

The Phenomenology of the Happy Host: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and  
Autoethnographic Study of Alterity in the Hospitality Industry

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## **Abstract:**

This personal exploration examines the distinct qualities and perspectives of a joyful host in the food and beverage industry within a commercial hospitality venue. It highlights the necessity of enriching the emotional experiences of both guests and oneself during service encounters. This study examines the significant experiences that enhance the well-being of individuals and those around them, revealing a unique phenomenon of alterity within the context of commercial hospitality. The central concept focuses on the genuine experiences of a food and beverage host, underscoring the crucial role of alterity in commercial hospitality. Alterity involves recognising and engaging with the experiences of others, making the concept of “Otherness” essential for fostering positive interactions within this industry. Moreover, the research emerged from a profound understanding of Otherness shaped through careful self-reflection. These insights foster greater self-awareness, enabling individuals to manage and regulate emotions more effectively when faced with overwhelming negative feelings. The ability to navigate these challenging emotions enables frontline hospitality workers to experience authentic joy, rooted in genuine hospitality, which in turn results in meaningful and satisfying experiences within the commercial hospitality sector.

This research adopts a phenomenological approach to examine the case of an exuberant host within the food and beverage sector of the hospitality industry. By utilising Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and autoethnography, the study explores the joyful experiences of the enthusiastic host through the lens of Dasein. It highlights key events that evoke a sense of Otherness while providing a comprehensive cultural analysis of personal experiences. The research emphasises the valuable insights gained from a significant event at the Chandelier Lounge in the Cordis Hotel Auckland, which I referred to as the “phenomenon of the tipping flute.”

I have interpreted the phenomenon of the tipping flute, which relates to a theory that elucidates the concept of sui generis empathy, acknowledging otherness. This perspective is crucial for food and beverage hosts who consider and integrate this principle into their daily roles. This research asserts that authentic happiness is achievable in the hospitality sector, even when confronted with its most emotionally taxing challenges. Furthermore, while the idea of

alterity—recognising ‘Otherness’—is important in commercial hospitality, it warrants further investigation and a more thorough examination.

The exploration of the joyful host phenomenon offers a captivating perspective on its application. It highlights a crucial opportunity to nurture a culture of alterity within the industry. The study strongly suggests that adopting the concept of alterity can significantly improve the overall hospitality experience. These insights could motivate the hospitality sector to create a more welcoming and compassionate atmosphere, ultimately contributing to the development of a more empathetic and enjoyable future in the hospitality industry.

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## **Attestation of Authorship:**

I affirm that this submission is my original work. To my knowledge, it includes no materials authored by others, except where acknowledged, and it excludes contents that substantially overlap with submissions for any other degree or diploma from a university or higher education institution.



Kirk Pitiquen

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realities of the hospitality industry. I truly hope this field will one day transform into a more rewarding environment for those who are passionate about hospitality.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

My research examines the phenomenology of the joyful host in the hospitality sector from the perspective of Otherness. This chapter commences with an overview of my background in New Zealand and the motivations underpinning this research. It subsequently highlights the significance of my phenomenological approach in addressing critical challenges within the hospitality industry. Furthermore, I outline the study's objectives, intentions, and research questions. Lastly, I summarise the overall research plan and present my research background, including the motives that drove this inquiry.

### 1.2 My Background in New Zealand and the Rationale for This Research

My journey as a fulfilled host in the food and beverage sector of the hospitality industry has been unique. Before I started my career as a food and beverage host, I was a chef. I began my culinary journey in 2010 after travelling from the Philippines to New Zealand to study culinary arts at the Cornell Institute of Business and Technology, motivated by my dream to become a chef. I have honed my culinary skills in various kitchens across New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, and Norfolk Island. I have stood out because of my exceptional patisserie skills, which stem from my passion for baking. I earned a French pâtisserie diploma from Le Cordon Bleu in Wellington in 2016 and am proud to have received specialised training and attended short masterclasses in pastry at esteemed locations, including Perpignan in France, Kyiv in Ukraine, and Las Vegas in the United States. As a passionate pastry chef, I derive immense joy from my creations and love seeing them come to life. However, as a chef, I often feel introverted because, even though I have significant experience and qualifications, my shyness often undermines my sense of achievement in my career. Although I enjoyed being a chef, I realised that the realities of this profession did not always align with my desire for genuine personal fulfilment. My introverted disposition amplifies my sensitivity, making it challenging for me to maintain loyalty at work when I am dissatisfied with my job.

My life took a new direction in 2020 when I enrolled in a graduate diploma programme in hospitality management at the Auckland Institute of Studies (AIS). The COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenge to this personal decision. AIS helped me land an internship at Cordis,

which was set to become the largest hotel in New Zealand when I joined in 2021. I started my internship in the pastry kitchen, but soon, I soon noticed that the work lacked excitement. I spoke with my internship supervisor about my interest in exploring various hospitality opportunities and asked for her help relocating to a different department within the hotel. She facilitated my transfer to the Chandelier Lounge, where I could participate in front-of-house food and beverage service. On my first day at the Chandelier Lounge, an event occurred that sparked a journey of self-discovery. This event altered my perspective and prompted me to reevaluate my original motivations for coming to New Zealand. Consequently, I chose to set aside my passion for patisserie. My experience in the Chandelier Lounge brought a profound sense of fulfilment, primarily through the concept of Otherness—something that I had been missing in my career as a pastry chef. This discovery revitalised my sense of purpose and fulfilment throughout my internship. Working at the Chandelier has consistently filled me with joy, and I continue to experience this happiness in my current role as a host. My phenomenology as a happy host through Otherness was the breakthrough that inspired me to pursue research in this field.

### 1.3 The Significance of My Phenomenological Study in the Hospitality Industry

My experience as a joyful host began with a significant event on 23rd July 2021, marking the start of my journey in the hospitality industry, specifically as a host within the food and beverage sector. As a food and beverage host, I have dedicated myself to crafting genuine emotional experiences for our hotel guests. My research study on my role as a food and beverage host explores my emotional and psychological well-being, with a particular focus on how I have overcome my introverted nature and social anxieties. This research also examines the emotional labour involved in customer service, particularly in the food and beverage sector. My autoethnographic study tackles the problematic emotional aspects of hospitality, which contribute to the high turnover culture in the industry. In this dissertation, I discuss my unique feelings and share my distinctive perspective on discovering intrinsic joy in this role. At times, I find myself standing apart, observing others who seem to lack the passion, motivation, and empathy I deeply value in this field. It often feels as though I am a solitary voice, surrounded by individuals who are disconnected from the authenticity, compassion, and empathy that should form the foundation of this industry.

## 1.4 The Objectives and Intentions of This Phenomenological Research

My research extensively examines the emotionally demanding nature of customer-facing roles within the hospitality industry and their impact on employee well-being. I offer a unique viewpoint as a food and beverage host at the Chandelier Lounge in the Cordis Hotel. I am deeply committed to crafting emotionally rewarding guest experiences, resulting in profoundly gratifying service interactions. I connect with guests through emotional exchanges, creating fulfilling experiences that bring me joy. By offering these fulfilling experiences to our guests, I also reap the rewards of these emotional connections in a meaningful way that is distinctly mine. This cycle of providing emotionally satisfying experiences to our guests fuels my passion for hospitality. In this research, I highlight the vital role of my well-being, which is essential for sustaining a positive mindset and fostering happiness—critical elements in advancing knowledge related to frontline roles, such as those in the food and beverage sector. I hope to share these emotional rewards through this research.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The research titled "The Phenomenology of the Happy Host" investigates the emotional well-being of individuals in frontline hospitality roles. This study specifically aims to explore the lived experiences of a food and beverage host at the Chandelier Lounge in the Cordis Hotel, with a focus on the concept of Otherness. It seeks to address two key research questions:

1. What motivates someone in the hospitality industry who experiences Otherness to take pleasure in caring for others?
2. How does a person in the hospitality industry who experiences Otherness find true joy in offering hospitality to others?

## 1.6 Overview of My Dissertation

This unique study combines Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with autoethnographic methods to offer distinct insights into the experiences of a food and beverage host. The research highlights the deep satisfaction that can be derived from providing an authentic hospitality experience through the lens of alterity. Alterity, or immersing oneself in others' experiences, is essential to my role. I strive to create emotionally rewarding moments

for our guests to find immense joy in engaging with them in fulfilling ways. My investigative narrative centres on self-discovery in the hospitality sector, particularly in food and beverage service, which began with my internship on 23 July 2021. This marked a significant phase that transformed my perspective on life through the concept of alterity. My self-discovery of Otherness has profoundly shaped me, particularly emphasising how alterity has inspired my journey to become the enthusiastic host I am today. This research explores my understanding of Otherness, intricately linked to the psychological and emotional dimensions associated with my ego. This self-centred experience informs my singular viewpoint and emphasises my position as a cheerful, self-important host who engages with alterity in hospitality at the Chandelier Lounge in the Cordis Hotel.

This research adopted a phenomenological approach to exploring the experiences of a joyful host, aligning with my internship and serving as a crucial moment of self-exploration. The study utilised IPA, employing an idiographic method alongside retrospective, introspective, and reflective techniques through personal analysis. The Chandelier Lounge is considered the most strategically located food and beverage outlet at the Cordis Hotel, but it is also the most challenging to manage. This venue is the primary focus of my research, illustrating a specific case that mirrors the experiences of frontline workers in the hospitality industry, particularly in food and beverage service. This research aspires to provide insights that deepen our understanding of human experiences in hospitality, offering a novel, engaging, and thought-provoking viewpoint informed by alterity.

## 1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented research on the phenomenology of the happy host through the lens of Otherness. This work integrates phenomenological analysis with autoethnographic investigation. I explored the motivations that underlie this research, which are rooted in my unsettling experiences in New Zealand. Furthermore, I emphasised the importance of phenomenology in addressing various challenges within the hospitality sector while clearly articulating the study's objectives, intentions, and research questions. Finally, I described the methods and techniques to be utilised, concluding with a reflection on my position as the researcher. The next chapter will provide a literature review that explores the concepts, theories, and philosophies of Otherness, which are essential for understanding the phenomenology of the happy host.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I examine the literature on alterity, beginning with an analysis of its core concept. The phenomenon of the ‘happy host’ embodies a profound egoic experience, making it a significant subject for exploration. Given that the happy host’s phenomenology represents a notable phenomenon embodying this deep egoic experience, this chapter investigates critical concepts, theories, and philosophies that foster the happy host’s intrinsic self-realisation. It presents Mill’s in-depth theory on the concept of the other mind, which is essential for understanding the egoic phenomena associated with emotions. The chapter also discusses Husserl’s view of consciousness (which he refers to as ‘the alter ego’), Levinas’ interpretation of alterity as an ethical connection expressed through hospitality, Derrida’s conception of hospitality as an act of substitution reflecting self-interruption, and finally, Stein’s definition of alterity as deliberative yet intersubjective empathy.

### 2.1 What is Alterity?

Alterity emerged as a significant concept in 20th-century French philosophy, reaching its modern understanding primarily through Emmanuel Levinas’ contributions to philosophical phenomenology (Ikhianosime, 2019). Alterity encompasses various meanings, but at its core, it signifies the state or quality of being other (Hazell, 2009). Ikhianosime noted that the concept of ‘the other’ first appeared in Mill’s (1979) work, *The Problem of Other Minds*. Mill’s writings explored how to justify the intuitive belief that others possess their own minds. According to Ikhianosime, the antecedents of this position originated from Descartes. Edmund Husserl further developed the notion of ‘the other’ in his work *On the Fifth of the Cartesian Meditations*, examining the Other as the phenomenology of consciousness and referring to it as the alter ego (2019, p. 3). Hazell (2009) stated that the concept of alterity is crucial in studying behaviour. He cogently conveyed the idea of alterity by emphasising several essential points. First, it is critical to recognise that while ‘Other’ is often contrasted with ‘self-same’, the distinction between them signifies alterity; thus, alterity and difference are not entirely interchangeable. This can be likened to envisioning an ‘imaginary twin’, or encountering an ‘identical other’. Second, it is vital to understand that perceiving the Other as inferior to the Self is not always accurate. In many instances, the Other is revered or idealised. Thirdly,

contrary to popular belief, the Other is sometimes silenced or passively silent; the Other may be quiet but can also be quite vocal (Hazell, 2009).

Ultimately, it is essential to recognise that alterity is a concept deeply rooted in the symbolic realm of language, imbuing concepts and ideas with imaginary elements that are often driven by emotion. Malone (2012) suggested that all instances of alterity are intrinsic to the subject because they stem from the moment of division, where the subject is evaluated by the Other's desire based on a lost object. Thus, according to Hazell, the concept of alterity, regarding the interaction between the Self and the Other in a secondary process of thinking (which involves focused, rational, linear, and inhibited thinking), acknowledges the conventional notion that there is a clear division between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. While conscious or unconscious communication may exist between the Self and the Other, they remain fundamentally separate entities (Hazell, 2009). The term 'alterity' derives from the Latin 'alter', which means 'other' and refers primarily to 'one of two' (Galetti, 2015). Alterity is the encounter with 'the Other' and, therefore, the concept of Otherness in phenomenological philosophy (Ikhianosime, 2019). The following sections will examine the concept of Otherness in phenomenology as it pertains to human consciousness.

