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TRESIDDER, Richard and MARTIN, Emma

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# **Deviant behaviour in the hospitality industry: A problem of space and time**

**Richard Tresidder and Emma Martin**, Sheffield Hallam University

## **Abstract**

The high levels of deviant behaviour within the hospitality sector have been an ongoing concern for many managers and academics, with a clear recognition of the reputational, human and organizational costs of such behaviour. The traditional approach adopted by organizations and Human Resource Managers to counter deviant behaviour in the hospitality industry has focused around unsuccessful education programmes, while other authors offer alternate assessments of the industry's response to deviant behaviour. This conceptual article proposes that both the management and the study of deviant behaviour within the hospitality industry need to be contextualized within a temporal and spatial analysis of an employee's workaday lived experience. Through adopting Durkheim's discussions around time and space it is possible to identify four distinct temporal and spatial categories (the sacred, the mundane, the liminal and the profane); each of these categories can be seen to influence the behaviour of employees in different ways, even though they are part of the same time-space continuum. Thus, this article argues, from a theoretical framework, that to understand and manage deviant behaviour within the hospitality industry it is important to recognize that each category of time and space needs to be understood both in isolation and as part of a time-space continuum that surrounds the hospitality experience.

## **Keywords**

deviant behaviour

sacred and profane

alienation

drugs

alcohol

health and well-being

## **Introduction**

Deviance at work in the Hospitality and Tourism industries is well documented and considers a number of deviant behaviours including theft, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sex and service sabotage (Lashley 2002; Demir 2011; Pizam 2010). Organizational responses to the issues recommend focus on recruitment, training and creating a strong service culture (see, Belhassen and Shani 2013; Harris and Ogbonna 2009). This 'dark side' of the employee is attributed to a hedonistic environment or alienation at work and, at present, whilst corporate responses to deviant behaviour within their organizations often focus on employee welfare and education, it is clear that these interventions are not working and no real understanding exists as to why we continue to see more of these behaviours in the Hospitality and Tourism industries than other industries (Zhu et. al. 2010; Pidd et al. 2011; Kitterlin et al. 2015). This article considers a theoretical understanding of the causes of deviant behaviour and why it

continues to exist in the hospitality and tourism industries despite the HR manager's interventions in the workplace. This article offers a conceptual approach to the existing literature by concentrating on the nature of the time and space in which hospitality operates. Although the hospitality industry creates an environment that is filled with risk and temptation (Sönmez et al. 2013), this article argues that the high instances of deviant behaviour are not just the result of access to temptation. It can be argued that the hospitality industry operates within a particular conception of time and space that is underpinned and shaped by the philosophical and historically embedded concept of hospitality. Within this time and space people behave and interact in particular ways that are distinct to the industry and are different to the time and space outside of the hospitality experience. The consequence of this distinct time and space is that both guests and employees behave in certain ways and of which deviancy is a part. This article proposes that the hospitality and tourism servicescape can be understood through four time and space categories; Sacred time, Mundane time, Liminal Time and Profane time. The relationship between these times and spaces shapes and supports both the experiences and the behaviours of guests and employees. The article goes on to provide suggestions to industry as to why the current interventions may not be successful and offers alternatives based on creating positive temporal opportunities for employees to mitigate deviant behaviour in the workplace.

### **The issue of deviancy in the hospitality industry**

The scale of alcohol and drug abuse within Hospitality and Tourism employment is well established with studies from the United States (Zhu et al. 2010; Kitterlin et al. 2015),

Norway (Edvardsen et al. 2015), Australia (Brown et al. 2015; Bywood et al. 2008) and Israel (Belhassen and Shani 2013, 2012); although these studies adopt differing approaches, all recognize the scale and detrimental impacts on the health and well-being of employees within the sector. In an analysis of alcohol consumption within the Restaurant sector, Moore et al. (2009) highlight that 80% men and 64% women engage in hazardous alcohol consumption patterns. This high level of alcohol consumption is also reflected in studies mapping alcohol-related deaths to occupation and that '[...] occupations within the drinks, catering, entertainment and hospitality industries had high indications of alcohol related mortality' (Romeri et al. 2006: 12). However, as Pizam (2010: 547) notes, '[...] before we can find a solution to the high rates of alcohol consumption and dependency that plague our industry, we need to understand its causes'. Pizam goes on to ask whether such deviance is the result of a tolerant sub culture, easy access to alcohol or stress, shift work and working conditions. Alongside the dominance of alcohol misuse the industry fairs no better with drug taking. According to Kitterlin et al. (2015), research undertaken in 2013 by the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration* (SAMHSA) highlighted that approximately one in six adults employed in the hospitality industry has participated in illegal drug use whilst Bywood et al. (2008), in a study of Australian hospitality workers, claim that 31% of hospitality workers are using recreational drugs.

