to contemporary affluent consumers, making them in reality economic and self-interested.

At face value, it would seem that an apparent strong concern with profits, market share or other pecuniary factors would undermine interpretations of moral authenticity.

The irony here, however, is that high prices can be justified by a focus on exceptional values or goals. To pull this off, the producer often must represent his/her product or service as primarily reflecting intrinsically motivated choices rather than extrinsic ones. Of course, just as with type authenticity, the only meaningful interpretation of this representation depends on the audience itself. To what extent do members of the audience buy on the basis of perceived moral authenticity, and how much consensus among them is there?

In our informal assessment, we think that a number of prominent restaurants appeal to significant audiences on a morally authentic basis. These include Green's (a vegetarian gourmet restaurant in San Francisco established by the Zen Center), Moosewood (a pioneering collectively-owned vegetarian restaurant in Ithaca that emphasizes health), Delancey Street (a rehabilitation house restaurant in San Francisco), and in New York, Blue Hill at Stone Barns (a menu-free restaurant on a farm in Pocantico Hills, New York that uses very local sources) and Craft (a restaurant that fanatically stresses fresh ingredients and simplicity).

We also find producers attempting to use the appeal of moral authenticity in many products including produce, meat, olive oil, tea, fish, meat, milk, salt, jams, sauerkraut, and cheese. Examples of food and drink purveyors apparently relying on moral authenticity would include Green City Market (a non-profit market in Chicago supporting local farmers who practice sustainable methods), Vermont Spirits (an ecologically sensitive distillery making vodka from maple sap and using local spring water), Niman Ranch (a network of 600 farmers following strict protocols dedicated to "the belief that all-natural, humane and sustainable methods produce great flavor"), Gunthorp Farms and

Grassfed Farms (small Midwestern family farms raising animals in humane and natural ways), Marin Sun Farms (California-based farms that “strive to align...production with the natural principles that a holistic, connected, perception of the world provides”), Claravale (a dairy farm that produces raw Jersey milk), Java Forest (a provider of organic, shade-grown,¹⁶ fair-trade coffee), Devil’s Gulch (producer of milk-fed pork), BLiS Handcrafted Gourmet Natural Foods (purveyors of troll-caught natural tuna¹⁷ caught by fifth generation fishermen) and (at least in its early days) Whole Foods.

A major strategic issue about moral authenticity concerns how sincere and distinctive these claims appear to audiences. Initially, most were unique and considered renegade, even anti-capitalist. Many of them were closely associated with, and likely heavily subsidized by communes, cooperatives or churches, organizations with overarching moral goals (Belasco, 2007). Recall legendary 1960’s era establishments such as the Swallow Restaurant Collective and the Cheese Board cooperative in Berkeley, which “has anchored and sustained th[e] community by its uninterrupted practice of compassionate collectivism, expressed through food” (Waters, 2003: viii).

But today things have changed dramatically---many once rare morally laden food items are now commonplace (Fromatz, 2006). The market for organic food and drink products surpassed over \$23 billion in 2002 (Organic Monitor, 2003), almost two-thirds of it delivered through regular groceries, not special health food stores (Dryer, 2003). According to the USDA, the number of regularly operating farmers’ markets in the U.S. increased in number from 1,755 in 1994 to 4,385 in 2006; and the number of organic farms in the U.S. increased from about 12,000 in 2002 to around 18,000 in 2007. To reach the consumer with same kind of appeal today requires a shift to something new and

more extreme, such as biodynamic farming, which is an esoteric set of mystical homeopathic-like organic practices relying on the 1924 prescriptions of the German Rudolf Steiner. When much organic food is sourced in China, consumers begin to cynically question whether the choices behind a product represent sincere moral judgments or simply reflect marketing ploys.

Consider also the deep inroads made by the corporate social responsibility movement, including its recent emphasis on practices supporting environmental sustainability. Virtually every major U.S. corporation makes substantive claims about its activities in these areas, and a plethora of interest groups, third-party auditors and knowledgeable consumers try to ensure they live up to them and expand them. Indeed, when companies like McDonald's and Wal-Mart embrace and deliver on these values, organizations claiming this orientation as their special raison d'être lose much of their uniqueness.

Then, too, there are emerging types or categories that by definition invoke a moral basis. For instance, community supported agricultural (CSA) farms, which sell their produce and other products directly to consumers on the basis of subscription contracts have become increasingly popular (now numbering over 2,200 farms by some counts). Likewise, there now seems to be a type emerging for "free range" animal farmers. Simply conforming to an established type, however morally laden it might be, will probably eventually become suspect with respect to moral authenticity. A codified type suggests a viable market and runs the risk of attracting pure profit-seekers.

2.4. Idiosyncratic authenticity in food and dining

We see the widespread adoption of corporate social responsibility, environmental sustainability, organic sourcing and the like as moral authenticity's parallel trend to the de-institutionalization of type authenticity. And, much as craft authenticity has eclipsed type authenticity, we see another conceptually related form of authenticity rivaling and possibly superseding moral authenticity in this domain. We call this other form idiosyncratic authenticity. We define it as the symbolic or expressive interpretation of aspects of an entity's idiosyncrasies. These peculiarities typically originate from some historical event or fact (or set of events or facts), which then becomes embodied in a collectively known and oft-repeated story. The quirky aspects of the story appeal as authenticity even though they rarely convey a moral message. (It apparently helps if the story runs counter to conventional rational practice in the business, as Baron suggests, and if the place or product possesses some significant historical age). In our view, many of these places and products would not be found nearly so appealing by consumers without the story, and they might in fact repel them (consider the hygiene of some popular local barbecue joints).

The appeal of idiosyncratic authenticity lies, we speculate, first in the comfort that it provides in recognizing and acknowledging a collective past, a link between modern society and an earlier social body (Sokolov, 1998). This link might help individuals to understand their heritage and anchor themselves in a rapidly changing world. In assessing art, Dutton (2003) suggests another, related interpretation. He emphasizes the importance of connecting with prior audiences: "...it enables us to understand the practice and history of art as an intelligible history of the expression of values, beliefs and ideas." According to Dutton (2003), "works of art...are manifestations of both individual

and collective values in virtually every conceivable relative weighting and combination.” In his view, it is important to establish “their human contexts by tracing their development” because our interest in art derives largely from the fact that “works of art of all societies express and embody both cultural beliefs general to a people and personal character and feeling specific to an individual.” (See Andrews (2004) for a somewhat similar claim regarding recipes.) An idiosyncratic eating place or food product that celebrates its quirkiness and its past is in many ways reminding us and connecting us to its prior owners, patrons and customers, with all their oddities and warts.

Secondly, the appeal of idiosyncratic authenticity may also reside in the evidence it presents about how different people and things are in the contemporary world as compared to the past. The differences might be regarded with simple benign amusement. Or they might be evaluated normatively, either in positive (things now are better) or negative (they were better then) light depending on the person (Kelley, 1967).

Examples of famous places we think appeal on the basis of idiosyncratic authenticity include McSorley’s Old Alehouse (the oldest bar in New York, supposedly frequented by Abraham Lincoln, see Mitchell, 2001), the Carnegie Deli in New York (a gathering spot for celebrities from the theater and other walks of life), the Billy Goat Tavern in Chicago (origin of the so-called Cubs baseball curse, see Gatto, 2004), the Phillipe’s restaurant in Los Angeles (an old restaurant in Los Angeles that claims to be the birth place of the French dip sandwich), and numerous local barbecue places scattered across the U.S. including (most famously) Arthur Bryant’s in Kansas City. A less famous place that almost instantly achieved such status locally was the now-defunct San Francisco restaurant named The Flying Saucer, where the décor, food, service and chef

were “renowned for an eccentricity that challenged diners” (Morgan, 2000). A famous beverage with this appeal would include Linie Aquavit in Norway (see <http://linie-aquavit.com>).