## 2.2 Exploring John Stuart Mill's Concept of Other Minds

Before examining the theories of Otherness, it is essential to analyse the concept of the Other, as discussed in Mill's (1979) work. Sayward's (2003) "Notes and Discussions" examines Mill's (1979) investigation of the Other in his work, *The Problem of Other Minds*. Mill (1979) argues that other thinking beings exist in our minds, and he supports this argument through his investigation. According to Mill (1979), other sentient beings exist; he has observed these figures in his mind, witnessing them walk, speak, and experience sensations and thoughts, indicating that they possess minds. Although this belief is not based on his direct intuition, Mill (1979) drew this conclusion from specific indicators he observed in his emotional experiences. He inferred that these other beings have similar emotions because they possess bodies like his, which he understood, based on his experiences, were prerequisites for emotions. Additionally, these beings exhibited behaviours and outward expressions that, from his own experiences, he recognised as stemming from feelings. Mill (1979) observed this through a consistent pattern of connected events that began with changes in his body, leading to feelings and culminating in an outward demeanour.

Though Mill (1979) verified the first and last components of this pattern through his senses, he could not directly observe the intermediate stage. Nonetheless, he noted that the sequence between the beginning and end was just as consistent and predictable in others as it was in himself. He recognised that, in his case, the initial stage led to the final one through the intermediate stage, and this progression could only occur with it. From this experience, he suggested that there must be an intermediate stage, which could either be the same for others or differ from his own. He was, therefore, faced with a choice: to consider others as either beings with inner experiences like his own or as mere automatons. By choosing to believe that others were conscious beings, he assumed that the intermediate stage was the same as his own experience and similar in all other respects. As observed phenomena, this brought other human beings under the same principles that accurately described what he understood as the true theory of his existence (Sayward, 2003). In the next section, I will examine Husserl's study of 'other beings' in individuals' conscious experiences, which he refers to as the 'alter ego' in his phenomenology of consciousness.

### 2.3 Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology of Consciousness: Exploring the Other Beings within Our Conscious Minds.

Edmund Husserl, recognised as the 'father' of phenomenology, developed the Phenomenology of Consciousness to investigate the essence of consciousness. He viewed consciousness as a separate realm, distinct from the external world. Cornwell (1998) elucidated Husserl's (1991) phenomenology of consciousness and the alter ego in the context of Mill's (1979) concept of 'the Other' within the realm of 'Ownness'. Husserl argued that the ego creates a unique sense of 'Ownness' within itself (p. 93). He suggested that, in this realm of Ownness, the perception of the Other emerges through a non-conscious process of analogising that unfolds in three stages, each adding further layers of significance.

In the first stage, the Other is perceived through its physical presence, existing solely as an object of intuition and devoid of being a subject engaging in intuitive acts. Cornwell (1998) states that we establish this entity through the same verificatory process we apply to any object, perceiving it as something we can repeatedly encounter with fulfilment. The second layer of meaning arises from recognising the similarities between the body of the Other and our own. We acknowledge the resemblance in appearance and behaviour, understanding that our body has an external appearance that does not necessarily reflect our nature (Cornwell, 1998).

The third level of meaning also involves perceiving the Other as possessing a concealed psychic dimension—a soul. Due to the inherent connection between our bodies and our egos in our consciousness, it consistently acts as the primary original entity in our analogising apprehension of the Other. Consequently, we always view the Other as conscious (Cornwell, 1998). Treanor (2006) stated that Husserl referred to the meaning individuals attribute to their thoughts, as they relate to their givenness to consciousness, as ‘Beings’. The transcendental ego is the fundamental concept of Husserl’s phenomenology (Riukas, 1999). According to Riukas, in Husserl’s phenomenology, the transcendental ego emerges when the human ego relinquishes its natural standpoint or naive belief in its capacity to perceive things as they exist in themselves, and instead, realises a crucial insight: that it can only perceive phenomena reliably and with certainty. Treanor discussed how a person’s perception of others is tied to their sense of Self. He emphasised that people tend to view others as being ‘like themselves’ in some ways and ‘unlike themselves’ in others, but that it always concerns themselves. When meaning is attributed to ‘the Other’, the Otherness becomes less unsettling as their experiences become part of a person’s own consciousness. In this light, Husserlian phenomenology can be understood as the revelation of the intentionality of consciousness.

Treanor (2006) also highlighted that the intentionality of consciousness in phenomenology aligns the object with the subject, where the noesis grasps the noema. Rassi and Shahabi (2015) thoroughly expanded upon the concept of Husserlian intentionality, which comprises two interrelated elements known as the "Noema" and the "Noesis." Noesis, originating from Greek, encapsulates understanding, grasping, and contemplation. It is the essence that imparts meaning to an experience. Conversely, Noema is derived from the Greek word ‘Nous’, which denotes an act related to the mind and intellect. According to Husserl, every intentional act encompasses a Noesis and a Noema, each unable to exist without the other. However, the Noema is not part of a conscious subject’s deliberate act. Husserl argued that objects arise from their own Noema in the act of an individual’s consciousness. This does not imply that Husserl regarded objects as a combination of Noema, nor did he assert that conscious acts produce or create objects. Using the terms Noema and Noesis, Husserl illustrated that any deliberate act possesses a bipolar structure. Essentially, the Noesis is associated with thinking and pondering, while the Noema is linked to thought and cognition (Rassi & Shahabi, 2015).

In Husserl’s view, the act of ‘making’ differs from that of ‘creating’; instead, it relates to the noematic sense that enables the subject to understand the object and establish an intentional

connection. Even in the absence of the object, meaning can generate an action as if the object were present. Treanor (2006) observed that when meanings are attributed to objects, alterity no longer disrupts consciousness. Consequently, the experience integrates into a person's being, as if the known arises from the thinker. Treanor also stated that this gives rise to Levinas' theory—Levinas was another critical philosopher who offered a contrasting viewpoint that arguably contested Husserl's notion of consciousness by asserting the inherent nature of the Other and suggesting that Otherness in phenomenology is not genuinely existent, as it undermines and negates the Other's individuality. Instead, Levinas interpreted alterity as an ethical commitment, reflecting a hospitality that broadens the self to encompass responsibilities towards others.

## 2.4 Emmanuel Levinas' Alterity of Substitution: The Theory of Infinite Moral Obligation

Levinas introduced a notion of Otherness that contrasted with phenomenology yet upheld its fundamental alterity. Literary studies on alterity are deeply linked to Levinas' impactful contributions (Galetti, 2015). Cohen (2024) identifies Levinas' significant works as *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, both of which are recognised as the most profound and thorough representations of his philosophical ideas. Levinas initially explored the phenomenological philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger in the late 1920s, and Husserl's phenomenological method significantly shaped his intellectual evolution, highlighting the concept of the 'transcendental ego'. In contrast, Levinas later adopted Heidegger's more grounded perspective on existence, drawing from his hermeneutics of being-in-the-world, i.e., 'Dasein' (Zalta, 2019). Heidegger also addressed the Other, implying that phenomenological interactions with a Being require allowing it to express its inherent desires (Treanor, 2006). In 1961, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas argued that although senses of transcendence are essential, they do not serve as the foundation; instead, he linked transcendence to exteriority (Zalta, 2019).

Levinas (1981) presented a contrasting theory of alterity to challenge Husserl's egology. (i.e., that the Other "is authentically given and not constitutable by the self") (p. 34). However, for Levinas, the Other radically escapes all terms and is external to the self. He referred to exteriority as the other person before us who eludes our understanding (Zalta, 2019). Ikhianosime (2019) stated that Levinas' original contribution argued that ethics represents the

primary philosophy of alterity, and Langenthal (2014) noted that Levinas's philosophical alternative granted him the right to establish an external ethical relation, which he termed 'the relation to others'. According to Noble and Noble (2017), in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas turned his attention in a different direction, opening the way to transcendence for this Other who commands us in a way we cannot refuse. Saldukaitytė (2016) suggested that the notion of alterity in Levinas' philosophy of the other person leads to the dimension of the transcendence of moral obligation, while Westmoreland (2008) argued that the foundation or whole principle of Levinas' ethics is 'hospitality', and that hospitality is ethics.

Kearney and Fitzpatrick (2022) expand on Levinas' (1981) concept of connecting ethics with hospitality by emphasising an individual's inescapable obligation to the Other. Blum (1983) indicated that Levinas' emphasis on the undeniable connections among individuals forms the basis of his ethical inquiry into alterity. As Allen (2009) articulately pointed out, Levinas' concept of alterity is a fundamental requirement for any ethical framework that exists beyond the limits of the 'language of relation' (p. 68). Halsema (2007) similarly noted that Levinas defines 'selfhood' about the Other as inherently open, with possibilities considered inconceivable for exploration. Blum further asserted that Levinas presents a theory of boundless obligation, proposing that individuals commit themselves without conscious intent, ultimately strengthening their dedication to fulfilling these obligations. Maloney (1997) examined the imperative of responsibility towards the Other, encouraging the self to engage with the Other, suggesting that this responsibility compellingly drives the self to act in place of the Other, establishing a profound sense of obligation. He also indicated that 'substitution', initially conceived as 'self for the Other', leads to a feeling of being bound since responsibility for the Other arises not from free will but rather precedes any choice. Maloney also stated that subjectivity is not manifested through the freedom of will, but is rooted in the inescapable nature of the Other's call.

Additionally, Dueck and Goodman (2007) addressed the question of whether sacrifice is possible, while Bernasconi (2002) explored this concept through Levinas' model of substitution. Levinas (1981) argued that substitution does not rely on a naturally altruistic ego or the individual's choice to act generously. Instead, it depends on a uniquely formed substitute, which exists independently of egoistic decision-making. Levinas posited that a subject's susceptibility to substitution is rooted in the ego's profound passive vulnerability. Treanor (2006) further asserted that the subjectivity of the Levinasian subject entails the dissolution of

identity, thereby transforming the significance of Being into substitution. Subjectivity leads to utmost passive vulnerability, where the passivity of responsibility, when pushed to an extreme, entails abandoning the ego's identity to become a substitution for another. This is not the same as abdication, but rather an abnegation of oneself, fully embracing responsibility for others, and this identity is revealed through commitment and dedication to serving others. According to Treanor, substitution represents “a malady of identity” (p. 39), a concept that intertwines the psyche and the self, holding them accountable to others through assumed responsibility.

Conversely, Noble and Noble (2017) identified two key issues in regard to Levinasian philosophy. First, the concept of ‘heteronomy’ involves a radical displacement of selfhood, potentially leading to self-alienation—a claim that Levinas rejected, arguing that it leads to self-fulfilment. Noble and Noble (2017) asserted that ‘the self’ who assumes responsibility for others will inevitably lead to guilt. Second, claiming that identity originates from the other does not divert attention from the self, “The other exists as the giver of [my] identity” (p. 49). Nevertheless, Levinas’ concept of substitution fundamentally altered the notion of selfhood, undermining the self’s autonomy by emphasising that a person has a responsibility to others that is independent of self-serving choices. This prompts an exploration of Jacques Derrida’s (1993) perspective on substitution within his philosophy of hospitality, which reinterprets Levinas’ concept as an egoistic phenomenon reflecting a form of self-interruption.

## 2.5 Jacques Derrida’s Substitution and the Concept of Self-interruption

Derrida (1993) introduced a distinctive notion of substitution that is self-centred and marked by self-disruption. He is well known for his idea of ‘différance’ in the context of hospitality, which aligns closely with Levinas’ (1981) theory of substitution in ethical responsibility, although Derrida’s interpretation differs from Levinas’ ethical stance on alterity. ‘Différance’ captures a distinct ‘tension’ in the complex dynamics between host and guest, resulting in substitution for the host, characterised by a self-interruption of identity. According to Yoshiy II (2017), a significant paradox in Derrida’s discourse on hospitality revolves around the host’s dual role as ‘host and hostage’, as well as the reversal of roles between the host and the guest. Joy (2009) noted that Derrida acknowledged Levinas (1981) for bequeathing an immense treatise on hospitality in his philosophical work. Derrida (1999) also pointed out that while ‘hospitality’ is rarely mentioned, the term ‘welcome’ is undeniably one of the most prevalent and decisive concepts in Levinas’ work when discussing the Other as the ‘stranger’ (*l’Etranger*) (Joy, 2009). Yoshiy II also revealed that from 1995 to 1997, Derrida extensively explored

questions of responsibility, and in particular, the theme of ‘hospitality’. His seminars on this subject were divided into two stages: the first in 1995-1996, titled ‘Questions of Responsibility: Hostility/Hospitality’, and the second in 1996-1997, on ‘Questions of Responsibility: Hospitality’. These discussions revolved around related texts concerning “the stranger, the enemy, the host and the guest” (p. 205).

Treanor (2006) asserted that, according to Derrida, hospitality lies in the open and unreserved welcome of an unexpected and unannounced stranger. This welcome stems from something other than an invitation; rather, it arises from a response to an unforeseen visit. The stranger’s arrival, according to Derrida, is always surprising and never a response to an invitation. This has prompted Westmorland (2008) to ask in *Interruptions*, "Is hospitality not an interruption of the self?" Nevertheless, Westmorland (2008) argued that absolute hospitality, which unconditionally welcomes a guest into the home, can result in violence. This violence, according to him, reverses the essence of home. In essence, the self is disrupted in the act of welcoming the guest. Additionally, McNulty (2005) highlighted that hospitality embodies a distinctive tension that Derrida described as *différance*. Etymologically, the ‘master’ embodies the host’s identity; however, paradoxically, hosts define themselves by relinquishing their essence. This aligns with the traditional view that the finest host is the one who has given the most, identifying them as both master and host. According to Yoshiy II (2017), the concept of *différance* operates within the host’s self-interruption, where the master/host who holds power over his household must interrupt or divide himself as both host and hostage when welcoming the Other.