The deviant behaviour adopted by employees at work can be seen to encompass more than just the abuse of alcohol and drugs in the workplace. Robinson and Bennett (1995:555) identify that deviant behaviour relates to a form of '[...] voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in doing so threatens the wellbeing of an organisation'; they split deviance at work into two key areas: organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. For Bennett and Robinson (2000), organizational deviant behaviours are directed towards the organization and include activities such as theft from the workplace and other

types of scams and fiddles (Mars and Nicod 1984). Interpersonal deviance is directed towards other employees. Shugihara (2013) estimates that these types of behaviour cost the US restaurant sector between \$15 and \$25 billion annually and it is interesting to note that although organizational deviant behaviours have a massive financial impact upon the hospitality sector, there is still little understanding as to why this type of employee behaviour is more prevalent in the hospitality and tourism industries than other industries (Bywood et al. 2008; Moore et al. 2012; Kitterlin et al. 2015).

Consequently, there needs to be an alternative theoretical exploration when attempting to understand the causes and nature of deviant behaviour as currently neither the industry nor hospitality academics have a real insight into why the HR interventions in the workplace are unsuccessful and are not reducing instances or concerns surrounding deviant behaviour in the sector. For example, substance abuse has been recognized as a problem for many years (Corsun and Young 1998; Frone 2003; Zhu 2008), and yet the 2013 study by SAMHSA still identifies that little progress has been made by the industry in counteracting the problem. The key outcomes of most research projects explore the welfare needs of employees and how issues such as deviancy can be tackled through interventions such as workplace educational programmes (O'Neill 2012), harm-reduction strategies (Frone 2013) and drug testing (Pizam 2010; Kitterlin et al. 2015), and yet little evidence has shown that these interventions have successfully worked (Kitterlin et al. 2015). However, the lack of reductions in instances of recorded deviant behaviour and subsequent negative health implications demonstrate that interventions are not working, whether this is due to a lack of enforcement from employers (Buultjens et al. 2013) or the inappropriateness of the intervention is not known. The situation is complex; interventions are based on the belief that stress, long hours and shift patterns create an environment for alienated behaviour e.g.

drug taking and alcohol abuse, stealing or physical behaviour (e.g. bullying). However, for some hospitality organizations customer satisfaction is enhanced by employee-driven alcohol abuse, drug taking (Belhassen and Shani 2012) or sex with guests (Bauer and McKercher 2003; Berdychevsky et al. 2013). These deviant behaviours are no longer labelled deviant but part of the hedonist customer experience. These positive benefits are no longer discouraged by the firm hence contradictions in the industry exist. As such, it can be argued that if alcohol and drugs, sex and stealing are driven by alienation then it equates to deviancy; if it is driven by hedonism it becomes part of the customer experience.

### **The continuum of service sector interactions and experiences**

This article, in attempting to understand the high levels of deviant behaviour in the hospitality industry, explores the spatial and temporal landscapes that hospitality employees negotiate daily and extends the idea that the characteristics of this landscape shape the behaviour of those employees interacting with them. The exploration of these landscapes provides an understanding of the sector-specific characteristics of the time and space that surrounds the hospitality experience and how in turn this may influence our understanding of why deviancy occurs at such high levels within the hospitality industry. This article adopts Durkheim's (1995) conception of the 'sacred and profane' to explore the peculiarities of the spatial and temporal landscapes in which hospitality is located. For Durkheim (1995) in his seminal work, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim 1995, originally published 1912), the notion of the sacred is an ideal that transcends everyday existence. It is something that is extra-ordinary and refers to things set apart by human beings including religious

beliefs or anything socially defined as requiring special religious treatment. The sacred is associated with extraordinary and is often seen to possess dangerous qualities. According to Durkheim almost anything can be sacred if society identifies them as sacred, and once they have been identified as sacred they become surrounded by a set of behaviours, practices and rituals that reinforce and protect their status. By contrast, the profane is associated with the realm of routine and ordinary, utility or everydayness. For the hospitality industry this equates to long hours, low pay, working patterns, the often-repetitive nature of work, managing the service encounter and the high number of low-skilled jobs.

The linking and use of the phrase 'sacred' to explain or understand hospitality experience could be provocative; however, it has been recognized for some time that secular activities such as tourism or hospitality have certain sacred attributes in terms of the role that they play in the individual's search for meaning (Turner 1969; Cohen 1979; Graburn 1983; Belk et al. 1989). Within this context, it is argued that the increasing secularization of society has created an existential void in everyday life (York 2001: 362), and that finding meaningful and significant experiences that justify the individual's existence fills this void. Traditionally religion was perceived as either a system of beliefs that binds people together into social groups (Durkheim 1995) or more importantly, that religion is a set of coherent answers to the human existential dilemmas of birth, sickness and death (Weber 1978). It is argued that in an increasingly secular world that people find meaning and existential answers to life through engagement in social activities, such as tourism (Turner 1969; Cohen 1979; Graburn 1983), football (Sterchele 2007), online gaming (Wang et al. 2014) and hospitality (Tresidder 2010; 2011; Belk and Sobh 2012). Each of these modern social activities becomes for those engaging in them a means to escape, to find excitement and an extraordinariness in everyday life; the significance of the activity is also underpinned by a set of rules, ritual and behaviours that reinforce their significance for those involved. The implications of this view are that



hospitality experiences create meaningful liminal celebratory frames that are underpinned by expected ritual behaviours and rules in which the consumer can engage in hedonistic or non-profane practices. According to Durkheim (1995), the areas of the sacred and the profane should not intermingle and they should remain separate; however, with the field of hospitality there exists a complex dichotomy of interaction between the hosts and guests and it is argued below that it is this dichotomy that encourages and supports deviant behaviour within the sector.