Why do we say this? First, a casual glance at any guidebook or set of users’ comments about any of these places or products usually mentions its authentic or real nature. Yet, there is no clear moral or expressive dimension involved, no high craft in operation, and while some may qualify as a type of one kind or another, this is not the most salient feature of attraction. Second, each entity carries with it not one but several tales about its origins or aspects of its history. For instance, McSorley’s numerous tales include the fact that Abraham Lincoln drank there and that the place did not allow women in until the 1970s (Mitchell, 1942). The Billy Goat’s legends include the curse its owner placed on the Chicago Cubs baseball team for ejecting his goat and the colorful way the cooks shout your cheeseburger order (memorialized on Saturday Night Live by the comedian John Belushi---see Gatto, 2004; Kadlec, 2005). Linie Aquavit puts its aquavit in ships and sends them across the Equator and back, on a precisely documented four and a half month voyage, to “smooth” and “enhance” its flavor; the practice dates back to 1805 when five casks made for the West Indies were returned unsold, sampled and thought to taste better. In each case, many customers know these stories and use them to motivate and justify visits and purchases; they also repeat them to friends and to others when they frequent the establishments or describe the products. Third, the places themselves embody and revel in these stories, sometimes to the extent of caricaturizing them in a kitschy way. Although such blatantly strategic marketing might be interpreted by some as inauthenticity, good-natured documentation and reinforcement of the stories

does not seem to be damaging, especially if they are factually accurate and sanctioned by other cultural “authorities.”

Less famous operations apparently relying at least in part on idiosyncratic authenticity would include Scorpion Mescal (a Mexican mescal that contains a scorpion in each bottle), Dogfish Head brewery (which makes strong flavored so-called extreme beer, some of it aged in a 9,000 gallon barrel made of palo santo, very hard holy wood, costing \$140,000, see Bilger, 2008; Calagione, 2005), Templeton Rye (a whiskey made in a copper pot still following an old Prohibition-era recipe), Snow’s BBQ in Lexington Texas (open only on Saturday mornings until the meat runs out, see Trillin, 2008), Belmont Farm Distillery (maker of Virginia Lightning, a clear corn whiskey twice-distilled in a 1930s era solid copper pot still) and Tito’s Handmade Vodka (a folksy distillery in Texas).

Note that idiosyncratic authenticity emphasizes the unique aspects of a product or producer. Accordingly, it features many exclusive elements of the producer’s identity. However, the product or producer could still maintain a high Grade of Membership (GoM) in a type. For instance, McSorley’s Old Ale House would be considered a pub or beer bar, despite its idiosyncrasies.

To summarize our discussion of the four ideal types of authenticity, we provide Figure 3, which includes definitions and several examples.

(Figure 3 about here)

3. The organizational construction of authenticity

We now take up the question of how a restaurant or food producer should operate and organize in order to project an image of authenticity that relevant audiences find

credible. The first thing to recognize in pondering this question is that authenticity claims and attributions almost always involve the identity of the producer (Zuckerman, 1999; 2000). Given the nature of authenticity, identity is important because any public image that has been clearly copied (chain or formula business) or manipulated (unreal marketing ploy) or strategically designed usually comes across as flatly antithetical (Carroll and Torfason 2007; Weber et al. 2008). The relevant aspects of an identity might include the individual founder or owner as well as the production firm itself, including its many elements and characteristics.¹⁸

Indeed, the producer's identity may very well be the primary attraction for consumers. For instance, Carroll and Swaminathan (2000: 728-9) claim that the appeal of microbrewers in the U.S. beer market comes from their identities as traditional craft-like producers. They argue that "consumers buying specialty beers seek simply a malt beverage brewed in a small craft-like firm according to traditional methods and using natural ingredients." Likewise, Podolny and Hill-Popper (2004) observe that when the transcendental conception of value governs a transaction "the identity of the founder is a critical element in the evaluation of the product." They go on to say that "it should not be surprising that the identity of the founder of leader is more important when the mutual identification of the consumer and the producer through a product is an essential component of the value of the exchange." Gary Alan Fine (2004; p. 175) makes a similar observation about authenticity in self-taught art: "What is true of art worlds generally, nowhere is truer than in the artistic domain of self-taught art in which the authenticity of the artist justifies the authenticity of the art work....Perhaps the work should be more important than the story, but at the moment the who, the identity, matters

greatly.....Ultimately self-taught art is a form of identity art in which the characteristics of the creators matter as much as the characteristics of the work.”

3.1. Projecting authenticity to audiences

To project authenticity, then, requires three things: (1) an identity claim must be visibly projected; (2) the purported identity must be credible; and (3) the identity must be perceived as reflecting the meaning of authenticity in question. A firm could thus appear as inauthentic for at least three basic reasons---for not making a potential identity visible, or for projecting an identity claim that does not seem accurate or believable, or for revealing an identity that does not reflect a particular meaning of authenticity but instead something else. A firm could fail on the first reason if it is overly secretive, and it could fail on the second reason if the image it projects (perhaps through marketing) is obviously manufactured in a strategic, deceptive or even illegal way. It could fail on the third reason if the identity comes across as contradictory or inconsistent with any of the meanings of authenticity that modern consumers resonate with.

How does an organization overcome these three obstacles to perception as authentic? We consider each issue in turn. First, take visibility. To hold a visible identity claim means that somehow an appropriate audience must recognize and associate a set of characteristics or attributes with a particular organization. These could be objective such as the size of the organization, or they could be subjective such as a culture of cooperation. The potential identity-defining attributes would include all those things for which the organization is known by the audience.

Every organization possesses some kind of identity. A visible identity can be achieved by an organization through explicit marketing efforts or by the impression its

behavior leaves on those who interact with it and tell others. This is not to say that marketing can always create a desired identity; any disjuncture between actual or perceived behavior and the marketing message concerns the credibility of identity claims, the second issue we consider.¹⁹

Regardless of origin, we suggest that potential organizational identities become more visible when they exhibit four properties. One, identity claims that contrast sharply with those of many otherwise somewhat similar organizations stand out in terms of visibility (for a measure of contrast, see Hannan et al. 2007). An organization with a family-like culture that takes care of its employees is more visible when it operates in an industry where the other employers exploit workers. Two, the more coherent the various pieces of the potential identity appear to the audience, the more visible it will be. When the identity attributes are interpreted as fitting together in a meaningful way, it creates a stronger impression. Three, organizations that appear consistent or reliable in their potential identities over time will likely be more visible. The accretion of consistent experiences with an organization confirms an image and generates visibility compared to organizations that regularly change possible identity features (Kelley, 1967). Four, visibility of an identity claim is enhanced when wide segments of the audience, or many audiences, make roughly homogenous interpretations. The more audience members holding an interpretation, the easier it is for them to communicate and reinforce each others' views, thereby elevating visibility.

Now consider the credibility of an authenticity claim, the second requisite. In a world where marketing and strategic posturing prevail, why would consumers believe some or any claims of authenticity but reject or ignore others? What factors prompt an

audience to accept such a claim, to believe that projected identity is real and can be trusted? We have argued that authenticity is always socially constructed but this does not disregard the social fact that some constructions are more credible, are more likely to be believed and accepted. Why?

Let us start with what is obvious to the audience: some of the potential identity-defining attributes might be readily apparent, others might require intimate understanding of the organization or further investigation. For instance, a gourmet café that claims to roast its own coffee beans might have its roaster within easy view of customers or a barbecue joint claiming to use a particular kind of wood might have stacks of the wood on view near the smoky barbecue pit, just as a winemaker claiming to use botti rather than barrique for aging wine can show his cellar for confirmation (Negro et al., 2007). By contrast, a café's claims to use only shade-grown beans bought from small organic farmers in Guatemala cannot be so readily demonstrated. Claims such as this likely engender more skepticism among audience members—some might want more details or proof of this claim, and this might prove tedious if not downright problematic.