Tension arises between the subject (the host) and the guest (the Other) when the latter finally arrives. The host takes the guest’s place and becomes a hostage when the guest displaces his rule upon arrival. Derrida (2000) deeply examined Levinas's concept of ‘the hostage’, proposing that ethical responsibility starts with being a hostage to the other. One must first passively yield to the other before yielding to oneself. In 2009, Derrida further explored the ethical implications of being a hostage, referencing Levinas's concept of being captive to the Other while fulfilling ethical obligations. Yoshiy II (2017) explained that according to Levinas, the host represents the subject, or the ‘I’; the ‘self’ who acts as the master of the house. The guest is the stranger or the Other who arrives. The ‘I’ has taken the place of the Other, meaning that the ‘I’ (the host) is held hostage by the Other. To be held hostage implies that “the self has already substituted for the other” (p. 205). The guest takes on the role of the host, while the

host assumes the role of the guest. This clarifies the reasoning behind the reversed roles in substitutional reference.

Treanor (2006) explained Levinas' concept of substitution, which introduces the notion of an inversion of intentionality; substitution represents the Other within the 'self', signifying that 'one' is not identical to 'oneself'. This can be understood as a distinction between the 'self' focused on enjoyment and the 'I' centred on responsibility, reflecting the contrast between the self-centredness of a child's "Me, Me, Me!" (p. 39) and the ethical subject's affirmation of presence with "I am here" (*mi voici*) (p. 89). This encapsulates the meaning of 'I', signifying "Here I am, responsible for everything and everyone" (p. 90). This concept resonates with Derrida's discussion of the reversal of roles, wherein the host, responsible for providing joy and comfort, transforms into the guest, as the host's happiness relies on offering hospitality. In essence, the host, who aims to satisfy the guest's needs, becomes the guest and attends to the needs of the host (Yoshiy II, 2017). Likewise, Treanor (2009) argued that this distinction is not simply about viewing the economic and responsible selves as opposites. Instead, it emphasises Levinas' point regarding the 'pre-conscious anarchic identity', or 'ipseity'. This highlights that self-consciousness and consciousness are based on a subjective state, referred to as ego or 'I', and should not be confused with one another (p. 39).

Treanor (2006) contended that even when considering the concept of distinct 'selves', the differentiation between the 'self in enjoyment' and the 'self as responsible' does not imply that the economic self is depraved, while the responsible self is virtuous. He suggests that substitution represents an "extraordinary quid pro quo" (p. 39). Moreover, Derrida (2000) elaborated on his concept of hospitality, referencing Klossowski (1995), who articulated,

"The master of the house's main concern is to extend warmth and joy to whoever comes to dine at his table and rest under his roof after the weary day's travel, anxiously waiting for the stranger to appear on the threshold as a liberator from the horizon. As he catches a first glimpse of him in the distance, though he is still far away, the master will call out, "Come quickly, my happiness is at stake" (p. 10).

According to Dueck and Goodman (2007), Levinas' concept of substitution involves assuming the Other's responsibilities by taking responsibility for them, which is less absorbed in 'auto-affection' but more focused on 'hetero-affection'; that is, the affective impact of the Other on oneself. In this case, Fuh (2003) noted that the close relationship between Derrida and

Levinas often serves as a foundation for dialogues about the ethical implications of Derrida's philosophy. According to Fuh (2003), Derrida's contributions have elevated ethics to a "higher level of (self-)reflection" (p. 14).

Treanor (2006) discussed Derrida's initial divergence from Levinasian thought on the alter ego, a concept that both thinkers explored. As with Husserl in *The Fifth Meditation*, Levinas challenged the notion of attributing the status of an intentional modification of the ego to the Other. For Levinas, regarding the Other as an intentional phenomenon of the ego would diminish its absolute alterity. According to Marrati (2005), Derrida did not immediately align with Levinas' perspective. Instead, he initially highlighted elements in the Cartesian Meditations that indicated Husserl's acknowledgement of the irreducible alterity of the Other, especially those that signified a genuine disruption in phenomenology. Derrida asserts that recognising the Other's uniqueness necessitates their presence; consequently, the Other is fundamentally revealed through a primary form of non-presentation. If the Other is a phenomenon of the ego, it is the phenomenon of an irreducible non-phenomenality. Consequently, Derrida's investigation further probed the egoic framework of experience, asserting that all experiences, including those directed towards the Other, inherently possess an egoic quality, felt as 'mine'. Fuh (2003) pointed out that the ethical 'horizon' characterised by Levinas was not 'Derrida's conception or metaphor'. However, Derrida resisted being labelled as 'ethical'; he nonetheless upheld a foundational ethical connection.

Fuh (2003) claimed that Derrida's ethical relations were situated within the "non-ethical" realm and differed from the "anti-ethical" stance (pp. 14-15). De Jong (2024), however, argues that Derrida's ethics reside in a paradoxical 'experience' that juxtaposes the feeling of being trapped with no escape, against the absence of such paralysis in normalisation, leading to an "ethics beyond ethics" (p. 279). Fuh also pointed out that while Levinas employed a philosophical writing style that challenged the view of ethics, Derrida's 'anti-philosophical' method drew attention to the potentially limiting aspects of ethics. This indicates their divergent philosophical journeys despite apparent similarities. Fuh emphasised that Derrida frequently illuminated the possibility of deviation in any text, as his reading of the Other continually disrupted ethical discussions, alluding to what he called the 'secret'. According to Fuh (2003), in *Passions*, Derrida (1993) suggested that the secret eludes any interpretative framework. "There is the secret" (Fuh, 2003, p. 15). No discourse can truly 'reveal' it, as it is not meant to be disclosed but is, instead, a 'no-thing' that indicates something forthcoming. There is always

a secret within ongoing events, perpetually eluding ethical frameworks, even from the Levinasian viewpoint (Fuh, 2003). Thus, the next section will explore a form of alterity outlined by Stein, focusing on a specific type of empathy that acts as a conscious articulation of intersubjective intentions.

## 2.6 Edith Stein's Empathy of Unique Deliberate Intention

Edith Stein proposed an intuitive approach to understanding, offering an alternative to traditional phenomenology for grasping the experience of others (Meneses & Larkin, 2012). In her 1917 thesis, *"On the Problem of Empathy,"* supervised by Husserl, she clearly outlined "intuitive understanding." Her work is a notable and orthodox example of Husserl's phenomenological investigation, providing a systematic and comprehensive application of his methodological framework to experience. Stein's writing delivers a modern and consistent perspective on empathy, as a psychological phenomenon within consciousness (Meneses & Larkin, 2012). She argued that empathy does not require directly experiencing another person's mental content or making assumptions about their mental state; rather, it signifies an awareness of their mental life. Stein highlights empathy as an intentional act—a purposeful engagement with another's experience in a phenomenological context. Meneses and Larkin asserted that the core idea is that empathy focuses on the experience of another, often referred to in the literature as alterity or the otherness of an experience. Stein's understanding of empathy involves opening oneself to unfamiliar experiences, thereby facilitating comprehension of that alien perspective. Consequently, Scheler (1913) expanded on Stein's notion that people can connect through direct perception rather than mere inference.

Moran and Szanto (2020) stated that Stein formulated a philosophy of psychology that aligns with Husserl's objective to establish a metaphysical phenomenological understanding of humanity. Stein's work consists of two primary sections: 'Psychic Causality' and 'Individual and Community', both of which are linked by the central aim of defining the ontological position of the human person within both the natural and spiritual realms. Social and communal relationships influence the latter. Moran and Szanto posited that three key issues are pivotal to Stein's philosophy of mind and psychology. The first pertains to the connections between the stream of consciousness, conscious experiences, and the mental and psychic domains; the second focuses on the conative and volitional domains and the motivational laws of the mental; and the third concerns the intertwining of different forms of causality and motivation. All

three issues pivot around Stein's intricate account and her original conception of psychic causality. According to Moran and Szanto (2020), Stein asserts that there are causally efficacious experiential states in an individual's psychic life, known as "life feelings." These life feelings, as they explain, are affective dispositions that trigger certain cognitive, conative, or affective states in a psychophysical organism. Furthermore, life feelings shape a person's bodily awareness and influence how they experience these states.

Stein (1922) described life feelings as the temporary state of the self, or its attitude towards life, noting that psychological factors affect three aspects of experience: (1) the content of consciousness, (2) the process of experiencing (*Erleben*) the content we assimilate, and (3) the awareness of that experience, as, "experiencing itself is a type of consciousness" (p. 18). Stein also explained that all these dimensions are subject to the psychic causal influence of an individual's feelings and psychic dispositions. Furthermore, Moran and Szanto (2020) discussed Stein's theory of autonomous personal agency and her comprehensive analysis of persons, suggesting that experiences can anchor the egoic or personal core to some degree. These experiential states, which include beliefs, emotions, volitions, and cognitive states, can influence the self. This influence can, in turn, affect the initiation and flow of egoic activity, depending on the extent to which the self exerts control over them. Moran and Szanto wrote that Stein presented her 'theory of emotion' in her books *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* (On the Problems of Empathy) and *Die Beiträge* (The Beiträge). Stein's theory of emotions offers a detailed examination of how affectivity shapes personhood, the connection between emotions and expressions, motivation and volition, and the capacity to grasp the emotional experiences of others empathically.

In their work, Moran and Szanto (2020) argue that Stein's philosophy of emotions is closely intertwined with her philosophy of psychology and her theory of empathy. They highlighted her original account of empathy, mainly focusing on analysing moods and sentiments, different levels of affective depth, and a complex elaboration of the stratification of people's emotional experiences. Stein (1917) referred to emotions as "spiritual feelings" (1917, p. 66) and categorised them as "intentional states" (p. 119). This intentional nature denotes that feelings "direct us at an object" (p. 119). Moran and Szanto (2020) proposed that Stein's concept represents one of the most nuanced phenomenological accounts of empathy. Meneses and Larkin (2012) explained that, according to Stein, individuals establish a connection to the world through intentional acts of consciousness, bringing the world and the object into consciousness

as a phenomenon. Correspondingly, consciousness links the self and the object, making it constantly relational as it situates the self and the object in proximity through intentional acts. Stein also argued that empathy, in this phenomenological sense, is a distinct, deliberate act, as its object is the experience of another. Stein defines empathy as understanding one's own foreign experiences by viewing them from another person's perspective. Meneses and Larkin described Stein's empathy as "a way of knowing instead of merely reacting to an external experience" (pp. 162-163). This concept entails a 'direct givenness' that encompasses at least two viewpoints: the 'self' and the 'other'.

According to Moran and Szanto (2020), Stein defined empathetic acts as a unique form of intentional experience (*sui generis*) directed at the experiential life of other individuals. These actions are distinct and cannot be categorised into various types of intentional acts (Stein, 1917). They also uniquely present their object and content, even if the empathiser has not experienced them firsthand. Empathetic acts provide the empathiser with what phenomenologists refer to as, *originarily* or *primordially* first-person experiences. Empathy is an originary intentional act that presents non-originary contents. The non-originary contents that it provides are not merely non-originary; instead, they represent the originary contents of another individual. Consequently, Stein's concept of empathy always maintains a self-other differentiation due to this unique nature of presenting another's experiences. Additionally, Stein described empathy as "the fulfilling explication" (1917, p. 10), which involves a form of self-transposition or projection (Meneses & Larkin, 2012). Meneses and Larkin's analysis of Stein's (1917) empathic projection suggests that it genuinely provides direct and immediate access to foreign experiences. According to Ferran (2024), Stein describes empathy as sharing emotions or viewing others as 'feeling beings'.

Meneses and Larkin (2012) discussed empathy as the process through which we connect with and understand the experiences of others. They highlighted Stein's (1917) concept of Otherness, emphasising that empathy does not require personally experiencing another's feelings but rather involves a second-person experience. According to Meneses and Larkin, Stein's perspective on empathy underscores the intersubjective nature of empathic encounters, where individuals navigate their own experiences alongside those of others. This intersubjective understanding is crucial in interpersonal interactions and fundamental to individual identity, as it allows individuals to comprehend the inner lives of others. They further assert that empathy is integral to everyday human experiences, facilitating mutual

understanding between individuals. Depraz (2012) offered an in-depth phenomenological and cognitive examination of the intersubjective nature of empathy, defining it as a ‘relational multiplicity’ and emphasising Husserl’s perspectives on its ethical dimensions.

Depraz (2012) suggested that the idea of the Other catalyses introspection and self-reflection. This concept manifests through an internal self-identification, leading to intrinsic self-alteration. From an experiential perspective, this self-alteration represents a profound passivity towards both the self and the Other. Depraz outlined four distinct experiential stages of empathy. First, embodied experiences are deeply interconnected with those of others. Second, individuals engage in imaginative transposition into the Other’s psychic states. Third, it is understood that the Other differs fundamentally from oneself in interpretative terms. Lastly, individual experiences of enjoyment and suffering necessitate ethical responsibility towards oneself. Empathy is inherently intertwined with an ethical and emotional experiential component that involves cooperation with the Other and influences our sense of responsibility and respect towards ourselves and others (Depraz, 2012). Andrews and Calcagno (2022) assert that Stein’s ethical framework strongly aligns with the last two phases of Husserl’s ethics. Stein’s understanding of the human person illuminated the structures of subjectivity and expanded her focus on intersubjective connections and human-person relationships. Additionally, Stein examined the human experiences and perceptions of others, establishing a relational ontology characterised by intersubjective alterity.