There has been a great deal of literature that explores the impact of this conception of time and space with both tourism and hospitality literature (Turner 1977; Graburn 1983; Wickens 2002; Tresidder 2010, 2011; Belk and Sobh 2012); nevertheless, the focus of this work simply places the host–employee within profane time and the guest within sacred time and the interaction between the two is not considered. The current literature fails to understand the impact of working within the sacred temporal and spatial environs of hospitality. This article asserts that there is a direct correlation between how time and space is managed and understood, and that the subsequent behaviour of employees is informed by the interaction between the sacred, mundane, liminal and profane time. Within the confines of hospitality servicescapes both guests and employees interact within the service context and the two amalgamate; when carefully managed this amalgamation creates an environment in which service quality is generated.

The high levels of recorded deviancy can be attributed to the particularities of hospitality spaces in relation to other retail or servicescapes. For example, the success of the service experience is dependent on factors such as ‘atmosphere’ (Kotler 1973; Fakharyan et al. 2014) and the moderating and experience-generating factors of employees (Bitner 1992; Durna et al. 2015; Gibbs et al. 2016), all of which require high levels of emotional labour by

staff. Thus, employees play a pivotal role in maintaining and creating the hospitality experience and to successfully achieve this they need to negotiate the temporal and spatial landscapes of the hospitality industry creating the 'sacred' experience for the 'profane'. The negotiation of this time and space is fraught with interactions and pressures that can lead to the adoption of deviant behaviour.

### **Hospitality and the sacred**

In understanding the significance of the hospitality experience within contemporary society it is important to take the notion of hospitality out of its commercial context and to return to the idea of hospitality which is underpinned by such ideals as the breaking of bread, sharing and offering friendship (O'Gorman 2007; Morgan and Tresidder 2015). This philosophy still fortifies the commercial hospitality experience, service quality and the very notion of modern hospitality management. It becomes one of the mechanisms by which the guest frames one of their experiences of the social, alongside other activities such as shopping, football or online gaming. Just as Silverstone (1988) envisages television as a 'ritual frame', a cognitive, imaginative and practical space in which everyone can access the things that mark off the social from the private (Couldry 2001: 158), it can be argued that hospitality servicescapes create a ritual frame in which the individual guest may reflexively explore and express their identity, aspirations or membership to consumer groups, tribes or interest groups. It is against this background that servicescapes mark the distinction between sacred time and space created for the guest away from the profane ordinariness of their everyday life. For Durkheim (1995), the formulation of these two categories is the product of socially generated boundaries that are underpinned by both rituals and rules. With the employee creating the theatre of hospitality (see Gibbs et al. 2016) they enact and support the

sacred experience through service delivery. In practical terms these socially generated boundaries locate workers in a hospitality time and space that is not sacred and within this paradigm their status is defined by sets of rules and rituals that reinforce the difference between the guests' sacred experience and employees' non-sacred or mundane delivery. In their analysis of women working in Gold Coast hotels Kensbock et al. (2014) refer to much of the work undertaken by female hospitality employees work as 'distinction work', whereby the employees' position is defined by various types and forms of hierarchies and distinctions (in terms of management structures, host–guest status and service provider–receiver); thus, for many employees the spatial and temporal boundaries of the servicescape are grounded in everyday lived experience. It can also be argued that this distinction is reinforced by the ritualistic and symbolic nature of many hospitality roles. As such, hospitality servicescapes can be seen to reflect a continuum of service sector interactions and experiences that are mediated by 'expected behaviors' belonging to both the employee and the guest. The parameters of these 'expected behaviors' are governed by various factors including social and cultural norms (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy 2003), the formality and nature of the hospitality experience, the design of the servicescape and ultimately by what Bitner (1992) refers to as customer and employee response moderators. Moderators can be defined as any variable with the potential to change the relationship between the host and the guest; examples of these include dress, attitude and cleanliness. These governing factors create a ritual frame, which Couldry (2001: 158) envisages as '[...] a cognitive and practical space' in which the customer–consumer may reflexively explore social relations, individual–group membership and expressions of identity through both the servicescape and their embedded hospitality interactions and experiences.