Needless to say, if deeper investigation or additional information brings out an inconsistency between the (non-visible aspects of the) claim and (perceived real) facts, then credibility is lost. This is precisely what Carroll and Swaminathan (2000) claim happened with contract brewers (e.g. Pete's Wicked Ale) attempting to participate in the microbrewer movement, as well as mass production brewers (e.g. Miller Brewing Co.'s Plank Road Brewery) who used fake brewery names to disguise their real identities when marketing microbrewery-type products. Another similar example of recent interest is alleged wild (versus farmed) fish, which apparently can be identified by analyzing

bacteria. These situations can potentially become emotion-filled and generate resentment or even backlash, especially if audience members feel deceived or manipulated. This appears to have been the case with the folksy Bartyle and James wine cooler label used by the E. & J. Gallo Winery in the 1980s.²⁰ Accordingly, in such situations, we think it is best to assume that interested activists and consumer groups pursuing authenticity will work hard to uncover information related to non-transparent claims and will eventually figure out what's what.

Enhancing the credibility of an identity claim thus involves at least two different strategies, a first entailing making as many aspects of the claim transparent as possible, and a second involving making the non-transparent elements of the claim acceptable on the face of things. Transparency has the virtue of indisputability: something the audience sees directly is not likely to be challenged, especially if it is uncommon and presented as de facto evidence. Getting a claim accepted on non-transparent evidence is harder; it pertains to making the claim accepted as true by default, since most consumers would rather not bother with further investigation and the amount of documentation a producer might need to represent could be overwhelming.

3.2. Projecting authenticity organizationally

For both visible and non-visible elements, our general thesis is that authenticity is projected more credibly when it is organizationally constructed. By organizational construction, we mean that a specific lasting feature of the organization (usually part of its structure or operations) radiates the symbolic meaning about authenticity that lies at the heart of the appeal of the producer and its products or services. To exert this type of effect, the feature would often be highly visible, costly to change, and implicitly

permanent. A naive consumer (or other audience member) who encounters this feature for the first time should be able to interpret its meaning without great assistance; its symbolism relies on the available cultural landscape for its interpretation.

Credibility of the authenticity claim also emanates strongly from how deeply embedded the relevant features are in the organization's structure. Deeply embedded or core features of an organization resist change, and they can be changed only with great costs (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). If authenticity hinges on a core feature, then observers have little reason to think that it might be a passing phase or a minor aspect of the organization's identity or the management's efforts. Moreover, when a core feature symbolizes authenticity, it reflects the organization's willingness to commit strongly and durably to the principle and its meaning. As with economic signals (Spence, 1975), observers appreciate that such expensive commitments are not taken lightly and regard them as less likely to be misleading or insincere.

How exactly can one organizationally construct authenticity as a core feature? As we discuss below, details will vary depending on the kind of authenticity sought, but a little elaboration now might prove helpful. A first suggestion is to build relevant aspects of the authenticity claim into the organization itself. For an organization offering products, this action often means internalizing key parts (if not all) of the production system and possibly even internalizing the production of key source materials and other inputs. For instance, a brewing company would own and operate its own brewery; a tea company would not only fire and dry its tea leaves but it would also own and cultivate its plantation; and a distillery would own, operate and display its own stills and possibly its own fruit trees. A restaurant might build an open display kitchen or provide the

opportunity to dine in the kitchen and converse with the cooks. These actions may or may not technically be related to quality, especially if outsourcing is widely available, but they often are perceived as such. They also may not appear economically rational from a financial investment viewpoint; but this perception may actually be beneficial for signaling authenticity because it signals a strong and costly commitment.

A second suggestion involves making as many relevant features of the organization visible as possible. So, if the organization has its own production line, it should make it available for inspection or a tour, or even better, put it on public display for all who visit and consume. Along these lines, it undoubtedly helps to make the display attractive and quaint, using original or old or historic equipment. Another example: a restaurant highlighting rare and hand-crafted ingredients might want to provide a comprehensive list with the menu, as does Coi in San Francisco. A third suggestion involves taking as many steps as possible to enhance accountability of the organization's authenticity claims, especially the non-visible ones. A chief way of communicating this in efficient manner comes through certification involving outside certifying bodies, membership in industry associations, and formal acknowledgements by peers, critics, suppliers, and employees. A fourth suggestion involves the incessant telling and retelling of the stories linking these particular elements to the organization's authenticity claims. Tell the stories to customers to make them aware and create reputation. Tell the stories to employees and other members of the organization to make them part of the taken-for-granted culture. All this serves to make these aspects of the organization harder to change, and hence more credible reflections of the purported authentic identity.

Now consider the third requisite for authenticity, meaning. For an organization's identity to reflect authenticity implies that the content of the identity somehow needs to be perceived as embodying and exemplifying a cultural meaning associated with authenticity. This obstacle thwarted the major breweries when attempting to enter the product space occupied by microbrewers (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000); they certainly had visible and credible identities. The major brewers managed to make excellent "microbrew" styles of malt beverages (according to expert accounts, even among the microbrewer enthusiasts), but consumers did not support them because of their identities as mass producers, which clashed with the craft-like kind of authentic identity sought.²¹

3.3. Organizational projection by kind of authenticity

For each of the four kinds of authenticity that we described above (type, craft, moral, idiosyncrasy), the associated resonant identity might become manifest through very different organizationally constructed means. For type authenticity, certain type-conforming attributes might be potentially visible, especially if the code defining the type is sharp. Examples here would include a glass cooler with hanging aged beef in a steakhouse, a pizza-maker throwing dough and a pizza oven for a pizza house, a farm open for visitors for produce and animal purveyors. Our short-hand descriptions of various types on Table 2 are of this nature. Signifiers of type authenticity for non-visible elements include endorsement by gatekeepers of the type, including especially critics, peer groups, certifying bodies, and industry associations.

For craft authenticity, potentially re-enforcing visible elements would include internalizing and publicly displaying the production process, and its associated workers, tools and inputs (ingredients, source materials). In food and dining, the production

process might be a farm or plantation, a factory, a kitchen, a set of furnaces or tanks, etc. Increasingly, rare input products, the origins of input products and the conditions of their development play a role in authenticity interpretations of food. Consider the interpretations given to certain kinds of cigars, to certain cheeses, or to certain types of meats. So, making the supply chain's producers and practices visible and verifiable is becoming important for craft authenticity. Simply announcing them in a public way, such as the back of the menu or box, is a start in this direction.

Information technology enables organizations to provide tags linking stickers, tattoos, radio-frequency identifiers (RFIDs) and bar codes to particular producers and even more (individual product or animal identification and biographies). And studies show that American consumers, at least, prefer detailed origin labels; they are also willing to pay a considerable premium for country-of-origin and presumably other background labeling (Loureiro & Umberger, 2003). The primary stated motivation is health and safety but preferences for more information, certain locations and supporting local producers also figure into the calculus.

Less-visible elements associated with craft authenticity might be communicated through school and training credentials of staff, prior work experience of staff, awards and prizes from craft-minded third-parties, and active membership in local communities of craftsmen.

Visible ways to convey moral authenticity seem to almost always begin with the explicit articulation and public display of the "philosophy" behind the enterprise. (Indeed, these explicit statements of philosophy are so commonplace and visible on websites and the like that we doubt an appeal to moral authenticity today without one would pass

discerning consumers' initial judgments.) Other visible ways to promote moral authenticity include endorsement, sponsorship and launching of public events or programs associated with the targeted morals or philosophy. Public donations to related causes can create an impression consistent with moral authenticity, as can testimonials from persons involved with or benefiting from the morally-driven actions of the organization. Establishment of permanent facilities or charitable foundations devoted to the moral cause can also contribute to the development of a potential identity of moral authenticity. The less visible aspects of moral authenticity are typically made objective and public through the use of third party agents, playing the roles of auditor and certifier (e.g., organic certification, Fairtrade).²² Obviously, the more integrity the auditor-certifier possesses, the stronger the potential contribution to the identity.

Given its nature, idiosyncratic authenticity may be the hardest kind of authenticity for which to describe effective communication patterns. Public evidence documenting a visible aspect of the idiosyncrasy, such as special (possibly makeshift) equipment, materials, workers, perhaps in unusual combinations, can be effective. Artifacts, remnants, photos, newspaper clippings, memorials, or permanent landmarks would seem to be ways to document and project non-visible elements of a potential identity. Also, helpful here would be regular reenactment or celebrations of events linked to the idiosyncrasy, as would books or other written stories memorializing and communicating the idiosyncratic.²³

Figure 4 provides a brief summary of the key elements of organizational constructions of authenticity, for each of the four kinds of authenticity.