## 2.7 Edith Stein’s Alterity of ‘We-are-both-good-together’

According to Andrews and Calcagno (2022), the fundamental structure of the human person comprises the self (inner self) and the non-self (outer self) elements, both of which influence behaviour, existence, and interactions with others. Stein argues that human existence is inwardly open and can thus be receptive to the external world, enabling it to embrace that world. Andrews and Calcagno assert that, according to Stein, ethics arise from the intentional actions of the individual, which, in turn, shape the individual’s identity through encounters with Otherness. They contend that Stein ultimately provides an anthropology of the human person’s ethos that can only be understood through alterity. This is because the individual’s ‘I’ is fundamentally shaped by the ‘you’ that imparts essential meaning to their existence. This mutual relationship between the ‘I-you’ is grounded in empathic acts. Similarly, Andrews and Calcagno propose that this “essential connection between empathy and the formation of the

psychophysical individual indicates that action perfects the person” (p. 205) in response to their truth; this action, aimed at others, operates on the ontic or constitutive level.

Furthermore, Andrews and Calcagno (2022) state that the reference to the Other always originates from the self due to the intrinsic priority of the self. This priority is fundamental because every individual acts based on their sense of self. It serves as the foundational point from which the duality of the self emerges through empathy, thus forming the psychophysical individual. Essentially, they suggest that the existence of ‘I’ is inseparable from the existence of ‘you’. From an ontological perspective, constructing one’s identity and self-formation depends on referencing others, which underpins Steinian ethics rooted in the notions of identity and Otherness.

A prominent theoretical challenge in ethics, as proposed by Andrews and Calcagno (2022), is conceiving ‘the good’ as both an individual pursuit and a common good. They argue that developing individualistic ethics based on Stein’s relational ontology is impossible, as the concept of the Other emerges from the ontologically relational nature of human beings. The well-being of the Other is essential for understanding and realising one’s own well-being. Therefore, the good of the Other and one’s own good are interdependent for complete fulfilment.

Andrews and Calcagno (2022) also argue that the human ethos should be viewed as fundamentally relational. They emphasise the importance of phenomenology in shaping understanding of the self, portrayed as a conscious, self-owned being who acts. Human actions are not limited to specific behaviours; rather, they are defined by their intentional nature. According to them, Stein’s works further support this point of view by highlighting the significance of the ‘core of persona’ (*Kern der Person*). In Stein’s view, free acts are motivated acts, and the essence of free acts lies in the ‘purpose’ behind them. From this standpoint, recognising the inherently intersubjective aspect of a person is essential when discussing the good in human action from a Steinian perspective. Nevertheless, in line with the configuration of the person’s ontic structure, the “good for me” (Andrews & Calcagno, 2022, p. 207) is also inherently intersubjective. Andrews and Calcagno contend that objectivity, through its communicability, arises from the exact requirement of the intersubjective intentionality of consciousness. The communicability of the good, rooted in a constitutive intersubjective dimension, indicates that the subjectivity of the good cannot be discussed without considering the subjectivity of others.

According to Andrews and Calcagno (2022), Stein's emphasis on empathy in shaping the psychophysical individual is crucial for developing an ethics that recognises human beings as inherently relational rather than merely externally related. Stein (2000) elaborated on this idea in the following quote: 'Mind' (*Geist*) involves a shift from the self and encompasses two types of openness: The first pertains to the objective world we experience, while the second relates to another person's subjectivity, through which we collaboratively share and engage with this objective world. (p. 295). Szanto and Moran (2015) suggested that Stein offered an original perspective on the intricate relationship between individuals and the community by providing a sustained defence of essential phenomenological insights regarding 'We-intentionality' (p. 453). Burns (2015) asserted that consciousness involves openness to the objective world co-constructed with others, where being a conscious individual means being receptive and actively participating in communal relationships.

## 2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the crucial concept of alterity, which aligns with numerous philosophical viewpoints. I investigated Mill's notion of 'other minds,' which is central to our emotional experiences; discussed Husserl's view of consciousness as the alter ego; analysed Levinas's understanding of alterity as a type of exteriority that promotes ethical connections through hospitality; elaborated on Derrida's idea of hospitality as a substitutive action indicating self-disruption; and summarised Stein's interpretation of empathy as intentional but intersubjective alterity. My fulfilling experience as a host is profoundly linked to the notion of otherness, intertwining diverse philosophical concepts that resonate deeply with me. The following chapter will outline the development of a solid and robust research methodology to investigate the phenomenology of a joyful host.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological frameworks and approaches that underpin this study. All research is based on philosophical assumptions regarding what is considered ‘valid’ and which methods are suitable for enhancing knowledge. Recognising and understanding these assumptions is crucial for both conducting and evaluating research. The chapter examines the philosophical foundations, the phenomenological perspective, and the design strategies that support the research, clarifying its stance and the rationale behind the chosen methodologies. It also discusses the research methodologies, their descriptions, and the designs employed in this study, including how these methods have been integrated into the research. The study adopts a descriptive and interpretive case study approach, which is rigorously analysed using qualitative methods to ensure its validity. This chapter also explores the concept of “methodology,” which is essential for the relevance of this study. It provides a robust rationale for employing phenomenology, including a detailed discussion of its significance as a distinctive and fundamental qualitative research method. Furthermore, it evaluates the rationale for the phenomenological perspective, emphasising its importance for researchers conducting phenomenological studies.

Additionally, it discusses the philosophical foundations of phenomenology, emphasising the compelling reasons for employing a phenomenological research methodology within Heidegger’s (1996) hermeneutic phenomenological framework for an idiographic investigation. This methodology utilises self-exploration to conduct autoethnography, clearly explaining the rationale behind this approach and focusing on the significance of self-ethnography. It highlights Chang’s (2016) work in autoethnography, emphasising the crucial role of cultural analysis. Moreover, it details the study’s self-inquiry approach, serving as a narrative method to clarify the research findings that relate to the ‘Phenomenology of the Happy Host’, the primary theme of this investigation. The study employed a comprehensive and rigorous scientific methodology to explore the researcher’s lived experience as a joyful host through the lens of an alterity phenomenon.

## 3.2 Methodology

Methodology can be defined as a framework of theories and principles built upon specific methods and procedures (Holloway, 1997). Burns and Grove (2008) noted that methodology encompasses the study's design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, and techniques for data collection and analysis. According to Khan et al. (2023), the purpose and significance of methodology lie in its role as a systematic and organised means of conducting research. This approach provides researchers with a structured framework to effectively plan, execute, and evaluate their studies, thereby enhancing their rigour and reliability. Research methodology "ensures the findings are credible, valid, and valuable" (p. 2). Moreover, the methodology reflects the philosophical stance adopted by the researcher (Denicolo & Becker, 2017). Hignett and McDermott (2015) described methodology as an overarching term that encompasses the theoretical foundation guiding the conduct of research. Mouton and Marais (1988) emphasised that the etymology of "methodology" reflects its function in applying scientific methods to study reality; They further emphasised that scientific research involves decision-making, requiring researchers to select the most appropriate theory or model for their project and to formulate hypotheses based on that choice. Thus, methodology provides a clear understanding of the research process, ensuring that the researcher is both informed and competent in their field of study. This aligns with Kaufmann's (1944) assertion that research methodology serves as a foundation for developing a sound scientific framework.

Goundar (2012) comprehensively explained research methodology, defining it as a set of procedures through which researchers describe, explain, and predict phenomena. Research methodology aims to elucidate the rationale for conducting a research study, define the research problems and their limitations, formulate hypotheses, select data collection methods, employ data analysis techniques, and address other relevant aspects. This structured approach ensures that research is carried out and organised systematically. Essentially, research methodology illuminates the researcher's activities and serves as the nerve centre that guides the research. In this study, methodology refers to 'employing the appropriate phenomenological method and the researcher's perspective', a technique applied in the case of a happy host's lived experience in the hospitality industry. The primary focus is to explore the phenomenology of the happy host due to Otherness and to utilise Heidegger's concept of Dasein to interpret the subject's situatedness as 'Being there', where they find joy in providing genuine hospitality. Dasein's definitive characteristic is questioning the world they inhabit. This research involves an

inductive approach to exploring, describing, and interpreting the lived experience of a happy host working in the hospitality industry. The inductive method centres on deriving research insights from the main themes identified in raw data, moving away from rigid, formal methodologies (Thomas, 2006). Thus, this research will primarily adopt phenomenology, a qualitative method often employed as an exploratory and investigative approach (Goundar, 2012).

### 3.3 Phenomenology as a Distinct Research Method

Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research. However, phenomenology differs distinctly from qualitative research methods in terms of its research approach. Qualitative research is a type of social inquiry that emphasises how individuals interpret and comprehend their experiences to gain insight into social reality (Zohrabi, 2013). Qualitative researchers conduct studies in real-world settings to investigate how individuals perceive, experience, and interpret phenomena based on the meanings they ascribe to them (Sandelowski, 2004; Hammersley, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described qualitative research as multi-method and interpretive, focusing on naturalistic approaches to its subject matter. The primary paradigms in qualitative research are positivist, interpretivist, and critical (Punch, 2013). The focus of qualitative research is on people's behaviour, perspectives, emotions, and experiences, with the aim of uncovering the essence of their lives. Fundamentally, it adopts an interpretive approach to social reality, seeking to describe the lived experiences of individuals (Atkinson et al., 2001). Peshkin (1993) outlined the goals of qualitative research as description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation. Qualitative research reveals the nature of a situation, setting, or process, facilitating new insights and concepts while identifying issues within a given context. This type of research is characterised by open-ended questions that do not lend themselves to numerical answers, focusing on 'how' and 'why' (Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research designs are typically non-linear, in contrast to quantitative designs, due to the open-ended character of the research questions (Cleland, 2017). A key strength of qualitative research is its ability to elucidate processes and patterns in researching human behaviour that are challenging to quantify (Foley & Timonen, 2014).

Conversely, phenomenology aims to thoroughly investigate and uncover the core of lived experiences (Guillen, 2019). Badil et al. (2023) state that phenomenology entails rigorous, systematic, and critical analyses of events to illuminate the structure of lived experiences. This

systematic inquiry commences by examining the phenomena of interest and seeks to grasp the subjective meanings of lived experiences arising from an event. Phenomenology primarily concentrates on individual experiences through in-depth interviews, inductive analysis, and reflexivity. Badil et al. further explain that phenomenology employs the concept of transcendental reduction and predominantly focuses on “discovering and analysing the experiences of individuals residing there” (p. 10). van Manen (1990) described phenomenology as a method of human science and emphasised that it is “a systematic study of human experience” (p. 168). However, van Manen also pointed out that “this method lacks a research design and does not follow a blueprint” (p. 167). Therefore, phenomenology can be viewed as a method without a strict methodology. Referring to phenomenology, Hycner (1999) stated, “The phenomenon dictates the procedure and not vice versa” (p.156). Moreover, Finlay (2009) suggested that the researcher’s subjectivity is inevitably involved in the research. Phenomenology characterises the interconnectedness between the researcher and the research. Badil et al. assert that phenomenology is widely acknowledged for investigating the core of consciousness and perception, effectively articulating the concepts and significance of individuals’ lived experiences.

Fundamentally, Badil et al. (2023) argue that phenomenology aims to comprehend the phenomena experienced by specific individuals who have lived through particular events. It seeks to delve into human experiences as they manifest in consciousness, with individuals vividly sharing their experiences when encountering those phenomena. Alase (2017) explained that phenomenology is a qualitative research method that differs from other qualitative traditions in its approach to inductive research but shares similarities in exploring the questions of ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ (Tuffour, 2017, p. 1). Alase emphasised that the significance and essence of phenomenological research lies in its ability to explore, scrutinise, and interpret the ‘lived experience’. Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative research is conducted when an issue needs to be explored, and the phenomenological approach is the most suitable tradition to delve into the crux of the phenomenon. Based on this rationale, this research employs a phenomenological approach to explore the host’s experience of alterity, focusing on the joy derived from providing emotional satisfaction to hotel guests. Accordingly, this study adopts a phenomenological research framework.

### *3.3.1 Phenomenology*

Phenomenology, a philosophical movement developed by Husserl in the early 20th century, traces its roots back to Kant, who derived the term from the Greek *phainein*, meaning “to appear” (Rockmore, 2011). Kantian phenomenology is grounded in constructivist philosophy, proposing that the human cognitive subject constructs phenomena. From a phenomenological perspective, the subject is conscious of what it has constructed, which is not merely an appearance but maintains an appearance in consciousness (Rockmore, 2011). According to Guillen (2019), the phenomenological method enables the exploration of an individual’s consciousness and understanding of essence, as well as their perception of life through experiences and the meanings that their psychic life assigns to them. Wertz (2005) argued that phenomenology is a genuinely psychological qualitative method that implicitly utilises the descriptive psychological reflection characteristic of the phenomenological approach. This study examines the concept of consciousness based on Heidegger and Husserl’s definitions of phenomenology. According to Korab-Karpowicz (2013), Heidegger interpreted consciousness in a broader, more etymological context compared to Husserl, in which he characterised phenomenology as “permitting what unveils itself to be perceived from its own perspective, as it reveals itself” (p. 3). In contrast, Korab-Karpowicz (2013) explained that Husserl focused on consciousness and employed phenomenology as a comprehensive philosophical approach. He further suggested that engaging in phenomenology necessitates adopting a philosophical mindset in scientific inquiries into human consciousness, fostering a phenomenological attitude or perspective for the researcher.