## **Spatial and temporal landscapes of hospitality**

It is argued in this article that the high levels of deviant behaviour within the hospitality industry may be influenced by the very particular construction of time and space in which employees are placed. At the basic level, adopting Durkheim's distinction of time and space as being represented by either sacred or profane time, with guests being in the sacred sphere (Tresidder 2011; Belk and Sobh 2012), this status is affirmed through the various aspects of hospitality provision such as service, service quality, extraordinary experiences or merely the convenience of not having to produce a meal. This juxtaposition enables us to start to understand the complexity of time and space within the hospitality industry and the impact that this has on the individual; however, the host-guest interaction makes this juxtaposition more complex within the hospitality industry than other sectors because of the rituals, design of servicescapes and the embedded rules of host-guest interactions that underpin the hospitality experience. Durkheim's view was that the sacred was simply society transposed onto the spiritual level, and the distinction between the sacred and the profane is a universal social fact; 'The sacred and the profane have always and everywhere been conceived by the human mind as two distinct classes' (1995: 38–39).

Although it may be tempting to identify guests as being in sacred time because of receiving hospitality and employees being in profane time as result of their supplying hospitality, this binary distinction does not allow for the fluid interaction and co-creation of experiences that play out within the hospitality encounter. Time for Durkheim becomes a classification of reality (1995: 217); further, for Smith (1999: 16), this binary distinction between the sacred and profane time is important and remains at the core of Durkheimian scholarship. However, he believes that there are four elementary forms of time and space; these are 'sacred, profane,

liminal and mundane'. By accepting these four forms of time and space it becomes possible to chart and understand how employees negotiate the temporal and spatial landscapes of hospitality. The consequence of these four elementary forms of time and space can be defined within the realm of hospitality in the following terms.

### **Sacred time and hospitality employees**

The sacred has been discussed in some depth in both tourism and hospitality literature (Turner 1977; Graburn 1983; Wickens 2002). Much of this literature is based on the celebratory aspects of hospitality and underpinned by ideas of *communitas*, whereby social and cultural barriers are broken down and that meaningful exchanges and experiences may take place between all of the actors involved in the hospitality or tourism experience (Turner 1977), or by the idea of social therapy, whereby, the tourism and hospitality experience provides a metaphysical reward for negotiating the pressures that surround everyday lived experience (see Krippendorf 2010). For Smith (1999: 16) sacred time provides the individual with the '[...] prospect of closer contact with the transcendental and with realms of ultimate meaning, generating emotional energies such as awe, reverence and excitement'. In charting the temporal work cycle of hospitality employees, they can be seen to be working within the sacred temporal frame that surrounds the hospitality experience. Their role is vital in creating and maintaining the experience of guests; it can be argued that this role is about enacting and performing defined hospitality rituals. Thus employees are a vital element in creating sacred time, but simultaneously the roles adopted to achieve this are not always part of sacred time, but of something more fluid and liminal. In terms of the binary division between the sacred and profane, then it stands to reason that employees are straddling both the sacred and the profane. Conversely this article proposes that the work cycle and culture of hospitality

employees needs to be understood in terms of Smith's four temporal categories. However, to understand the significance of this temporal blurring of boundaries it is important to unpack what working in the sacred entails for hospitality workers.

The nature of hospitality work and, in particular, the service element places the employee in a position where they are requested to co-create the sacred time with the guest. The roles that hospitality workers play in the formation of this time is important, and as such, workers are responsible for maintaining the sacred element, but are in what can be seen as opposite categories of time. Hedonistic behaviour related to sex, drugs and alcohol are commonplace for guests (Crick 1989; Bauer and McKertcher 2003; Berdychevsky and Gibson 2015), with many operators marketing and promoting the role of staff in creating hedonistic experiences. Such hospitality contexts allow for irresponsible behaviour to become acceptable as guests enter a time and space where they are unconstrained by social norms brought from home (Sönmez et al. 2013). In some cases, working in this environment of alcohol parties and other risky behaviours (Tutenges 2012) produces a normative culture of acceptance (Belhassen and Shani 2012) and a permissive environment develops (Padilla et al. 2012). Although where the labour process 'aims to sell on experience, the quality of social interaction is of paramount importance' (Filby 1992: 37) and where staff are, as Cabezas (2009) notes, 'selling tropical paradise', resorts look to encourage engagement between staff and guests to co-create the customer experience and look for repeat business, leading to alcohol and drug consumption with guests and, as reports note, around 20 per cent of resort worker having sexual relations with guests (Cabezas 2009). For example, as Sönmez et al. (2013) note, for many tourism representatives their '[...] unwritten job description [...] involves participating in the hard selling of alcohol, getting tourists to spend as much money as possible, and in some cases even having sex with tourists'. Going beyond service with a

smile is often encouraged by some resorts as sexuality is seen as an integral part of an all-inclusive resort experience (Tutenges 2012; Belhassen and Shani 2012); these relationships benefit the organization and yet also the worker, often entwining opportunity and gain for the employee with care and affection (Cabezas 2009). Staff in these jobs, it can be argued, hardly distinguish between their work and non-work lives: their customers are their friends, their workplace is where they would hang out anyway (Guerrier and Adib 2004: 337–38) as their role in co-creating the sacred straddles the boundaries between work and play.