(Figure 4 about here)

4. Evolution in organizations and types of authenticity

The institutional environment does not remain fixed over time---it evolves, in response to its history as well the organizational dynamics that play out within it. So, too, do the interpretations audiences place on organizations and even types of authenticity. We do not have now a strong theoretical conjecture to make about this evolution in food and dining, but we can offer several examples and developments as potentially informative.

4.1. Temporal shifts in interpretations of specific organizations

It is important to recognize that the four kinds of authenticity we specify in the framework are ideal types, in the sense of Weber. As such, they represent conceptual categories reflecting common characteristics of some social phenomena. Accordingly, any empirical case might be only imperfectly associated with a given ideal type; and a given case might be reflective of more than one type. Over time, the ideal type(s) associated with a specific restaurant or purveyor may evolve.

A good example of such evolution is the fabled Berkeley restaurant Chez Panisse. We venture that it now qualifies as authentic on several, if not all of the four, of the kinds in the framework. Obviously, craft authenticity has long been a central attraction of the restaurant; from the start, its goal was to serve “innovative French provincial food” with “integrity and high quality” (Tower 2003: 67, 71. We also suggest that with the advent of food-related social movements such as Slow Food and “locavore,” Chez Panisse has become recognized for its moral authenticity as well; in its adolescence, it initiated and spurred the establishment of many small farms in California as early suppliers for the restaurant, a relationship that became common with quality restaurants. In addition,

because it is commonly credited with creating and defining what is commonly referred to as “California cuisine,” Chez Panisse in the 1990s at least was often seen as reflecting type authenticity. Finally, the historic role that Chez Panisse has played in the development of American tastes and food preparation, as well as the gossip surrounding antics of its staff in the early days, perhaps qualifies it as idiosyncratically authentic today, as the stories and the people involved have become legendary (Tower, 2003; McNamee, 2007).²⁴

As the Chez Panisse, certain entities may shift from one ideal type to another. Another familiar example of this might be the Carnegie Deli in New York. While today we would assess it as high on idiosyncratic authenticity, our understanding is that in an earlier era the Carnegie would have fit the Jewish delicatessen type well, giving it type authenticity. (Although craft authenticity might also seem applicable here, we believe that it is less operative than might seem apparent, if for no other reason than the fact that all New York delicatessens now buy their pastrami from the same purveyors rather than making it themselves.)

4.2. Temporal shifts in authenticity types

Beyond specific cases, even entire types sometimes experience a shift in the basis of their authenticity.

Consider barbecue in the U.S. We suggest that in recent decades the authenticity appeal of barbecue has in some places begun a shift from idiosyncratic authenticity to craft authenticity. The dominant idiosyncratic authenticity of the previous era is reflected in the attractive imagery of a rural or ghetto-based rundown place with an open pit or fire-driven smoker, a folksy staff and secret ingredients in the sauce (how else to explain

the popularity of places with unspecified meat sources and dubious hygiene, exemplified by arguments about the “beneficial properties of accumulated grease” and by an editor of a top literary magazine boasting “I’ll eat barbecue in the rattiest joint there is” (Trillin, 2008: 64-65)). A telling comment is found in the New York Times’ so-called roundup of barbecue places (1988): “Ramshackle shacks with swinging screen doors and ceiling fans are worth a try as is the fare at a fleet of black barrel-shaped mobile barbecue pits.”

Compare that to the chic urban barbecue eateries in modern day Manhattan, downtown Chicago and the like, where the emphasis is on quality and faithfulness to regional traditions of cutting, cooking and serving the meat. A recent review by the chief dining critic of Chicago describes a new place: “Over at Honey 1 BBQ, everything is stripped to the bare essentials: a big glassed-in smoker, a pile of oak, a counter where you order and a few tables. That’s plenty, because Robert Adams has decades of experience smoking ribs in the style of his native Arkansas, where he learned from his dad. And he’s passing on his skills to his son Robert Jr. The Adamses are proud of their four-by-eight pit, disdaining the Southern Pride gas-fired smokers used by some of the other joints...” (Wheaton, 2008a: 50).²⁵

We note hints of similar shifts possibly underway in certain places for other types. For instance, some highly regarded chefs have begun to experiment with the steakhouse category, attempting to introduce aspects drawn from their “contemporary” type restaurants (Wheaton, 2008b). So, some steakhouses may be willing to sacrifice possible type authenticity in order to gain craft authenticity. Similarly, certain sushi houses have garnered outsized reputations based on the dictatorial demands their chefs make on patrons’ eating practices, whose violation would cause banishment, leading to the term

“sushi bullies” (see McLaughlin, 2008). Such notoriety would possibly give these places idiosyncratic authenticity.

The socially constructed nature of authenticity also means that things do not stand still even for specific kinds of authenticity. Indeed, for three of the four kinds of authenticity in the framework, demonstrations of authenticity within the food and dining domain sometimes seem to take on the character of an arms race. What passes with an audience as an authentic producer today may very likely not qualify a few years down the road, after the appeal has been recognized, copied and taken a step further by other producers. Consider how the definition of authentic Mexican or Italian cuisine has changed in the U.S. over the past twenty years (upping the ante on type authenticity for these). And, consider how the standards for recognizing a highly qualified chef or kitchen staff or kitchen supply chain have changed (increasing the demands on craft authenticity). And, consider how the definition of the deliberate humane treatment of farm animals has changed (moral authenticity). The exception seems to be idiosyncratic authenticity, where inter-entity comparisons of this kind are hard to gauge because there is no obvious dimension of evaluation.

Propelling these arms races typically is an involved community of activists and other audience members. Yet, the social basis of the community behind each type of authenticity in the framework tends to differ (Carroll & Thorafson, 2007). While it may be possible to identify specific exceptions, it appears to us that type authenticity is frequently supported by ethnic communities, craft authenticity by professional communities, and moral authenticity by communities of social action. Even idiosyncratic

authenticity, which does not typically generate an arms race, appears to benefit from the support of a local community.

An interesting question concerns how important these underlying communities might be for the development and exact form of the eventual socially accepted formula signifying authenticity in any given domain. We have argued that organizationally constructed demonstrations of authenticity carry greatest force and are more likely to be interpreted in the intended way. Yet, this insight assumes that the person or groups receiving the message do not possess full information and use the organizational construction as a signal or minimal test code for assessing the authenticity of an entity. In contemporary mass society, this assumption is highly defensible and widely applicable, in our view. But we have no doubt that in some tight-knit cohesive communities of actors, there may be more elaborated means of assessment and diffusion of knowledge. The extent to which organizational constructions operate similarly there remains an issue worthy of additional investigation.

5. Discussion

Our efforts here were motivated mainly by the belief that theoretical connections between interpretive cultural studies of authenticity and organizational studies could be strengthened. Towards that end, we attempted to engage the literatures of both areas, and to develop concepts and theory that might pertain to both as well. We chose contemporary food and dining as our context for the exercise because (1) it is blossoming as an academic domain; (2) questions of authenticity are especially pertinent there; and (3) we like to think we possess some relevant professional expertise. In exploring this domain, we used an unstructured qualitative approach where our goal was to advance an

interpretive conceptual framework that might be insightful for future theory and research on authenticity. Scientific evidence supporting the framework still needs to be developed.

The framework we propose recognizes that authenticity plays out differently according to two kinds of classical symbolic interpretations: (1) type authenticity, where the question involves whether something is true to its alleged type (or genre); and (2) moral authenticity, where the issue concerns the sincerity of the choices behind something. Moreover, in response to emerging social phenomena, the framework contains two extensions of these interpretations. The first of these is craft authenticity, which possibly evolved from the erosion of the institutionalized type classification system and where the question is whether something is made using the appropriate techniques and ingredients. The second is idiosyncratic authenticity, which plausibly emerged out of the ubiquity of claims about moral authenticity and where the question is whether there is a commonly recognized historical quirkiness to the product or place.