### 3.4 The Researcher’s Phenomenological Perspective

This research method examines Polkinghorne’s (1989) comprehensive explanation of the phenomenological perspective to illuminate the researcher’s mindset, a crucial technique in conducting phenomenological research. The researcher adopted a phenomenological approach to investigate the ‘Phenomenology of the Happy Host’. Polkinghorne stated that phenomenological research methods offer a unique perspective that deviates from mainstream natural science by exploring the fundamental structures of human consciousness. He argued that the phenomenological perspective emphasises the importance of understanding the structures of experience before presuming the existence of objective natural entities. This highlights that descriptions of natural phenomena are based on subjective experience, underscoring the importance of clearly understanding experience as the foundation for scientific exploration of the natural world. Polkinghorne also contended that traditional

Western scientific methods rely on the assumption that perception is simple, built on sensory data that faithfully reflects the external world, while also acknowledging personal biases and emotions. Methodological frameworks aim to eliminate these subjective influences, focusing solely on experiences of objects that are directly perceived and agreed upon by observers. In this view, the individual is often seen as a passive receiver of reflections from natural entities. In contrast, phenomenological philosophy disputes this idea, suggesting that experience is an active process that encompasses and shapes the various elements within awareness. These elements include perceived objects, as well as those from memory, imagination, and emotion.

Polkinghorne (1989) discussed the importance of the phenomenological framework, which marked a significant shift in research focus from describing physical objects to describing experiences. This shift necessitates that researchers embrace a phenomenological perspective, setting aside inquiries about the existence and nature of experienced objects. Instead, the emphasis is on attending to what is present in awareness. By suspending the common assumption that an independent reality explains experience, research is situated within phenomenology, eliminating the need to seek external sources believed to cause experience (1989). Objects are perceived to be ‘something’ rather than mere sense data in awareness. The concept of independent sense data arises from a secondary, abstracting process, which yields an incomplete form of perception, diverging from the initial, holistic experience. In its immediate form, experience occurs at the intersection of the individual and the world. It is a reality that emerges from the receptiveness of human awareness to the world and cannot be simplified to the mental or physical realms. The realm of experience encompasses specific occurrences and their enduring meanings. Phenomenology acknowledges the experiential reality of meanings alongside concrete details; despite variations in the factual experience of particular manifestations, a meaning remains constant, providing reassuring continuity in the face of varying experiences (1989).

Moreover, according to Polkinghorne (1989), phenomenological philosophy is concerned with delineating the organisation of experiences. Husserl (1931) referred to these experiential structures as ‘essences’. Although a specific phenomenon is not perceived without first categorising it as an example of a structure or type, these typical modes of existence can be investigated independently without a particular instance in mind. It is possible to comprehend something ‘in principle’ without focusing on a specific instance. Examining conscious (or ‘lived’) structures entails distinguishing between the unchanging and fundamental aspects of

an experience, thereby uncovering the typical manner in which a phenomenon manifests in experience. Polkinghorne expressed that, according to Husserl, understanding the structures of consciousness does not rely on induction or generalisation from a sample; instead, it is based on a 'direct grasp' of 'eidetic seeing'. Husserl proposed that comprehending a structure's principles and inner workings requires only one instance, real or imagined. In practice, grasping the essential pattern of a structure typically involves meticulously working through and imaginatively testing various descriptions of an essence until the crucial elements and their relationships are distinguished from the non-essential and specific. This emphasis on imagination in understanding makes phenomenological philosophical inquiry a creative and engaging process (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Building on this, Giorgi (1985, 1994, 2012) emphasised the unique nature of psychological reality. He argued that a rigorous set of procedures rooted in phenomenological philosophy, an alternative philosophy of science, is necessary to understand this nature. Furthermore, Giorgi, as referenced by Finlay (2009), maintained that there are four core characteristics common to all variations of psychological phenomenological approaches: rigorous descriptive research, the use of phenomenological reductions, the exploration of the intentional relationships between persons and situations, and the disclosure of the essences or structures of meaning inherent in human experiences through imaginative variation. Referring to Giorgi's work (as cited by Finlay), which outlines the fundamental features of a phenomenological research method, this study considers two phenomenological approaches that it will use to explore the phenomenology of the 'Happy Host'. The subsequent section will provide a detailed explanation and justification for the methodological procedure and the selected method that this research will implement within its phenomenological research framework.

### 3.5 Choosing the Right Phenomenological Framework

Giorgi explains a diverging philosophical concept that has evolved into two fundamental categories for conducting phenomenological research. Giorgi and Giorgi (2012) posited that Husserl's original phenomenological philosophy was intended as a descriptive pursuit. However, Heidegger reinterpreted the phenomenological project, proposing that the phenomenological method is inherently interpretive. While both Husserl and Heidegger acknowledged the validity of description and interpretation as methods, they differed on which should be considered primary. From an epistemological perspective, Husserl asserts that

description takes precedence while interpretation is a specific form of description. Conversely, from an ontological standpoint, Heidegger argues that interpretation is primary and that description is a distinct type of interpretation. These disparities arise from their respective starting points. Heidegger's emphasis on Dasein, rather than consciousness, leads to the recognition that the question of being arises from Dasein, which is responsible for interpreting the meaning of being. Within this framework, Heidegger advocates an interpretive approach consistent with the hermeneutic tradition (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2012, p. 167).

Moreover, drawing on these two phenomenological frameworks, Finlay's (2009) article, "Debating Phenomenological Research Methods," explores the differences between these philosophical views, providing a more precise understanding by outlining the varying perspectives that emerge from their respective contributions to phenomenological research. Finlay (2009) examines Giorgi's distinctive concept of psychological reality and its relationship to phenomenological philosophy, contrasting it with her own views, which, although different, converge in certain areas. Giorgi emphasises that psychological phenomenology, rooted in Husserlian philosophy, employs a meticulous descriptive approach aimed at uncovering the essences or meanings embedded in human experiences. He advocates for employing phenomenological reduction to suspend presuppositions, thereby allowing for an examination of experience in its pure state. He highlights the intentional relationship between individuals and their surroundings, acknowledging that psychological realities are inherently lived and context-specific. Giorgi views psychological reality as systematically accessible through scientific methods, remaining anchored in subjective experience while striving for broader applicability. He contends that psychological reality possesses a fundamental structure that can be revealed through meticulous eidetic analysis and stresses the importance of maintaining clarity and discipline in methodology to uphold the phenomenological tradition.

Conversely, Finlay offers a broader and more adaptable viewpoint. She contends that psychological reality is embodied, ambiguous, and dynamic; it is best represented through vivid, concrete descriptions of lived experiences. For Finlay, phenomenological philosophy accommodates both general and idiographic (individual) insights, with various methodologies being more or less appropriate depending on the research setting. Unlike Giorgi, she welcomes methods that incorporate interpretation and reflexivity, positing that the researcher's subjectivity is not only unavoidable but can also provide valuable insights. Finlay advocates for a pluralistic and relational understanding of psychological reality, where meaning is co-

created between the researcher and the participant, viewing phenomenological inquiry as both a scientific and artistic endeavor.

### 3.6 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of understanding and interpreting meanings. It is derived from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which means ‘to interpret’ (Shahbazian, 2015). Gadamer, often referred to as the father of philosophical hermeneutics, aimed to unite scientific progress and thought through language (Guillen, 2019). Guillen described hermeneutics as the process of uncovering the meanings within a person’s consciousness and interpreting them through language. He also explained that, according to Gadamer, meanings can be discovered through a person’s written texts, attitudes, actions, and expressions. Shahbazian emphasised that hermeneutics, once central to biblical study, has expanded to include the examination of ancient and classical cultures, evolving into a philosophical pursuit and transcending its previous role as a methodological or didactic aid for other disciplines. Rather than addressing ‘how to read,’ it has shifted to the broader question of ‘how do we communicate?’ This transformation laid the groundwork for an ontological shift in hermeneutics, catalysed by Heidegger in the mid-1920s. Hermeneutics was redefined to explore the fundamental conditions for symbolic interaction and culture, encapsulating the essence of human life and existence. Likewise, Shahbazian (2015) remarked that Heidegger suggested understanding life as a text necessitates a method that explores foundational ontological and existential inquiries.

Shahbazian (2015) revealed Heidegger’s primary inquiry as, ‘What is Being?’ and critiqued the notion of pure phenomenology in addressing ontological questions. He integrated phenomenology with hermeneutics, creating a fusion that illuminates the meanings of words. His influential work, *Being and Time*, exemplifies this fusion known as hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger (1996) extensively explored the concept of Dasein, examining the science of ‘ontology’ to reveal the interrelatedness of the self and the world as a singular entity. His hermeneutic phenomenology investigated the lived human experience and the world, aiming to create meaning and cultivate a more profound understanding as it is experienced (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Heidegger stated that the ‘understanding of Being’ is the definitive characteristic of Dasein. Therefore, as Shahbazian (2015) noted, the approach to exploring lived experiences leads to a fundamental disagreement between Husserl and Heidegger. Husserl focused on comprehending beings or phenomena, while Heidegger concentrated on ‘Dasein’, which translates to ‘Being in the World’. This emphasis, showcasing

a profound philosophical inquiry, clearly sets Heidegger's work apart. Husserl's interest lay in attending to, perceiving, recalling, and contemplating the world, with human beings primarily viewed as knowers. In contrast, Heidegger perceived humans as fundamentally focused on *being* and drew attention to their existential plights in a world that frequently feels foreign.

Considering these two epistemological frameworks for exploring a lived experience, this study will employ Heidegger's phenomenological approach in alignment with van Manen's (1990) perspective. Van Manen argued that understanding a particular lived experience cannot be fully achieved by simply grasping the factual aspects of that experience. A true reflection on a lived experience involves thoughtfully perceiving what makes it uniquely significant. Phenomenology distinguishes between appearance and essence, uncovering the underlying factors that give meaning to the things experienced. This research employs a hermeneutic phenomenological framework to investigate the experiences of the joyful host, encompassing all critical situations and significant life events that shape the subject's perspective. It centres on the lived experience of the 'Happy Host', highlighting the phenomenon of Otherness. The Otherness establishes a robust framework that guides the investigation of this research.

### *3.6.1 Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology*

The Heideggerian phenomenological research method is fundamentally grounded in the interpretive domain. Researchers rely on the concepts and preconceptions associated with the phenomenon under scrutiny and consider specific perspectives related to the interpretation of facts. The initial step in employing the hermeneutic phenomenology research method highlights the interconnectedness of human existence with the world and the interpretive nature of inquiry (Pham, 2021). Moreover, Moran (2000, p. 223) suggested that the central question is how the researcher studies Dasein, as human existence cannot be directly approached. Eatough and Smith (2017) argued that the only viable approach is to examine what Heidegger referred to as 'the facticity of existence'. They emphasised the importance of reviewing an individual's life through the lens of cultural and sociohistorical meanings (2017, p. 3). According to Badil et al. (2023), the researcher identifies the ideas and preconceptions related to an event under investigation and considers specific perceptions linked to the interpretation of facts. Eatough and Smith (2017) noted that Heidegger posits that human beings are Dasein, meaning 'being there' or 'being in the world' (Spinelli, 1989). Tuffour (2017) noted that Heidegger proposed that "Dasein represents the unique existence of human beings" (p. 2) and

emphasised that “being in the world presents a fundamental interpretative situation that compels us to ask questions about our world” (Tuffour, 2017, p. 2).

From a philosophical standpoint, Heidegger asked, ‘What does it mean to be?’ Badil et al. (2023) elucidate that these philosophical inquiries hold profound significance, beginning with the questions of ‘what’ and ‘how’ and consistently encompassing inquiries into the true nature of lived experience, employing a method that entails rigorous, systematic, and critical analysis of an event. Gallagher and Zahavi (2023) elaborate that Dasein constitutes a self-consciousness that imbues individuals with the sensation of being ‘thrown’ into the world. Dasein finds itself ‘thrown’ into this realm of people and objects, language and culture, and cannot be meaningfully separated (Tuffour, 2017). Heidegger (1996) posited that individuals are “always already in an enviroing world” (p. 64), underscoring that a person cannot step outside their existing cultural and historically conditioned environment. Thus, Taylor (2018) emphasised that historical contexts influence Dasein's horizons of significance. Heidegger (2005) further explained that only by delving into “the specific history of the origin of the categories” (p. 12) can a person truly comprehend and define their existence based on concrete experiences. Therefore, Heidegger’s interpretative phenomenological analysis, as a method, examines the relationship between experiences and the external objective world, highlighting the link between objective reality and subjective perceptions (McCormack & Joseph, 2018).

Furthermore, Alase (2017) noted that IPA is a research tool with broader potential applications, while Smith et al. (2009) emphasised that IPA does not aim to operationalise a specific philosophical idea; rather, it draws on a wide range of philosophical concepts. The pursuit serves not only as a historical illustration but also as a fundamental aspect of philosophy itself. It does not, however, signify an attempt to embrace philosophy, as “phenomenology transcends traditional philosophical boundaries” (Pham, 2021, p. 267). Heidegger’s method of phenomenological inquiry employs historical critiques as the sole means of attaining an original and foundational perspective on the subject. Consequently, as Pham (2021) argued, “the more primordially the situation develops itself and becomes transparent to itself, the more apparent and comprehensible it is what should be submitted to interpretation” (p. 267). Heidegger (1996) posited that understanding Dasein necessitates interpretation through a methodological phenomenological description. According to Finlay (2009), Heidegger also asserted that “the essence of phenomenological description as a method lies in its interpretation” (p. 9). Rorty (1979) and van Manen (1990) asserted that the phenomenology of

Dasein is inherently hermeneutic and that “hermeneutic phenomenological research brings forth personal insights” (p. 7).