The rituals of hospitality (table settings, dialogue, expected behaviours, serving wine) create an ‘aesthetic function’ (Cossu 2010: 42) that brings an order and significance to the experience; additionally, these rituals also reinforce the sacred dimension of hospitality and creates a flow of time that impacts upon the behaviour of those involved in the sacred sphere (Durkheim 1995: 375). According to Cossu (2010: 34) the construction of rituals pays ‘[...] reference to a complex system which includes values, norms, rules of conduct, formal procedures of action and meanings’. Additionally, he goes on to identify that at the foundations of Durkheim’s principle of ritual ‘[...] lie the concrete features of “acting together” in a time and place [...]’ and that is underpinned by ‘[...] bodily practices, the synchronicity of action, the exposure to sounds, colours, to the movements of the other participants’ (Cossu 2010: 36). Workers’ temporal and spatial position is one that is blurred and coexists with the co-creation of the hospitality experience and consequently, places them in a unique workaday situation that is not seen in other occupations or sectors. The customer’s role in employee deviance is an interesting one; whilst for some employees the significance of employees and guests co-creating the experience is a blurring of work and life, for others the co-creation is grounded in everyday working practices. According to Wang et al. (2011) and more recently Kensbock et al. (2014), co-creation and the distinction

between work and play lead to an emotional distance or dissonance between employee and guests, and such instances of dissonance contributes towards feelings of alienation at work. Additionally, it can be argued that deviant employee behaviour is also a response to the distance between the employee and the guests' life, challenging customer behaviour, socio-economic hierarchies and customer unfriendliness (Wang et al. 2011). Thus, for many hospitality employees although they may work in what can be defined as sacred time, the reality of their workaday life is that it is part of the mundane.

### **Mundane time: The monotony of everyday life**

According to Smith (1999) the mundane mediates between sacred and profane places and is associated with everyday life. For many the mundane revolves around the workaday routines of everyday lived experience. As can be seen from the above, for the hospitality employee, mundane time is often located in a celebratory environment in which employees are facilitating the entry of guests into the sacred realm of experience. Hospitality employees work in a time and space whereby the binary distinction between the sacred and profane is blurred; although tasks undertaken may be mundane, repetitive and sometimes subservient, they still take place in a defined sacred space. The result of this is that for the hospitality employee the spheres of the sacred and profane become entwined and escape is governed by a search for release from the work and ritual environment (for a wider discussion of this see Eade 1992; Eade and Sallnow 2013; Yorgason and della Dora 2009). This entwining of spheres can be explored in terms of the type of behaviour that employees are often encouraged to engage in and has become an accepted element of the role in the hospitality and tourism industries. Employees and guests may 'kick off the party with loads of alcohol' (Tutenges 2012) and free alcohol and other services sweeten the relationship between the



employee and the guest. Although at first sight this may be seen as engagement by both parties in sacred hedonistic practices, for some employees the pressures to continually be sociable and to participate in hedonistic practices become firmly an established element of the mundane workaday life. In exploring the case of TGI Fridays, Lashley (2002) notes that the emotional display must be fun and party like and front-line staff's performance must match the expectations of customers. What these behaviours also foster is the normalization of overindulgence as part of acceptable everyday working practices and that the continual blurring of boundaries also allows deviant behaviour to become part of the norm within the hospitality industry.

The engagement and fostering of relationships with guests in the work environment is an important aspect of the hospitality industry; however, when this moves from service-based interaction and becomes more intimate it often leads to 'sweethearting behaviours' (Brady et al. 2012); such behaviours often include providing guests with free drinks or meals, extra-large portions and product substitution. Although at first sight intimate labour may be seen to transgress the boundaries between sacred and profane time, for many employees in customer-facing roles, it is an expected part of the job and in the realm of tourism. 'Intimate labour is an important feature on which resorts capitalize', whereby 'workers strive to create and exploit conditions of intimacy' (Brady et al. 2012: 95); although some sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry directly encourage such behaviour, workers often engage in such practices in order to search for a better way of life. Brady et al. (2012) note that the 'dark side of close customer employee relationships' goes beyond sexual relations as the practice of 'sweethearting' often includes providing guests with free products or experiences. These behaviours often develop into other areas such as employee theft and fraud. The idea of the blurring of boundaries between sacred and mundane time can initially be seen as a

sharing of experiences and activities; however, such social behaviour remains part of the mundane for employees and as such, need to search for alternative forms of escape. Consequently, the search for escape moves into other often ungoverned or liminal spaces, for example staff coming together to drink and relax in closed bars or restaurants after guests have left and service has finished.