The second major component of our analysis consists of a conjecture. Specifically, we propose that communication and impact of authenticity comes through most forcefully when it is constructed organizationally---tightly and visibly integrated into the structure of an organization. Depending on which of the four kinds of authenticity are operative, the details of what organizational construction means will vary. For each, we suggested some ways that seem compelling to us based on previous observation.

5.1. Comparison of two chocolate companies

An empirical basis for this conjecture can be seen by comparing the approaches to authenticity offered by two contemporary gourmet chocolate producers, Cocoa Pete's

(Powell, 2003) and Scharffen Berger (Hsu & Hannan, 2004). Both firms stressed authenticity as a selling point for their products.

At Cocoa Pete's

....authenticity implied constant and timely customer feedback to prove that the company valued customer opinions and that the company's namesake, Pete Slosberg, and the flavors had genuine stories behind them....Slosberg...fashioned many different mixtures with cacao beans from different countries, and varying quantities of cocoa butter, sugar, and vanilla. To show authenticity, Slosberg developed a personal story to accompany each recipe...[For example] With Maltimus Maximus, Slosberg connected his childhood fondness for malted milk balls with his experience using brewer's malt at Pete's Brewing Company.

(Powell 2003: 13-18)

Actual chocolate production was outsourced by Cocoa's Pete's; much of the firm's initial capital was devoted to promotion and marketing in an effort to establish the brand.

At Scharffen Berger, the founders, focused initially on dark chocolate and made it themselves in small batches. They personally selected the beans, roasted each variety separately, and customized the blending for each batch based on their individual tastes, with a pronounced emphasis on quality. Marketing was done initially to bakers and chefs, and relied heavily on word-of-mouth. Upon expansion, the company located its factory in an older building in Berkeley, California; they attempted to educate the public and make connections with customers through regularly offered tours.

In our assessment, Scharffen Berger's approach to the market resonated well with the San Francisco Bay Area "foodie" community and with other consumers while Cocoa

Pete's did not. We would say that Scharffen Berger represented an image of craft authenticity to its audience; Cocoa Pete attempted to project idiosyncratic authenticity. Moreover, Scharffen Berger's craft image was understood and accepted in large part because of its organizational construction (in-house expertise and actual production) and transparency (visibility and openness of the factory). By contrast, Cocoa Pete's image of authenticity never seemed that clear and did not have a true concrete manifestation in the organization. The stories of Cocoa Pete also lacked transparency and credibility in our view. Consistent with this assessment, Scharffen Berger grew rapidly and became one of the boutique chocolate market's modern success stories, and Cocoa Pete's shut its doors after several years of effort and no obvious long-term success.²⁶ Also consider that most of the new entrants to the rapidly growing gourmet chocolate market in the U.S. source their own beans and make their own chocolate rather than outsource production (Powell, 2008).

Scharffen Berger's success made it an attractive acquisition target. And, in what can only be considered an ironic twist of fate, Scharffen Berger was subsequently acquired by chocolate giant Hershey in 2005. Hershey placed the unit in its Artisan Confections Company and promoted its products without identifying the ownership association. The Berkeley factory remained in operation until early 2009, when it was announced that it would be closed and production for Scharffen Berger chocolate would be moved to the Hershey plant in Robinson, Illinois. In our view, the acquisition itself undermined the Scharffen Berger authenticity appeal to some extent, but the consolidation of the factories essentially destroyed it. A cursory review of blogs by foodies and other relevant audiences support this view: after each event, many chocolate

aficiandos proclaimed their intentions to find and support other artisanal chocolate producers.

5.2 Authenticity appeal in other domains

While we have focused our attention here primarily to domain of food and dining, we believe that the phenomena we describe operate in many other (but certainly all) domains in advanced contemporary societies. At the risk of over-speculation, we suggest that these include tangible products such as cosmetics, rugs, construction materials (tile, porcelain, brick, and wood), musical instruments (pianos, guitars, violins), furniture (home and office), and clothing (design, materials). We would also speculate that certain services show signs of developing authenticity appeals, including massage, group exercise, schools, and tourism (eco-tourism, adventure tourism). Finally, we suggest that authenticity conveys appeal in many art forms including self-taught art, and performance arts such as music (classical, hip-hop, country, bluegrass and rock).

Of course, the specific ways that authenticity plays itself out in each of these domains, if indeed it does, remains to be investigated by organizational theorists. Although we think each domain, including food and wine, will be unique in its details, we also believe that the framework offered here might be a useful general guide. So, for instance, craft authenticity in pianos likely means some very different than craft authenticity in tile or food or massage. But we suspect that craft-like authenticity might appeal generally in many domains to consumers in advanced economies. So, too might moral and idiosyncratic authenticity.

Similarly, we think that consumers in many domains in contemporary society face a difficult problem in discerning which producers truly embrace and embody authenticity,

whatever type is involved. Accordingly, we believe that our argument about the visibility and meaning of organizational constructions of authenticity holds broadly, even if again the particular details will vary by domain. As a result, in future research we look forward to exploring these domains and developing the framework established here further.

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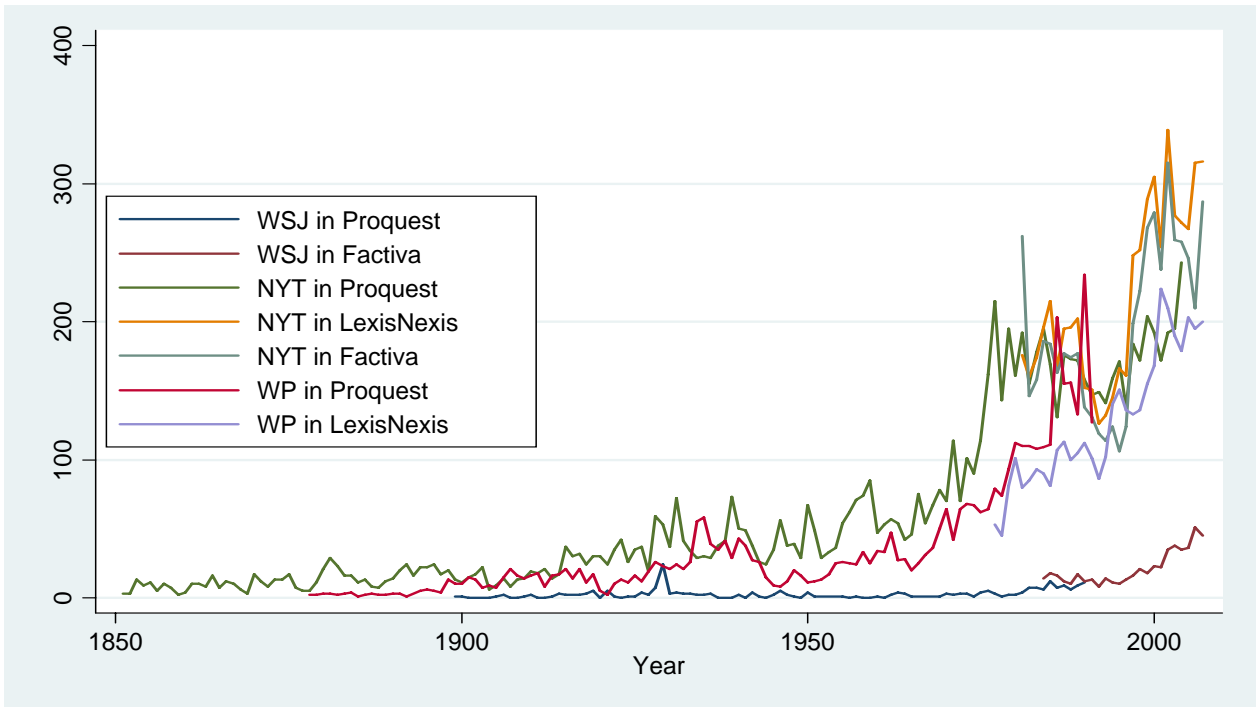


Figure 1. Annual number of articles with specified authentic word tags in three major U.S. newspapers

Figure 2. Stylized Descriptions of Four Restaurant Types

STEAKHOUSE

Steakhouses are the restaurant of choice for diners who want something indulgent yet basic and uncomplicated. American steakhouses started in the 19th century when the expansion of the nation's railroad system let Western ranchers ship their vast cattle herds to the stockyards of Kansas City and Chicago, and from there to the East Coast. No wonder that besides NY, KC and Chicago are two of the major centers of top steakhouses.