Tuffour (2017) reinforced this by asserting that Heidegger’s hermeneutic approach permeates philosophical, theoretical, literary, and interpretive perspectives, yielding a facet of human experience deeply anchored in “unrestricted imagination and metaphorical sensibility” (p. 2). As Wheeler (2016) put it, phenomenology is a philosophical and theoretical endeavour aimed at uncovering the historical and transcendent factors that shape daily human experiences through meticulous and reflective analysis. The objective of Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis is to articulate certain conditions of possibility of human experience, conditions that are transcendental in that they are presupposed by the structure and nature of human experience, but which are also historical in that they do not exist outside of human social history (Wheeler, 2016, p. 97).

### 3.7 Idiographic

Tuffour (2017) argued that IPA employs hermeneutic, idiographic, and contextual analysis to comprehend the cultural context of an individual’s experiences. He emphasised that IPA is primarily idiographic, concentrating on thoroughly analysing the phenomenon under investigation. This method carefully reviews each case, providing a comprehensive and nuanced analysis that ensures no aspect of the case is overlooked. It appreciates the strengths of each case before performing a general comparison to highlight both similarities and differences across cases. The IPA method prioritises idiographic designs and often employs single-case studies (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Greening (2019) explained that IPA maintains a flexible and non-prescriptive approach to methodological issues, accommodating various methods applied to individual cases or intentionally selected samples. According to Miller et al. (2018), there is no singular correct approach to conducting data analysis within the IPA framework. They asserted that all IPA studies share a distinct analytical focus on identifying patterns in participants’ experiences, understanding how they derive meaning from those experiences, and interpreting them within social and theoretical frameworks (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Smith et al. (2009) noted that idiography emphasises the ‘specific’ over the ‘general’. Likewise, Warnock (1987) astutely remarked that examining the ‘specific’ helps us approach the universal. Similarly, Kitchener (2018) insightfully pointed out that to understand the external world, one needs an accurate mental representation or replica of it. If this representation is both accurate and valid, it genuinely and truthfully reflects reality.

Evans (1993) asserted that examining personal experiences can illuminate and validate the importance of universal themes in everyone's lives, connecting an individual's unique story to the broader human experience. Eatough and Smith (2017) highlighted that IPA emphasises the individual's interpretive process in making sense of their experiences. They refer to Bruner (1987), who characterised narrative as an "interpretive feat" (p. 13). According to Bruner (1991), narrative "operates as a cognitive tool in shaping reality" (p.6). Clandinin and Connelly (1994) argued that narrative serves as a method of inquiry. Furthermore, Eatough and Smith affirmed that interpretation is fundamental to qualitative inquiry and psychology, claiming that psychology, as a psychological activity, is particularly suited to exploring this question. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is fundamentally rooted in the significance of the sustained exploration of individual lived experiences and the individual's endeavour to comprehend and attribute meaning to those experiences through their narratives. This study will employ an idiographic approach within interpretative phenomenological analysis, utilising a single case study, and adhere to the guidelines outlined by Tuffour (2017) and Eatough and Smith (2007). Reflecting Heidegger's concept of Dasein, the phenomenology of a joyful host illustrates a "dialogue between a person and their world" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 43). Additionally, this study incorporates self-ethnography, or autoethnography, which involves a narrative analysis of personal experiences.

### 3.8 Ethics

Section 6.4 of the Ethics Committee at Auckland University of Technology (AUTEK, n.d.) states that this research does not require ethical clearance since it is a single-person study where the researcher is the subject. Therefore, AUTEK approval is not needed, as the study utilises self-observation for data collection. Additionally, research incorporating self-observational studies in public settings may include other participants while ensuring anonymity and avoiding harmful content that could jeopardise their identities. This type of research is exempt, as outlined in Section 6.8 of AUTEK (n.d.). However, since this study references a public figure, the exemptions detailed in Sections 6.5 and 6.6 of AUTEK come into play. These sections specify that the names of public figures, such as politicians, may be included if the mention does not request sensitive information, solicit opinions from these individuals, or centre significantly on their exposure.

### 3.9 The Rationale for Conducting an Autoethnographic Research Method

The rationale behind employing autoethnography in this study is informed by the argument presented by Clandinin and Connelly (1994), which emphasises the pivotal role of the researcher-participant relationship in research endeavours focused on comprehending personal experiences, particularly the concept of voice. According to Clandinin and Connelly, a researcher's freedom to articulate their viewpoint as a participant in the research process and to intertwine their lived experience with the studied phenomenon is crucial for advancing knowledge. They argued that the absence of the researcher's voice diminishes a text to a mere recapitulation and interpretation of others' work, imparting nothing new. Therefore, drawing on the phenomenological theoretical framework of this study and integrating Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology, which is inherently reflective, descriptive, and explorative, along with Clandinin and Connelly's emphasis on the researcher's voice, this study confidently employs the autoethnographic method, offering unique and insightful perspectives. Similarly, Ngunjiri et al. (2010) highlighted that researchers recognise autoethnography as a uniquely effective method for exploring subjects profoundly and quickly, in contrast to other research approaches. They suggested that this method enables researchers to thoroughly examine their own experiences and emotions, which are closely tied to them in ways that may not be possible through external interviews. Ellis (1991) noted that the growing use of autoethnography in research signifies a shift towards self-introspection or self-ethnography, recognising that individuals are best positioned to accurately describe their experiences more than anyone else (Wall, 2006).

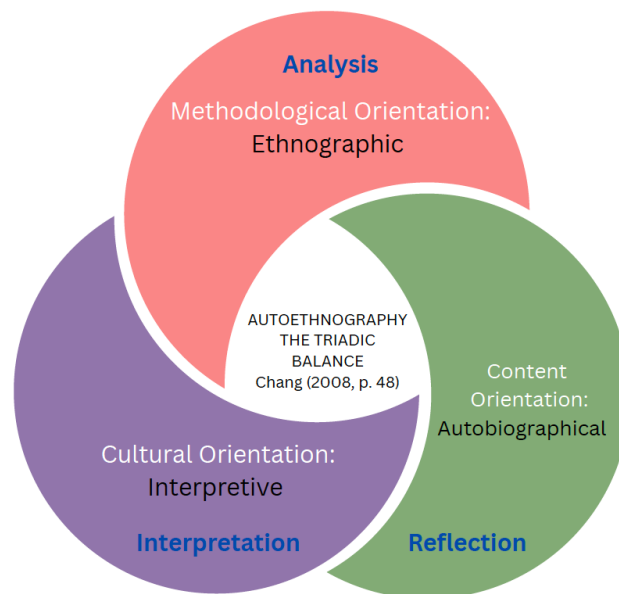
### 3.10 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a powerful qualitative research method that gathers data about the self and its context to uncover the interconnectedness between the self and others within the same setting. It is self-focused in that the researcher takes on the roles of both the 'subject', conducting the investigation, and the 'object', being scrutinised. As a research method, autoethnography employs a rigorous and systematic approach to collecting, analysing, and interpreting data related to the self, as well as to social phenomena involving the self. This study will primarily utilise Heewon Chang's (2016) method, as detailed in her work on autoethnography, to conduct a descriptive narrative analysis of the researcher's lived experience of alterity. Chang's approach to autoethnography emphasises a combined cultural analysis and interpretation of narrative details. It follows an anthropological and social scientific inquiry approach rather than relying on descriptive or performative storytelling. Ngunjiri et al. (2010)

suggested that this systematic and deliberate approach to understanding the sociocultural aspects of the self distinguishes autoethnography from other forms of self-narrative writing, such as memoirs and autobiographies. According to Chang’s method, autoethnographers are expected to reflect on their stories, analyse them, and interpret them within their broader sociocultural context.

Figure 1

Snyder’s (2015) sidebar doodle of Chang’s (2008) autoethnography



**Note.** In Snyder’s (2015) analysis, Chang’s (2008) autoethnography (1) emphasises an ethnographic methodology, (2) integrates a culturally interpretive perspective, and (3) includes autobiographical elements.

Butler (2016) contended that Chang’s (2008) autoethnographic theoretical groundwork seems to hold an “objective position” (p. 296) in social research. He commented that Chang’s approach to autoethnographic research appears to have been strongly influenced by Anderson’s (2006) ‘analytic autoethnography’. According to Chang, Anderson’s analytic autoethnography method is characterised as objective, further noting that Anderson ‘leans toward the objectivity camp’. Anderson’s analytic ethnographic design is dedicated to an “analytical research agenda to enhance theoretical insights into broader social phenomena” (p. 375). According to Chang (2018), when autoethnography first emerged in anthropology, the discipline referred to the ethnography of the researcher’s “own people” as “autoethnography” (p. 2). Eventually, this

term was also used to describe the ethnographic study of the 'self'. Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that emphasises a more personal and intimate level of study. It enables the researcher-participant to explore past and present experiences while gaining self-awareness of their interactions and sociocultural impacts (Butler, 2016).

### 3.11 Culture

Sparkes (2000) suggested that autoethnographies provide personalised accounts that leverage the author's experiences to enhance sociological understanding, enabling one to "utilise oneself to gain insights into a culture" (p. 21). Building on De Munck's (2000) perspective, Chang (2008) emphasises that "Culture is located inside people's minds" (p. 8). Carrithers et al. (2010) argued that "Ontology is simply another term for culture" (p. 5). Consequently, Chang viewed the self as intricately linked to others in society as a "carrier of culture" (p. 125). De Munck also suggested that culture exists both "out there" in the public domain and "in here" within the private sphere of the self (p. 8). Considering that "culture and psychology shape each other" (Valsiner, 2007, p. 238), this study will explore the self and its connection to others through a cultural analysis of alterity, focusing on the social and psychological phenomenon of the Happy Host. This study will take a similar approach to that of Chang (2018, p. 2), who primarily used data from "recalling her memory" (p. 2) to construct a reflective interpretation of her lived experience. According to Chang (2008), autoethnographers employ recalling when collecting memory data.

### 3.12 Autoethnographic Method

Chang (2008) emphasised the importance of autoethnographers examining their past experiences, interpreting their personal stories, and identifying relevant aspects of their research. Wall (2006) proposed incorporating personal narratives as a widely discussed approach for researchers to integrate their experiences into their work. She argues that all autoethnographic works begin with the subjective self, emphasising the paramount importance of personal storytelling in this method. This research will utilise a personal narrative style known as 'critical autobiography,' as outlined by Church (1995). In this work, Church skillfully applies critical autobiography to investigate and share stories from a community mental health service system. The underlying concept of critical autobiography plays a crucial role in shaping the current narrative. Similarly, this research will also adopt Sparkes' (1996) autoethnographic writing style, as demonstrated in *The Fatal Flaw: A Narrative of the Fragile Body-Self*, which

emphasises narratives of the self. According to Richardson (1994), as cited by Sparkes (1996), narratives of the self represent a form of evocative writing that employs fictional techniques to create deeply personal and revealing texts. These texts enable authors to share their lived experiences and invite readers to emotionally “relive” those events. Richardson (1994) argues that in such self-narratives, “accuracy is not the concern; rather, it is that they endeavour to meet the literary standards of coherence, verisimilitude, and interest” (p. 521).

Thus, these autoethnographic methods will be explained using the ‘braided approach’ (Fischer, 1976; Mullen, 2019). The braided approach is a standard qualitative methodology in which researchers act as ‘bricoleurs’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Denzin (2013), the bricoleur's work results in a ‘bricolage’—a multi-dimensional, reflective, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's perceptions and interpretations of the world or the phenomena under examination. Mullen describes this as “weaving analysis with narrative” (Mullen, 2019).

### 3.13 Self-Narrative Method

In this research, I conducted an interpretative phenomenological analysis, beginning with introspection on the day that marked a profound insight into Otherness, on 13 July 2021. As I worked to interpret my introspection, I undertook an in-depth theoretical examination of the concept of Otherness. This analysis involved discussing various concepts, theories, and philosophies of alterity from the perspectives of Edmund Husserl, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and Edith Stein. Their theoretical viewpoints resonate deeply with my personal experiences and understanding of alterity. I immersed myself in my research and reflected on the significant events crucial to my study’s narrative. I recounted the essence of these pivotal events, drawing on Church’s (1995) critical autobiography and Sparkes’ (1996) narratives of the self, and emphasised my narrative with vital and rational thinking. This intentional approach established clear and meaningful connections between the narrative and the theories examined in the theoretical analysis. Furthermore, I incorporated a narrative technique inspired by Chang’s (2016) autoethnography, which shares my personal experiences, thereby enhancing self-ethnography to support a cultural analysis aimed at exploring alterity within its cultural context. The objective was to investigate alterity from psychological and emotional perspectives, recognising it as an inherently egoic experience to deepen my exploration of the phenomenon. This strategy strengthened the logical and critical reasoning underpinning my

comprehensive interpretation of my stories and their foundational theories related to “The Phenomenology of the Happy Host.”