### **Liminal time: Where employees go to escape**

Liminal time can be defined as the period of time that occurs in the middle stages of rituals and because it does clearly fit into defined categories, in the case of this article the sacred and profane. Liminal time possesses the quality of ambiguity or disorientation and usual or normal behaviours are often temporarily suspended for the duration that the individual is located within the liminal period. A great deal of research has been undertaken in identifying the significance of liminal time and the impact that it has on the behaviours of individuals (Shields 2013; Turner 1977). It is within these liminal places or 'pleasure zones' (Fantasia 1995) that we find a release from our normal social constraints and to enter a state of *communitas* (Turner 1977; Belk et al. 1989). The creation of these 'pleasure zones' offers a delineated space of hospitality experiences in which we may hedonistically explore the experiences of food and hospitality. This liminality and release enables us to explore hospitality and food in terms of senses and the sensual, as an 'intimate frontier' (Dawkins 2009), where it becomes possible to hedonistically revel in the notion of food and drink as pleasure. For Smith (1999) the liminal provides an alternative point of mediation between the sacred and profane; he goes on to state that the liminal is

[...] a type of special place where everyday rules of life are seen as being held in abeyance. They are marked by ludic forms of behaviour and emotional constellations which suspend the traditional moralities that are founded upon the careful separation of the sacred and the profane. (Smith 1999: 17)

It can be argued that much of the deviant behaviour charted within hospitality research takes place in what can be thought of as liminal time and spaces. Liminality may be defined as a place or an event that is out-of or in-between time; this liminal period can be seen to release employees from the mundane routines of service and the imposed norms of everyday lived experience or social constraints. Thus, within the hospitality context the engagement in hedonistic and escape practices becomes a reflexive, expressive activity in which individuality is reinforced as we are freed from the constraints of social structures. Turner (1973) characterizes this temporal and spatial removal from social constraints as ‘antistructure’, whereby the content of the social relations is no longer normative and hierarchical but egalitarian, a process that he hails as ‘communitas’. The informal and liminal hospitality servicescapes inhabited by employees after work, creates a form of ‘communitas’ whereby people bridge their social and cultural differences by finding communitas through shared consumption patterns and a process of harmonization that enables to escape and find freedom from the constraints of our normal lives. Turner states that this freedom results in a process that he classifies as ‘flow’ (1977: 48–52) and can be characterized as:

the non-reflective stage that is characteristic of a person who is engaged in some important activity, in which action and awareness emerge, self-awareness gives way to attention focused on a limited field in which the participant is engaged in

mastering, a feeling which is a reward in itself, not a means to an external end. While such feelings may characterise those engaged in religious acts, e.g., taking communion, they are also common to leisure occupations, such as hobbies, sex acts, recreation, and games. (Graburn 1983: 545)

These deviant spaces of hospitality can be defined as the social spaces in which employees enter into escape and socialization behaviours within the liminal environs of host-free servicescapes (the kitchen, the empty bar or restaurant) of the hospitality industry. For many this time and space is the equivalent to the idea of ‘Banana Time’ (Roy 1959), whereby groups of employees developed various coping strategies to overcome the repetitive and mundane nature of work. Although Roy’s work focuses on machine workers, the principles remain the same whereby workers use food, drink and drugs as a means of escape and the reinforcement of community and fostering an esprit de corps, or as seen by Martin (2004) as ‘chefs pranks’. It is interesting to note at this point that according to Durkheim (1995: 217–18) rituals (even those of the workplace) create ‘intimate bonds of relationship’ and consequently ‘[...] a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation’. As such the ritualistic nature of hospitality work creates teams and an esprit de corps to cope with the work environment, and this relationship becomes extended into liminal time and spaces. Ancona et al. (2001: 519) identify how individuals and group behaviours are subject to ‘temporal personality variables’, in which actors interpret and interact within the recognized boundaries according to their own ‘[...] cognitive and behavior dispositions’. Thus, the ideas of liminal time within the hospitality industry can be seen to directly impact upon the behaviour and personality of employees and that individuals relate inversely to different categories of time and space.

Unlike the formalized and ritualized time and space associated with hospitality-orientated sacred time, for Smith,

Liminal places are created by narratives of absurdity and are sustained by quasi-ritualized carnivalesque, playful or grotesque forms of behaviour. These narratives disrupt traditional categories of thought and morality. They are often either comedic in character, offering a ludic conception of place, or else 'absurd' in the sense that they are fragmented and defy any easy classification or ontological grounding except that they are 'other' to the everyday. (1999:21)

The ludic or the playful nature of hospitality spaces is underpinned by a set of 'expected behaviors' or micro-rituals that normalize this type of behaviour as part of the work-cycle of the hospitality industry. They can be seen as a reaction to the unsociable working shifts and the formalized ritualism that underpins the notion of service. The ludic behaviour of hospitality and tourism employees is well charted and according to Shields (2013) is sustained by a set of ludic discourses that encourage deviant behaviour and sexuality and that the industry 'turns a blind eye' (Litzky et al. 2006). In fact, Smith (1999) and Shields (2013) go as far as to see the liminal spaces that surround tourism and hospitality as providing an institutional license that encourages interpersonal micro-rituals such as drinking, drug taking and lovemaking as reinforcing the liminal space identity; socialization at work is about Liminal space activity, not what is done with the guest.