Henrici's on Randolph, which opened in 1868, was long one of Chicago's most popular, lasting almost a century. (In 1942 it was charging \$1.65 for sirloins.) Gene & Georgetti in Chicago is 65 years old and looks it, but most of Chicago's steakhouses (and those all across the country) are linked to the past mainly by impersonation: dark wood paneling and brass detailing, decor is often sports memorabilia or bawdy art, a cigar list and area for smoking where legal (typical steakhouse tries to look masculine), tables set with dagger-sized steak knives (even for buttering bread and dividing up the huge desserts that are another staple), and a wine list often heavy on expensive California cabernets.

Highly trained chefs are unnecessary in steakhouses; instead a skilled grill man handles the steaks. Top steakhouses tout heavily marbled USDA prime beef or (usually considered a notch down but not necessarily so) Certified Black Angus beef. Porterhouses and strip loins (New York strip, Kansas City strip for the bone-in variety, or a regional variation in name like strip sirloin or shell steak) are the main cuts served, along with filet mignons, T-bones (a porterhouse with less meat on the filet side), and rib steaks (aka Delmonico or its thick roasted variation called prime rib) Most diners prefer these cuts in the rare to medium rare range. Steakhouses also tout the careful aging of their prime beef, either dry-aging (hung unwrapped for up to 3 weeks under refrigeration) or wet-aging (vacuum-sealed in Cryovac, which retains more moisture but is considered inferior to dry-aging by some). Broiling at very high temperatures (800 to over 1000 degrees Fahrenheit) to sear or char the steaks' surface while leaving the interior juicy and red is the usual cooking method. Seasoning is usually simple—salt, pepper or some variation.

The typical steakhouse appetizer list prominently includes shrimp cocktails and big basic salads (ice berg wedges with blue cheese dressing), and a la carte sides like baked or hashbrown potatoes and creamed spinach. Live Maine lobsters or Australian lobster tails also are common non-steak offerings, and they have the same cache of simple luxury.

Because of the fairly low level of craft involved, steakhouses are amenable to becoming national chains (i.e. Morton's, The Palm, and Ruth's Chris's) that can replicate the experience with the consistency of MacDonald's (Morton's the prime example) from Hong Kong to Mexico City. The best steakhouses, whether one-of-a-kind like Peter Luger's in New York or chains like Morton's, The Palm, Capital Grille, Smith & Wollensky, are revered for their consistency, offering business people and travelers the same experience wherever they go.

A recent variation on the classic steakhouse is the French-accented American steakhouse (David Burke's Primehouse in Chicago, BLT Steak in New York) where

classic French sauces (Bordelaise, maitre d' butter) accompany steaks and appetizers and side dishes are more complex (tuna tartare, foie gras terrine). These restaurants naturally require chefs trained in French technique.

SUSHI RESTAURANT

Sushi as we know it is a fairly new invention, developed in Tokyo in the 19th century when nigiri-zushi (hand-molded oblong mounds of vinegared and sweetened rice with slices of raw fish or shellfish on top) was first invented as the fast food of its time and sold as a finger-food snack from stores and street stalls. Later maki, rolls of vinegared rice filled with seafood and/or vegetables, wrapped in dried nori seaweed, and sliced into bite-sized pieces also became a staple of sushi restaurants, along with sashimi, artfully arranged raw fish served without rice but with garnishes and condiments.

Sushi's origins go back many centuries, some say thousands of years, to China, where fermented rice was used to preserve fish. Today sushi is considered an art form on the level of fine French cuisine. Highly skilled chefs, who spend years as apprentices learning the craft from masters (as with classic French chefs), are now the mark of a good sushi restaurant, and though in ways it remains a snack food, sushi in restaurants with the best chefs is expensive. The most notable instance is probably the foremost sushi master working in America, Masa Takayama, who won renown with his Ginza Sushi-Ko in Beverly Hills and later opened Masa in New York to probably the highest acclaim ever given by the city's critics to an Asian restaurant; it is a restaurant that costs hundreds of dollars per person.

Like steakhouses, sushi restaurants are extremely popular in American cities, but they didn't catch on with Americans until, the story goes, a sushi chef in the Little Tokyo neighborhood in Los Angeles invented the California roll in the 1960s. It combined cooked snow crab with avocado to mimic the buttery texture of raw fish, and this easy-to-approach version opened the American popular palate to more exotic forms of raw seafood.

Sushi restaurants may be casual but the etiquette of eating sushi is rather formal and codified. All sushi restaurants have a sushi bar, behind which work one or more sushi chefs, usually dressed in traditional Japanese costume. On the refrigerated or ice-bedded bar is a display, usually behind glass, of the day's fresh seafood and in front is seating for customers; there may also be regular dining tables at which other customers can sit and order sushi and cooked Japanese food, if offered. Seeing the quality of the fish (experienced sushi diners can tell the freshness of the fish by its glistening quality and color) and watching your sushi made by a chef is part of the experience, and his (almost always a man) expertise at the tasks, including using his knives to slice the fish, are visible signs of the quality of the restaurant even before tasting. Decor is usually simple: Japanese crafts, paper screens, bamboo, and the like. Beer, sake, and tea are the usual drinks.

A crucial part of sushi is the freshness of the fish, often flown in from major Tokyo fish markets. (The advent of international jet Fed Ex delivery has made fine raw seafood available worldwide and helped spur the growth of sushi restaurants.) Sushi is served with soy sauce and wasabi, Japanese horseradish (which may also be smeared under the fish directly on pieces of nigiri), and pickled ginger as a palate freshener between bites. The best sushi restaurants use freshly grated wasabi; many others use

powdered and reconstituted wasabi often made from dyed Western horseradish and mustard. Most sushi restaurants have a similar line-up of classic nigiri and maki, but some newer sushi restaurants, such as Kaze Sushi in Chicago, specialize in innovative sushi incorporating global flavors such as truffle oil and chili sauce, as well as offering classic preparations. (Many eclectic or contemporary American restaurants are also using creative plays on classic maki sushi and sashimi.)

JEWISH DELICATESSEN

We could accurately call this type the New York-style Jewish deli because it is so closely associated with that city. The origins of the cooking go back to East European Ashkenazic Jews who immigrated to New York in the 19th century and opened informal restaurants selling thick sandwiches made with corned beef, pastrami, tongue, and salami served on rye bread with mustard along with other ethnically Jewish foods like half-sour pickles, matzoh-ball chicken soup, chopped liver, brisket, gifilte fish, kreplach, latkes, and rugelach. Katz's on the Lower East Side opened in 1888.

What distinguishes a deli in appearance is the display counter filled with salamis, jars of pickled tomatoes and peppers, roast turkey, trays of lox and other smoked fish, and baked goods. Typical drinks are egg creams and Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray tonic. Much of the food may not be made on premises nowadays, especially the preserved meats and smoked fish. Ed Levine of the New York Times says that in the 1930s the roughly 5000 New York delis cured their own meats, but today most New York pastrami is made by a few wholesalers because the process is too labor intensive and takes up too much space.

Except for Los Angeles, which around Hollywood and Beverly Hills has a large Jewish population with New York roots, few other American cities have been able to support first-rate delis, and those that do often get their cured meats from New York suppliers. Delis need a lot of walk-in traffic to work because the rye bread and the sandwich meats have to be very freshly cut to be at their best. A good deli is a busy deli with pressing crowds of tourists and a demanding local clientele. They flourish where there is bustling street life.

But what also distinguishes a real New York Jewish deli is the atmosphere, and more than the look and the decades of pungency, it's the people. The blunt tough-love gruffness of the waitresses and waiters and the often joking interactions between them and customers, making these delis a perfect example of what Oldenberg (1989) called "third places." They also may have personal identities or stories, as with Carnegie's history of being a comedians' hangout, immortalized in Woody Allen's movie Broadway Danny Rose, with photos on the walls of many of them, and of course Katz's being immortalized in the faked orgasm scene in Harry Met Sally.