### 3.14 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter clearly outlines the justification for conducting a phenomenological analysis. It involves embracing the researcher’s phenomenological perspective to explore a study that integrates phenomenology and autoethnography, particularly regarding the ‘Phenomenology of the Happy Host’, focusing on the concept of alterity. The research study effectively utilises Heidegger’s interpretative framework to facilitate an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), incorporating elements of both hermeneutic and idiographic approaches. The idiographic method, characterised by a thorough research process, adeptly employs autoethnography to enable a detailed narrative examination of the self. Furthermore, the autoethnographic method articulates its findings throughout the research. Drawing on Chang’s (2016) autoethnographic framework, Church’s (1995) critical autobiography method, and Sparkes’ (1996) self-narrative style, this study provides an in-depth cultural and psychological exploration of the self. The interpretative analysis is grounded in coherent reasoning stemming from its single-case study design, wherein the subject functions as both the sole participant and the researcher. The autoethnography surrounding the ‘Phenomenology of the Happy Host’ is a narrative inquiry that presents an in-depth cultural investigation of alterity through self-reflection. This meticulous study critically examines the researcher’s personal experiences as a happy host in the context of Otherness.

## Chapter 4: The Autoethnography of the Phenomenology of the Happy Host

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I carefully outline the key events stemming from my reflection on the phenomenology of Otherness through an autoethnographic lens. My autoethnography blends seamlessly with interpretive phenomenological analysis, creating a narrative rich in critical and reflective insights. The storytelling employs various formats, such as micro-interactions, reflective writing, sociological and historical contexts, and theoretical exploration. The main goal of both interpretive phenomenological analysis and autoethnography is to narrate the experience of a joyful host influenced by Otherness. This account critically examines the claim of the host's fulfilling lived experience, which is deeply rooted in the concept of Otherness.

### 4.2 How Do I Tell You My Story of Alterity?

My exploration of alterity began during my internship at the Chandelier Lounge on 13 July 2021. From that significant moment, I have been dedicated to fostering genuine emotional connections and sharing meaningful experiences with our guests. I will recount my personal experiences while integrating a cultural analysis of alterity grounded in Church's (1995) concept of critical autobiography. According to Church, "the self is a social construct" (p. 5), and critical autobiography demands thorough social analysis. This approach prompts us to critically examine our relationships with others and our environment by documenting and reflecting on our personal experiences. Church explained that by narrating our own lives, we can contextualise our individual experiences within a broader societal framework, "transforming our stories into shared narratives rather than just personal accounts" (p. 5). Harrison (2009) highlighted the importance of incorporating lives into sociological research, drawing on Mills' (1970) influential work, *The Sociological Imagination*. In this seminal work, Mills (1970) emphasised the necessity for social scientists to consider biography, history, and society in their scholarly endeavours, arguing that a comprehensive understanding of humanity requires a thorough grasp of historical and sociological contexts. Mills introduced the concept of the "sociological imagination," which requires recognising the profound interplay between biography and history.

Harrison (2009) emphasised the importance of acknowledging the personal dimension in social analysis. He viewed individuals as 'biographical entities' shaped by their social environment,

including historical societal structures and institutions. Mills (1970) asserted that comprehending an individual's biography and development necessitates referencing the historical structures that influence everyday life. Harrison examined how we understand our identities and experiences through shared narratives by exploring the theoretical aspects of individuality as a social entity. He argued that stories form the foundation through which we shape our identities and that storytelling, combined with analytical reflection, empowers the storyteller and engages the audience, enabling both to truly grasp these phenomena. Berry and Patti (2015) suggested that storytelling often arises from personal moments of change and insight, connecting us to a larger narrative. Wall (2006) proposed that researchers engaging in autobiographical inquiry, particularly those who have personally encountered a phenomenon and grappled with unanswered questions, can utilise introspection to explore their subjective understanding of experiences, thereby fostering a sense of reflection and contemplation. These researchers used their voices to critically analyse various aspects of their existence (Berry & Patti, 2015). Harrison (2009) and Ngunjiri et al. (2010) stated that we express our narratives as reflections of our innermost selves, offering the outside world a glimpse into our personal stories.

### 4.3 My Culture and Its Significance to My Sense of Otherness

My reflection on my experience with alterity connects my analysis to my socio-cultural background. I grew up in the Philippines, where the core value of 'kapwa'—which translates to 'fellow' in English (Tagalog.com, 2024)—profoundly shaped my understanding of Otherness. Kapwa encapsulates a deep sense of interconnectedness with others (Constante, 2022). This concept permeates Filipino culture and is epitomised by the word 'pakikipagkapwa' (fellowship), which emphasises the bond between one's inner self ('loob') and the inner selves of others (Miranda, 1989, p. 69). The emphasis on pakikipagkapwa reflects the profoundly relational nature of Filipinos and their interconnectedness with others, integral to the Filipino concept of Otherness (De Leon, J, 2024 x 6). Additionally, we Filipinos are celebrated for our warm and attentive hospitality, reflecting the concept of 'interrupted' hospitality, as Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida described in their philosophy of the idea of substitution (De Guia, 2024; Chua, 2024). This form of hospitality is marked by constant self-interruptions, as demonstrated by the Filipino custom of showering guests with abundant generosity. We often find ourselves 'self-disrupted' when welcoming guests into our homes. My cultural upbringing was rooted in generous hospitality, where we frequently overfed our

guests at special events, consistently offered additional food, and often inquired whether they were satisfied with their meals.

I grew up in a culture that prioritises hospitality, where making guests feel at home is paramount. My family's region, nestled in Mindanao on the island down in the Southern Philippines, is renowned for its exceptional hospitality, often going to great lengths to accommodate guests, including offering our beds and willingly choosing to sleep elsewhere to ensure guests' comfort. This selfless act symbolises our genuine dedication to our guests. Our warm and welcoming nature is deeply rooted in attentiveness, fostering genuine connections and nurturing meaningful relationships. Embracing the Filipino core value of *pakikipagkapwa*, I sought to cultivate these authentic connections by creating a hospitable environment. It was not until twelve years after I relocated to New Zealand that I fully understood and appreciated the profound potential of this relational form of hospitality. My internship at the Chandelier Lounge in 2021 was a turning point that led me to pursue a career as a host. The philosophy of relational hospitality through the perspective of *pakikipagkapwa* and my transformative experience at the Chandelier Lounge represents the culmination of my reflective analysis and the pivotal realisation that has enriched my understanding of myself as a dedicated and joyful host.

#### 4.4 A Short Reflection on My Previously Challenging and Unsettling Life Before Becoming a Host

I arrived in New Zealand in 2009 to study culinary arts and decided to stay. Moving from the Philippines to obtain a chef's qualification in this country marked a crucial step towards fulfilling my culinary aspirations. As both a student and a chef, I have experienced inspiration and frustration. The most complex and lengthy part of my transition was adjusting to New Zealand's diverse culture as an immigrant from the Philippines. During my culinary journey, I worked in various large and small kitchen environments, which provided both rewarding and challenging experiences. Although I excelled in my role as a chef, I found it tough to manage the interpersonal dynamics at work. These challenges impacted me more profoundly than the motivation I gained from my solid performance in my job. I found it difficult to face these issues due to my low emotional resilience. I recognised that my relational nature was also a weakness, especially when dealing with hard-to-resolve interpersonal conflicts. Even though I am observant, I often find myself trapped in cycles of overthinking and emotional turmoil,

resulting in sleepless nights and diminished focus at work. Initially, I attempted to cope by dedicating more time to honing my culinary skills, but this solution only provided temporary relief.

Ultimately, I found it hard to confront these challenges, resulting in a recurring pattern of leaving jobs whenever I felt unhappy. The emotional hurdles I faced profoundly impacted my self-esteem and confidence. My predicament with my emotions, which affected my self-worth, began to shift during my 2021 internship when I made a life-changing discovery that radically altered my perspective on life. This discovery allowed me to explore emotions on a deeper level, both my own and those of others, through a relational dimension. By embracing the concept of pakikipagkapwa (fellowship), I experienced a deeper understanding and connection with these emotions. This newfound insight has enabled me to create deeply fulfilling emotional experiences for our guests while immersing myself in those same emotions. Since then, my life has been dedicated to exploring the boundless possibilities of relational hospitality, with my experiences at the Chandelier Lounge playing a pivotal role in this journey. The true joy I feel as a host is a testament to my embrace of alterity. In the subsequent section, I will explain the reflective moments that led to my self-realisation, my transformative journey through alterity, and my immersion in the emotions of others for my well-being.

I attempt to vividly capture my moments of reflection by incorporating Sparkes' (1996) autoethnographic storytelling style. This method powerfully, clearly, and compellingly conveys intricate experiences, emotions, micro-interactions, and thought processes. According to Sparkes, skilfully intertwining subjective biographical, psychological, emotional, and biological elements with a socio-cultural context ensures that the 'personal' does not become self-centred and the 'sociological' does not lose its humanity (p. 5). My aim in sharing these experiences is to resonate with readers, much like Frank (1995), who seeks to captivate his audience by connecting with their lived realities through narratives. By doing so, readers perceive the inherent logic of cause and effect, temporal dynamics, and tensions within the story. Frank suggests that engaging with a narrative enables individuals to recognise its impact on their lives and acknowledge a "certain truth in that influence" (p. 23). In line with Frank's perspective, I invite you to join me in exploring the remarkable concept of Otherness I encounter; my narrative begins on 13 July 2021.

## 4.5 The Phenomenology of the ‘Theory of the Tumbling Flute’.

I started my internship in the pastry kitchen at the Cordis Hotel, and on 13 July 2021, I moved to the Chandelier Lounge, aiming to learn, grow, and refine my skills in hospitality service. Once at the Chandelier Lounge, I quickly dove into the high tea service and became actively involved in the lively operational atmosphere. My experience with the high tea service ignited my interest in ‘emotional guest satisfaction’ due to a unique phenomenon that opened my perspective on emotional experiences. This insight drove me to delve into the ‘relational dimension of service,’ emphasising that genuine guest satisfaction stems from the emotional connections established between guests and their servers during service interactions. One of my first tasks during my internship was to serve welcome mocktails in flutes. I was directed to deliver drinks to two high tea tables: one for three elegant women at table five and another for a similarly attired couple at table nine. I felt unsure about serving these flutes. Despite the motivation and encouragement to be confident and relaxed, it turned out to be more difficult than I had expected.

As I presented the delicate flutes, I felt both tense and excited. Transitioning from working in the kitchen to serving refined beverages in an elegant service setting felt surreal. Unfortunately, as I carried out this task, I accidentally spilt one of the mocktails on a woman’s lap at table five. As if that mishap was not enough, I later mismanaged two more flutes, resulting in another spill on the lovely dress of the woman at table nine. Having already been rattled by the earlier incident, my hands began to tremble, making it difficult to maintain my composure and appear calm. Deep down, I felt frustrated with myself and overly consumed by my emotions. Nevertheless, as these events transpired, I encountered the Otherness. After I accidentally spilt the drink on the woman at table five, she kindly reassured me not to worry, acknowledging that it was unintentional. Her response came across as genuine. She then told the other ladies that they were truly enjoying themselves and that the Chandelier Lounge was the most delightful place for high tea. Everyone smiled kindly at me, expressing their hope that I would start to feel better soon. I sensed their genuine concern, and their gestures reassured me that everything would turn out just fine.

Meanwhile, the woman at table nine, who had also experienced my appalling miscue, observed my stunned expression. She caught my trembling wrist despite my efforts to keep it still. My hand shook as I rearranged the flutes that had fallen from the tray I was holding. All I managed to say to her was, “I apologise.” The two incidents seemed unreal and left me feeling extremely

embarrassed, making the Chandelier Lounge the last place I wanted to be at that moment. The kind woman at table nine also seemed to recognise my distress, and I thought I heard her genuinely inquire, “Are you all right?” She went on to remark, “It seems today is not going well for you.” With a warm smile, she reassured me, “Don’t worry about us. Just take care of yourself for now. We’re fine and enjoying the ambience like everyone else.” Although my mind was occupied by worries about my lapses, her reassuring words relieved my anxiety, and I gradually felt much more at ease.

Right after the incident, my colleague hurried to check on me, reassuring me not to worry as she would take care of the tables. Her support, along with that of my other colleagues, significantly boosted my sense of worth and morale within the team. They frequently asked how I was doing. Once the high tea stands were delivered to each table, the outlet manager excitedly approached me, exclaiming, “Look, everyone is happy!” Witnessing the joy of both guests and staff made it evident that the atmosphere was genuinely positive. The Chandelier Lounge exuded joy, lifting my spirits throughout the entire experience. I started to reflect on earlier events: did the guests somehow sense my distress? It seemed they picked up on my emotional signals, easing my discomfort before I even realised it. This insight struck me, as my anxiety seemed to diminish rather than engulf me in embarrassment. I began to wonder if it was possible to express our intentions in a way that emotionally connected with others. While it felt ambitious, it genuinely intrigued and captured my interest. I began implementing this idea during service interactions and noticed gradual improvements in my guests’ experiences.

## 4.6 The Star

Following the incident in the Chandelier Lounge, I was scheduled for just one more high tea shift and was then rostered for the dinner period afterwards. Nevertheless, I still had the opportunity to work during high tea service, as my dinner shift started immediately after the second seating began. This arrangement worked well for me, as it allowed me to gain experience in both types of service and interact with a broader range of guests. I devoted myself to learning the standards, procedures, and menu. My focus was always on assisting everyone. I realised that I was never particularly inclined to work at the bar; I was more enthusiastic about interacting with guests than about learning to prepare drinks. After a few dinner shifts, the supervisor observed that guests appreciated engaging in conversation with me and often provided positive feedback when they checked out. I derive immense joy from making guests feel special during my time on duty. I remember feeling awkward and somewhat silly the first

time I sang “Happy Birthday”, especially since I had been quite reserved since arriving in New Zealand. However, witnessing the delighted reactions on my guests' faces made me realise that their happiness also ignited a sense of joy within me. I concluded that if singing brings pleasure to both me and my guests, I should keep doing it. “I will sing ‘Happy Birthday’ for their enjoyment and my own pleasure.” I feel inspired to sing, as the joy it brought made me feel good throughout my shift.