Ancona et al. (2001), in exploring the significance of temporal transformations within business management processes, adopt Hall's (1966) notion of polychronic time, where time

is seen as cyclical and informed. The result of this is that the strictness that is associated with monochronic time is loosened so that a lack of punctuality or other unacceptable behaviours become part of the cycle of work. As such, members of a given group who are in monochronic time possess shared experiences of the time and resultantly engage in social interactions that reinforce group membership, resistance and friendships; in other words it creates a state of *communitas*. It can also be argued that the issue of personality is of particular significance within the context of hospitality studies as there have been a number of studies that identify that the industry often attracts employees with destructive and sometimes addictive personalities, and thus the freely available access to alcohol, possible sexual partners and the social networks that surround the industry become major motivating factors for them to join the industry (Colbert et al. 2004; Liao et al. 2004). In the case of the hospitality ‘banana time’ many of these social interactions result in what may be defined as deviant behaviour.

### **Profane time: Where deviancy happens**

So far, this article has explored the implications of sacred, mundane and liminal time and space, all of these categories provide the contextualization against which the significance of the profane can be understood. Within tourism and hospitality, the idea of the profane has been largely ignored apart from its use to denote its relationship with routine work and in reinforcing the binary differentiation between the sacred and profane categories. Within the context of this article profane places within hospitality can not only be seen as providing this opposition but the profane also marks a time and space where deviant behaviour becomes a

normalized element of employees' everyday lived experiences. Smith (1999: 17) associates the profane, '[...] with evil and pollution that speaks of the depths of depravity'. Like sacred places they influence the emotions in powerful ways, creating sentiments such as unease, terror or revulsion. In assessing Durkheim's conception of the profane, Rawls et al. (2016) break the distinction between the sacred and profane down to the simplistic distinction of 'what should be' and 'what should not be'; it is not, however, a moral distinction, but a social one. They go on to state that 'The "should" are the shared social ways of making meaningful coherences. The "should not" prohibits the purely individual and "natural" from intruding into and disrupting these processes' (Rawls et al. 2016: 13). Deviant behaviour consists of several constituent practices that may be defined as profane as they have crossed the boundary between what is acceptable or 'should be' and what 'should not be'. Rawls et al. (2016: 14), in exploring this idea, further state that 'Modernity consists of a heightened state of moral relevancy. Each situation and type of interaction will need its own sacred/profane boundaries [...]'. According to Durkheim, 'Man [*sic*] acts morally only when he works toward goals superior to, or beyond, individual goals' (1995: 69). However, as employees emerge from the mundane to the liminal and transgression into the profane, it can be argued that for many there is a shift from 'moral individualism' to what Durkheim calls 'egotistic individualism'. For both Thompson (1991) and Durkheim (1995) egoistic individualism is socially divisive and results in pathological tendencies that include deviant forms of behaviour and a 'breakdown of moral community' (Thompson 1991: 288).

The impact of this 'breakdown of moral community' directly influences the scope and degree of deviant behaviour being adopted by employees as it represents the acceptance and normalization of practices such as drinking, drug taking and theft by individual and groups of

employees. Additionally, it also leads to what may be termed as 'micro incidents of resistance' or in more traditional terms 'organizational dissonance'; these are types of deviant behaviour (Harris and Ogbonna 2009), for example, spitting in guest's food or wiping utensils in dirty cloths, etc. Such behaviours can be seen to directly challenge the formality and rituals of hospitality by placing such actions firmly in the realms of the profane. These 'micro incidents of resistance' range from counterproductive behaviours designed intentionally to negatively affect service in the form of 'service sabotage' (Harris and Ogbonna 2002), to boredom and weak sanctions (Tuna et al. 2016). Lashley (2002) interestingly notes that the key paradox is that employee emotions are sometimes at odds with labour requirements and that the resultant emotional dissonance creates stress-related behaviours at work. He goes on to state: 'Where emotions are felt in dissonance with emotions that can be expressed [...] Stress, absenteeism and withdrawal are all likely consequences' (2002: 256). In developing this idea further, Harris and Ogbonna (2009) go some way towards categorizing the various types of service saboteurs and their deviant behaviours. Harris and Ogbonna (2009: 326) identify four basic types: 'thrill seekers' aiming to relieve boredom or monotony, 'apathetic's', who are indifferent and lazy duty shirkers, 'customer revengers', for whos revenge on the customer not the firm is important. and 'money grabbers' who can increase income through the practice of sweethearting? These practices can be viewed as clear examples of 'egotistic individualism' and become firmly embedded in the profane by virtue of falling into Rawls et al.'s (2016) idea of 'what should not be'.