BARBEQUE JOINTS

American BBQ has murky and disputed origins in the South and Southwest, variously attributed to Mexican influences (the word "barbecue" comes from the Spanish word "barbacoa," adopted from the Arawak Indians of the Caribbean, and the use of mesquite in the carnes asados of Northern Mexico), to the 19th century German, Czech, and Polish immigrants in Texas who brought their tradition of smoking meats and opened butcher shops that evolved into barbecue joints, and to various African influences in the

South. Styles of American barbecue range widely: East of the Mississippi, pork is the favored meat, while West of the river barbecue may mean beef, especially beef brisket in the “barbecue belt” of central Texas, where renowned places like Kreutz Market in Lockhart are located. But while in Memphis and Kansas City, pork ribs are the focus of barbecue restaurants, in the Carolinas pork shoulder is the preferred cut, and sausage is also smoked in many regions, especially Texas. Sauces and dry rubs also differ from region to region, and often are not even used in Texas; but what they all have in common is the use of the smoke from a hardwood fire at low temperatures to cook and flavor tough cuts of meat over a long period of time. There is now considerable overlap of styles in many restaurants in cities in the Upper Midwest and the Northeast.

Homegrown barbecue restaurants are typically “joints” in appearance and atmosphere, with the feel of ramshackle Southern roadhouses, and even the big chains like Famous Dave’s and KC Masterpiece imitate the look. The informality is such that many places in Texas and elsewhere serve the meats simply on butcher paper or paper plates (Famous Dave’s uses metal garbage can lids to serve big combo platters), with minimal cutlery, sometimes rolls of paper towels are on the tables for cleaning up inevitably messy hands and face, and patrons drink beer or soda from the bottle. Years of built-up grime and smoke often coat the walls, as at Arthur Bryant’s in Kansas City, sometimes giving them the name “grease houses.” The sight and smell of hickory, mesquite or other wood smoke coming from the restaurant’s smokestack is pervasive and often announces the joint from down the street. (A friend once remarked that she always respected a BBQ shack that caught fire and burned every few years, as seems to be the case with Ribs n’ Bibs on Chicago’s South Side.) Some places have their smokers in the window or other visible location so customers can watch the process. Many barbecue joints are strictly takeout, as in revered spots like Leon’s and 87th Street Barbecue on Chicago’s South Side.

The craft of making and tending a smoky wood fire and properly cooking meat takes considerable craft (far less than a sushi chef, though), and many of the best BBQ masters compete in huge cook-offs (examples are Memphis in May, National Rib Cook-Off in Cleveland, Blue Ridge BBQ Championship, and American Royal Invitational in Kansas City) staged annually around the nation for coveted championship awards, which enhance their reputation and that of their restaurants. Accompaniments to the barbecued meat are typically simple: cole slaw, pickles, corn bread, baked or barbecued beans, potato salad. In takeout shacks and other joints in Chicago, ribs or sausage are typically served on top of greasy fries and white bread.

Figure 3. Ideal Types of Authenticity

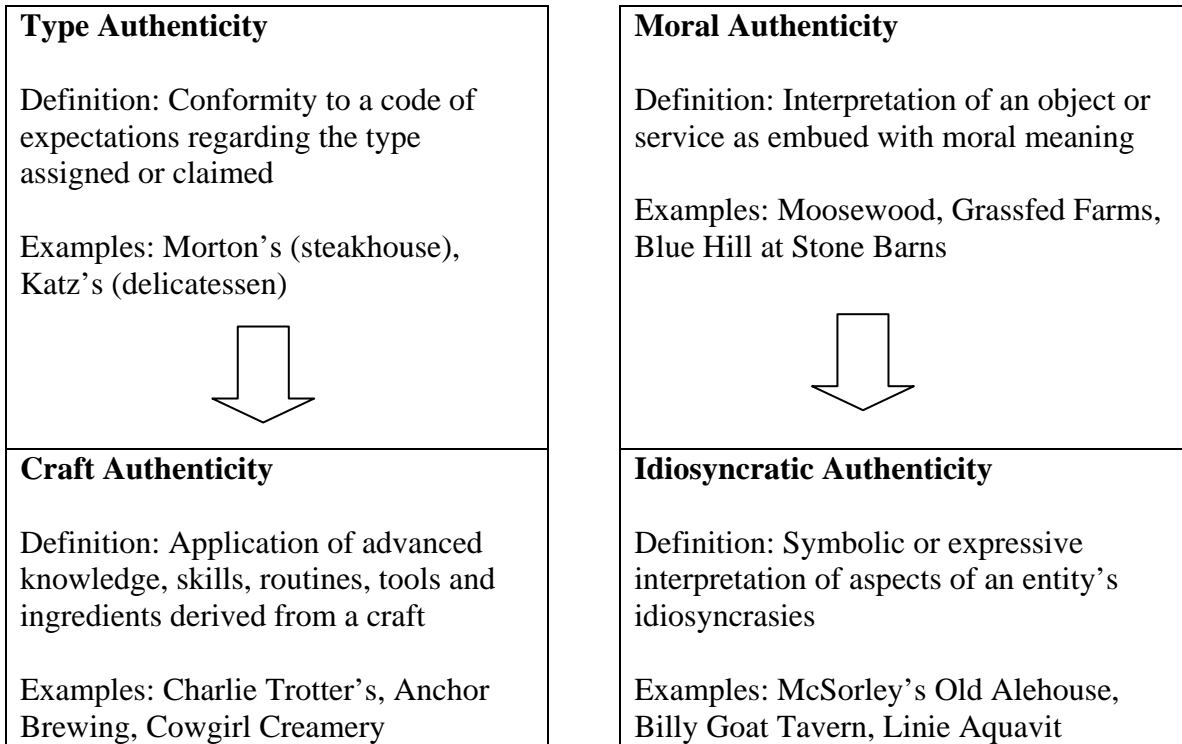


Figure 4. Organizational Constructions of Authenticity by Type

<p>Type Authenticity</p> <p>Visibility of type-conforming attributes</p> <p>Public endorsement or certification by institutional gatekeepers</p>	<p>Moral Authenticity</p> <p>Sponsorship of public events or programs associated with targeted morals</p> <p>Credible certification or audit by third-party agent</p>
<p>Craft Authenticity</p> <p>Internalization and display of the production process, including workers, tools and input ingredients</p> <p>Training and “pedigree” of the staff; involvement in local craft community</p>	<p>Idiosyncratic Authenticity</p> <p>Documentation or display of artifacts related to idiosyncrasy</p> <p>Reenactment or celebration of events related to idiosyncrasy</p>

Table 1. Restaurants by Chicago Labeled Types 1975-2009

Restaurant Type	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2009
Afghan				1	1			
American	26	28	40	25	23	11	11	10
American Southern						4	2	3
Argentine			2					
Armenian		2	2					
Barbecue				5	1			
Bohemian			2	1				
Brazilian			1				1	1
British			1					
Caribbean			2	1		2		
Chinese	27	20	10	9	6	6	4	3
Contemporary					16	27	34	38
Continental	27	13						1
Cuban				1				
Eclectic		3	8	12	6			
Ecuadorian								1
Ethiopian			1	1	1	1		1
Filipino			1	1				
Fondue			1	1	1			
French	23	21	22	20	21	25	23	18
French/Vietnamese/Asian							2	2
Fusion					3	1		
German	3*	9*	8	2			1	
Global						5	3	
Greek		8	4	3	3	1	1	
Guatemalan			1	1	1			
Hawaiian								1
Indian		2	2	1	2	2		4
Italian	28	30	19	17	17	23	19	14
Japanese/Sushi	13	11	11	10	7	11	11	11
Jewish			2	2				
Korean	4	9	4	7	2			1
Latin American	5	5						
Lithuanian			1					
Malaysian				1		1	1	1
Mediterranean					2		4	4
Mexican	8	6	9	6	5	4	7	7
Middle Eastern		2	3	7	3	2	1	1
Nouvelle Cuisine			14	11				
Pakistani				1				
Pan-Asian						2		2
Pan-Hispanic						2		3

Persian			1	1	1			
Peruvian				2	1			
Pizza			8	4				
Polish		1**	2	2	1			
Polynesian	3							
Romanian			1					
Russian						1		
Seafood	18	17	21	10	6	7	9	8
Serbian	2	2	2					
Slavic	15							
Spanish		2		3	4	3	3	2
Steaks and/or ribs	13	6	9	7	5	6	9	9
Thai	3	6	7	5	3	3	4	6
Vietnamese			2	4	2	2	3	1
Yugoslavian	2	2						
Other	29	17						
TOTAL	249	222	224	188	148	149	155	153

*Includes Austrian and Austro-Hungarian.

**This number would be three if two Serbians were included.

Source: Listings in Chicago magazine

NOTES

¹ We also conducted less thorough counts on some other papers, whose copies are not yet fully archived electronically. These findings suggest that the trend observed here is widespread, yet subject to some regional variability. For instance, USA Today shows an increase in the targeted word stems from around 1990 to the current era. So too does the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. However, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch shows a slight decline. Give the sporadic nature of our counts here, we are reluctant to make too much of this difference.

² Our cursory examination of other newspapers suggests at least regional variation in the appeal of authenticity in food and dining in the U.S.

³ In studying consumption, Bagnall (1986: 244) observes that even when consumers derive pleasure from an experience, and it evokes an emotional response, they still might require authenticity to legitimate the experience.

⁴ A third common meaning applies to the origins of individual objects and can be answered factually. It is what Dutton (2003) refers to as “nominal authenticity,” defined as “the correct identification of the origins, authorship, or provenance of an object, ensuring, as the term implies, that an object of aesthetic experience is properly named” (see also Grayson and Martinec 2004). One might ask, for example, whether a signature is authentic or a painting is an authentic Picasso. Authenticity here requires that the public representation about the object is accurate, for which there is an objective answer--Did the person whose name is indicated actually sign the document? Or did Picasso really paint the picture? These matters of fact are not of interest to us here; we are

concerned with the perceived authenticity of social and cultural objects for which there is no objective factual answer.

⁵ Moral authenticity might seem to be at odds with genre or type authenticity in that sincerity is seen by some as to imply originality in behavior and action rather than predictable conformity to some type or genre (see Peterson 1997; Rao et al., 2005). But the equation of originality with sincerity applies only to certain contexts (e.g., to some observers a sincere person must be original in his/her behavior) and we think this position reflects a misunderstanding of the general meaning. Consider that original performances and objects often are seen as superficial and devoid of value while genre-conforming performances and objects sometimes are claimed to achieve great moral heights.

⁶ Although these examples involves cases where the moral choices involved might be viewed as progressive, that is clearly not required for moral authenticity. If the person truly believes in something that guides his/her actions, that is enough for the action to be considered authentic. Such could be the case when someone supports torture---or when chef Mario Battali advocates consumption of “white prosciutto” (another word for pure pork fat), a part of the pig that many progressives would regard as unhealthy and disgusting.

⁷ Davies (2001: 224-5) recognizes this second kind of usage of authenticity in the scholarly literature. He suggests that it too can be regarded as a classification problem if one considers agency as the “type” and evaluates persons and characters in terms of their “character, intellect, emotions and free choices.” While acknowledging this possibility in the abstract, we think it overlooks the sociological importance of the distinction---the ways real people think and interpret authenticity. We also think his classification

becomes much more problematic when entities other than persons are involved, as we discuss below. Accordingly, we regard type authenticity as bearing little resemblance to this concept.

⁸ The Weberian ideal type is a theoretical construct that contains all the features or characteristics considered to be representative of the type. In fact, in most usages, observed empirical instantiations of the type like rarely, if ever, fit the ideal type perfectly. This is why a field guide to birds, for instance typically shows a drawing of a particular type of bird (with all its defining characteristics shown clearly) rather than a photograph of an actual bird, which would likely be imperfect in some way. For present purposes, it is also worth noting that any real entity or object might actually show features or characteristics of more than one ideal type.

⁹ An online phone directory (Superpages) gives 6,337 restaurants for the city of Chicago on April 24, 2006. The directory also gives listing by a set of categories, which we find to be incomplete and unreliable.

¹⁰ While we have not conducted systematic analysis on the issue, we do believe that most of the declines are due to restaurant failures rather than reclassifications.

¹¹ It should be noted that the top chefs involved emphatically disavow this label. See Adria et al. (2006)

¹² Obviously, the type or category is still in flux. Interestingly, it appears to conform to the Hannan et al. (2007) sequence of similarity clustering prior to category emergence. At this point, there seems to be increasing agreement on the label, and even on which restaurants should be so classified. However, the applicable schema and its underlying dimensions are largely unsettled.

¹³ Institutional theory, which stresses the argument about dodging hard evaluations, expects the opposite---a loose coupling between the claims and the activities. This arrangement can usually be pulled off only if there is opacity.

¹⁴ They invoke Dewey (1980), who offers the example of the epicure with respect to food. The epicure, he claims, “is conscious of much more than the taste of food. Rather, there enters into the taste, as directly as experiences, qualities that depend on reference to its source and manner of production.” (p. 49). As explained above, in our scheme, this preference would reflect craft authenticity if the concern was with matters related to the quality of the ingredients or a technical aspect of production or sourcing (say dry-aging of beef from a particular ranch) but moral authenticity if the concern was with matters such as the humaneness of the living conditions or the treatment of associated laborers and small producers as in Fairtrade.

¹⁵ Fine (2003) makes similar claims about self-taught artists, noting that commissions are seen as problematic because they raise questions about an artist’s authenticity.

¹⁶ In addition to tasting better, shade-grown coffee is purported to enhance biodiversity, especially among birds and in the rainforest, making it a sustainable practice.

¹⁷ Among other things, line-caught tuna is claimed to yield younger milder tasting tuna with higher levels of omega 3 as well as save dolphins.

¹⁸ Along these lines, we note with interest that an increasing proportion of words on contemporary restaurant menus seem to be taken up by proper names of ingredients and techniques.

¹⁹ If a projected image cannot be considered an identity unless it is regarded as “real,” then there is a potential definitional problem in separating visibility and credibility. To

avoid this problem, we consider potential identities and identity claims in treating visibility and credibility.

²⁰ It will be interesting to see if such issues become salient in the efforts by established scotch and other whiskey makers to compete against the rising new craft distillers.

Fischler (2008) reports 144 craft distillers in the U.S. Meanwhile, some major brands do not reveal their identities on bottles, and others have created high-end luxury versions of the products with unique (deceptive?) brand names.

²¹ Consumer rejection of these beers occurred even when brewers deceptively altered their identity (e.g. Miller's Plank Road), attempting to represent fictionally the brewer as a craft producer (causing credibility problems). The intense consumer interest in these products and their producers, and the strong communities that developed around them, meant that true identities always eventually get found out. The deceptive firms violated both reasons above, and appeared to be rejected more harshly by consumers.

²² Of course, both information tags and certification raise costs of products and services. It is worth noting that numerous studies show that American consumers, at least, are happy to pay a substantial premium for country-of-origin-labeling (Loureiro and Umberger 2003).

²³ Indeed, the old saying "no news is bad news" may apply here. We recall one BBQ establishment that became legendary for supposedly getting caught using cat meat.

²⁴ It may also be worth noting briefly how Chez Panisse embeds its authenticity appeals in its organizational structure including an open kitchen where patrons can walk and talk to the chefs, close relations with purveyors and farmers (including numerous forms of assistance), sponsorship of community activities, training and rotation of many personnel

(including chefs), development of cookbooks and posters, establishment of a foundation, advocacy of school food programs, and the unwillingness to expand and commercialize activities in the face of great recognition and opportunity (McNamee, 2007).

²⁵ This particular place may undergone an even more specific transformation from idiosyncratic to craft, when it moved from a slum-like area to a better district.

²⁶ In an ironic twist of fate, the success of Scharffen Berger made it an attractive acquisition target and it was later bought by chocolate giant Hershey.