Whilst management are not ignorant of the deviant behaviour, it is clear that the different areas from which employee deviance arises require different intervention strategies. Current strategies on recruitment, drug testing and educational programmes (O'Neill 2012;



Pizam 2010; Kitterlin et al. 2015) appear to have little impact. When we look at three central areas identified in this article; co-creating the customer experiences; the gap between customer space and employees' own life; and the release from mundane work activity in the hospitality space, we can surmise why interventions may have little success. The working environment is the essential key to understanding the deviant behaviour. Rather than employees being drawn towards liminal time and communities of deviancy, the hospitality industry needs to create and identify alternative sacred spaces for employees rather than just relying on educational programmes on drug and alcohol rehabilitation and awareness. Educational programmes reinforce the mundane rather than offer an escape from it. Employees who currently escape through deviant forms of behaviour need to be offered a more positive alternative. It is clear from research undertaken elsewhere (Haworth and Lewis 2005; Tsaur and Tang 2012) that access to employees' own sacred spaces, for example, through the provision of leisure activities (such as gyms, choirs or other activities that focus on well-being) creates opportunities to engage in their own sacred repetitive activities and offers an alternative to communities of deviancy. These spaces allow employees to escape from the mundane and find positive affirming interests and experiences that counteract the pressures of working in the hospitality industry.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this article offers an understanding of the time–space continuum in which the hospitality experience is contained. Traditionally, the spatial and temporal landscapes of hospitality are understood from the point of the guest or the consumer, with little attention being paid to the impact of working long hours, often for low pay, with

challenging working patterns and repetitive tasks on employees. The tenet of this article is that the proclivity of hospitality workers to engage in various forms of deviant behaviour is not just an organizational one but also the consequence of negotiating the industry's spatial and temporal landscapes. By breaking the time–space continuum into four categories, the sacred, the mundane, the liminal and the profane, it is possible to identify the various pressures and factors that lead to and support the adoption of deviant behaviours by hospitality workers. It is at this point that it is important to stress that deviant behaviour takes place in all stages of the time–space continuum, and there are links and ongoing causal links between the concepts; however, it can also be argued that the degree and level and severity of deviant behaviour becomes elevated in the liminal and profane categories. Additionally, the creation of sacred times and places for guests where hedonistic practices take place and are maintained is heavily reliant upon employees both in terms of their service input and the co-creation of experience element. Consequently, this sees employees straddling both the sacred and the mundane time of workaday lived experiences. This creates a distinctive spatial and temporal continuum for hospitality workers (and to a certain degree tourism workers) as they are surrounded by the symbols of hedonism, such as money, drink, drugs, food and sex. Although engagement in certain types of deviant behaviour by workers may enhance the hospitality experience for guests, such behaviours can also form part of the ritualistic and often subservient realities of mundane time for them. The result of this is that workers search for a time and space that is removed from guest-orientated sacred time and the mundane aspects of their jobs. The creation of liminal hospitality landscapes allows workers to escape with colleagues 'outside' of work through the use of sex, drugs and alcohol. Spatially, what is unique for hospitality employees is that this liminal time is usually undertaken in the

workplace (empty bar, restaurant or club) where paying for food–drink is often ad hoc, access to alcohol is easily available and the usual rituals or rules of hospitality are temporarily suspended. Consequently, the line between the liminal and the profane is easily blurred or crossed. It can be argued that the temporal and spatial nature of hospitality in conjunction with the personality traits of certain employees often results in employees entering profane time, where ‘what should not be’ behaviour and actions become normalized and boundaries are crossed, and this leads to the breakdown of the moral community within the organization. The relevance of this article for both academics and the industry is that it provides an alternative and complementary understanding of the time–space continuum in which hospitality employees operate, and that any strategy or discussion surrounding deviant behaviour needs to be contextualized and operationalized within the temporal and spatial particularities of both the industry and organization.

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### **Contributor details**

Richard Tresidder is a reader in hospitality studies at Sheffield Hallam University. Richard holds a Doctorate in the semiotics of tourism. His interests focus on the socio-anthropology



of tourism, hospitality and food and how these experiences are represented in marketing texts and the behaviours of both hosts and guests.

Emma Martin is currently Head of the Department of Service Sector Management at Sheffield Hallam University. Emma is a member of the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME) executive, where she is national secretary and chair of the management stream for the annual conference. Her current research and consultancy work is based on Lifestyle employment in Hospitality, Migration and talent management and wider aspects of employment and HRM in the hospitality and tourism industries. Her work has been published across a number of hospitality and tourism journals.

Contact:

Sheffield Business School, Department of Service Sector Management, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB, UK.

E-mail: [r.tresidder@shu.ac.uk](mailto:r.tresidder@shu.ac.uk)

E-mail: [e.martin@shu.ac.uk](mailto:e.martin@shu.ac.uk)