My newfound drive to bring joy to others resonates perfectly with our company’s commitment to delivering exceptional experiences, reinforcing my conviction that this role is an excellent fit for me. As my internship approached its end on 5 August that year, I recognised the significance of embracing and reinforcing the company’s vision and mission by prioritising our guests’ emotional well-being. I understood that my inherent disposition stemmed from a strong sense of responsibility and a natural urge to create happiness and fulfilment for others, ultimately providing me with personal satisfaction. That same week, the All Blacks were playing the Wallabies in Auckland, and the Wallabies were staying at the Cordis. A moment of insight struck me like an epiphany while serving three guests – a mother, a daughter, and their male friend – who had previously stopped by our other bar before coming to the Chandelier Lounge to enjoy some drinks. The mother complimented the Piña Colada she had enjoyed at that outlet. When I asked what drinks I could serve them, the daughter requested a unique recommendation.

Eventually, I suggested they order another round of Piña Coladas and assured her that the bartender from the other bar would prepare and deliver them as soon as they were ready. After the daughter accepted my suggestion, I discreetly sought the mother’s approval. She agreed but then asked whether I had spotted any Wallaby players in the hotel lobby. I admitted that I did not follow sports and was unfamiliar with the players. The mother told me she wanted something extraordinary and asked for a Wallaby that evening. I quickly replied, “Our bar only serves drinks; however, if you are keen on any of them, I must tell you it will be quite costly.” Suddenly, all four of us were crying with laughter. After a while, I served two Piña Coladas to the two women and a glass of Maude Pinot Noir to the gentleman. Wanting to please the mother, I encouraged her to point out any Wallaby players passing through the lobby and let me know. I promised to approach them and ask if she could pose for a photo with them. Shortly after, a player passed by and approached the lobby lift. The excited mother hurriedly called out, telling me that the gentleman about to take the lift was one of the Wallabies. I rushed to the player and

said, “Excuse me, sir. One of my guests would like to have a photo taken with you. Could you grant her wish?” Without any hesitation, the player agreed. I guided the player to their table, where we engaged in friendly introductions and had a brief conversation.

The group quickly started snapping photos, and when I offered my help, they unexpectedly welcomed me to join them for more photo shoots. Once the player departed, I was left with a grateful guest who frequently thanked me for my service. I kindly asked whether she could give feedback to the hotel, to which she cheerfully responded, “I already did.” She had just written us a review. Just then, she spotted another Wallaby player heading towards the lobby lift. I promptly went over and spoke to the player, politely asking, “Hello, sir. My guest would like a photo with you; is that all right?” He responded, “Where?” I pointed to the table and said, “She is over there.” I gestured for him to take the lead while I followed behind. As we approached the table, the group was already half-standing, ready to greet the player. After introductions, I volunteered to take their picture, but once again, they insisted I join them. As the player left, our guests expressed their gratitude for making their evening unforgettable. The mother hugged me as they were departing. After they left, I reflected, “That was surprisingly easy—just like that.” I had never experienced such an extraordinary sensation. At that moment, it struck me: I was a superstar, and the Chandelier Lounge was my stage. I cannot imagine a more exhilarating feeling than being in the spotlight at the hotel’s most prominent location.

#### 4.7 The Chandelier Lounge

A few weeks before my internship ended, the manager expressed his appreciation for my contributions. He mentioned that he liked me and emphasised how consistently I made guests feel happy. Although he did not directly try to persuade me, it was clear he believed the lounge would offer opportunities for me to grow and develop my skills. At that moment, the prospect of transitioning to his department felt delicate. I had already committed to working in the pastry kitchen, where the former French executive pastry chef endorsed my placement and supported me at the start of my internship. My journey at Cordis began when my supervisor at AIS looked for hotels willing to accommodate my two classmates and me, as completing an internship was a requirement for our course. The impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry, particularly in the restaurant sector, ultimately compelled me to return to my studies in 2020. Witnessing the widespread unemployment affecting chefs during the pandemic motivated me to pursue further education. Nonetheless, I found it hard to envision myself in a role involving direct guest interaction, as I had never considered myself particularly outgoing or socially inclined.

This sentiment held true both in New Zealand and back home, where I had yet to gain experience in customer-facing roles.

I come from a modest family in Davao del Sur, situated in the Davao Region, a significant agricultural area in the southern Philippines. This might explain my introverted personality. I managed my family's farming business, overseeing our palm oil plantations as well as neighbouring fields that cultivated vegetables, flowers, and rice. As a result, my interactions with a diverse range of people were limited, which is why I was thrilled when the Chandelier Lounge manager invited me to join his team. Realising my talent for engaging with our guests, the Chandelier Lounge introduced me to a vibrant work environment that appreciated my ability to connect with people. I dedicated myself to enhancing my social skills, believing that genuine understanding and connection with others required an inward journey of self-discovery and deeper self-awareness. I am convinced that reflecting on my own experiences fosters a more profound understanding of others. Working in the Chandelier Lounge provided a unique opportunity to observe, interact, and immerse myself in the world, continually revitalising my spirit and filling me with boundless enthusiasm. From my very first day as an intern, I was warmly welcomed by everyone in the organisation. The hotel's friendly and inviting atmosphere immediately suggested it was an amazing workplace, and the smiling faces and cheerful greetings exchanged among everyone only reinforced this impression.

I quickly became a vital member of the pastry kitchen team when I started my internship. The executive pastry chef and the kitchen administrator were always friendly and approachable, making me feel truly valued as an intern, which genuinely delighted me. I firmly believe that happiness significantly drives productivity. Happy employees generally give their best effort, perform at their peak level, and foster a sense of gratitude towards their employers. As I completed my course at AIS, I set my sights on pursuing a Master's degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). After considering both AUT's Gastronomy and International Hospitality Management programmes, I ultimately decided to pursue the Gastronomy path. During my internship, I was thrilled when the executive pastry chef announced that I would be moving to the Chandelier Lounge to serve high tea in the next phase of my program, having previously served high tea once as a student at Le Cordon Bleu in Wellington.

Nonetheless, I had developed a strong rapport with the pastry chefs and could sense their disappointment about my transfer to another department. I reassured them that I would permanently return to the pastry kitchen after completing my internship. However, in the final

weeks of my internship, I opted not to go back. Instead, I spoke with the outlet manager and clearly expressed my intention to stay in the Chandelier Lounge.

#### 4.8 A Completely Different World

Cordis offered me a full-time employment contract, during which I successfully negotiated the opportunity to pursue a Master's in Gastronomy at AUT full-time. I am grateful for their support in accommodating my academic goals. At 11.59 pm on 17 August 2020, the day I signed and submitted my contract, Auckland entered its second COVID-19 lockdown, resulting in a temporary four-week closure of many hospitality businesses. I began receiving my pay despite the lockdown, which was vital support during that challenging time. I truly appreciate the company's assistance throughout that period. After four weeks, businesses started to resume normal operations, and I primarily worked evening shifts at the Chandelier Lounge. The government's new regulation mandating a two-meter social distance significantly changed how we engaged with guests, resulting in a less interactive service experience. Dining habits shifted, and takeaway orders emerged as the dominant trend during the lockdown. Guest numbers at the Chandelier Lounge have declined, leading to budget cuts that included reducing staff. Typically, only two staff members worked each shift: one attended to guests on the floor, while the other managed the bar and processed payments at the register. As social distancing measures eased and people began to return, business gradually picked up, though at a more cautious and slower pace.

However, guest service began to feel impersonal and somewhat distant due to the need to maintain space during interactions. Still, some hotel guests adapted to this new reality and managed to engage with us, even while we wore masks. A few guests returned to express their gratitude for my attentive care throughout their stay during the pandemic. In March 2022, after New Zealand lifted its border restrictions, my eagerness to connect with others became even more evident. The announcement from the New Zealand government allowing vaccinated Kiwis and other eligible travellers to enter the country sparked a resurgence in the hospitality sector. Tourists eagerly began booking accommodations, and hotels once again buzzed with activity. With the continued increase in flights to New Zealand, demand for accommodations rose among both international and domestic travellers. Our hotel successfully captured a significant market share, consistently achieving full occupancy. While this benefited our company's business, it also brought challenges that affected our internal operations. This

disparity between staffing levels and the growing number of guests highlighted significant issues that needed to be addressed.

The pandemic led to a significant staffing shortage in the hospitality industry, impacting employers across the sector. The Cordis Hotel encountered difficulties in providing timely services to guests. Furthermore, Cordis promotes a strong, supportive culture among its departments. For instance, when the central kitchen needed help plating banquet dishes for large events or when housekeeping sought extra assistance, colleagues from other departments who were willing to work additional hours were invited to lend a hand. However, there were occasions when rooms were not ready on time, prompting reception staff to ask guests to wait. Those wanting immediate access to their rooms during check-in felt disappointed by these delays, particularly since the reception staff could not offer an estimated wait time, which further increased their frustration. To ease the situation, the front desk provided complimentary drink vouchers, allowing guests to enjoy a beverage in the Chandelier Lounge while they waited for their rooms. The Chandelier Lounge was crucial in looking after our guests during this time.

Moreover, caring for these frustrated and impatient guests highlighted the reality of my role. Their disappointment created a ripple effect, leading them to assume that all staff members were the same. They often confused the Chandelier Lounge staff with others, presuming we shared the same helplessness they perceived in the reception staff when their rooms were not ready. Acknowledging the emotional effort involved in delivering exceptional service has revealed the significant toll it takes on the hospitality industry. This role demands deep empathy for others' feelings, making it challenging to compartmentalise our own emotions during interactions. When guests express frustration, they expect us to understand their feelings, viewing this as a critical part of our responsibilities. Initially, I thought creating unforgettable experiences was merely fulfilling, but I now realise that my role is far more complex. Unfortunately, we often bear the brunt of others' frustrations and may face mistreatment when guests react rudely due to their own disappointments. This has led me to reflect—was I truly prepared for this?

## 4.9 A Genuine Reflection

During my postgraduate studies at AUT, I initially intended for my dissertation to focus on guest satisfaction. However, it took me a year to pinpoint a unique concept related to guest

satisfaction that I wanted to explore, particularly since the topic had already been extensively researched. I faced challenges in this area that were closely tied to my role. My primary motivation for staying in the Chandelier Lounge was to observe the interactions between servers and guests, seeking to understand how these dynamics influence guests' emotional satisfaction. It took me a year to prepare and another year to fully commit to this topic. Nevertheless, during my time as a host in the Chandelier Lounge, I confronted the harsh realities of the darker side of the hospitality industry, which can significantly impact well-being. Throughout this journey, my theory on the 'tumbling flute' phenomenon emerged as a key discovery that illuminated the sustained happiness I experienced as a host. While reading Meneses and Larkin's (2012) article on Stein's psychological exploration of empathy, I encountered the term 'Otherness.' Their research indicated that Stein's empathy represents a distinct, deliberate action aimed at authentically experiencing the emotions of others.

Meneses and Larkin (2012) describe this concept as alterity or otherness, referring to "the foreign quality of an experience" (p. 161). They suggest that Stein's empathy deepens our understanding of others' experiences. This description resonated with me as I recalled my first day at the Chandelier Lounge, serving high tea. The women at both tables seemed to connect, telling me, "Don't worry. We've got you covered, my friend." It is certainly possible to recognise another person's emotional state. As I explored the concept of Otherness more deeply, I realised it encompasses both others and myself. The incident with the falling flutes led me to consider whether I could apply this idea to my own thoughts. Can we consciously comprehend our inner feelings and the dialogue they create?

#### 4.10 Critical feelings

My experience caring for guests at the Chandelier Lounge has deepened my understanding of people, improving my ability to read human behaviour. Initially, managing emotional labour was challenging. The Chandelier Lounge is renowned for its exceptional high tea service during the day, transforming into a lounge bar that offers à la carte dining in the evening. Over time, I gradually began to take charge of the high tea service. The lounge also serves as a popular venue for families celebrating special occasions, functioning both as a casual dining spot and a fully stocked bar for in-house and walk-in guests. This dual operation requires careful attention to ensure that guests have an emotionally satisfying experience. As a result, it is typical for the entire Chandelier team to joyfully lead a birthday song at table six for a three-year-old girl celebrating her birthday with her family over high tea, creating beautiful

memories. Afterwards, we rush to serve the gentleman eagerly awaiting his Negroni at table three. The lounge caters to a diverse range of guests, each with unique expectations, making it vital for us to be particularly attentive and flexible in our service. Some guests prefer quick service and are specific about timing, while others come for the experience and enjoy savouring their time, with some falling somewhere in between these two preferences. Understanding these varied needs is crucial for delivering outstanding service that meets the expectations of all guests.

However, I have come to realise that guest satisfaction can sometimes be used as a tool for emotional manipulation. Striving for excellent service can create psychological unease due to the fear that guests might voice complaints if we cannot meet their expectations. For instance, there was a moment when a guest found my colleague's meal check intrusive during their dining experience, expressed dissatisfaction, and provided critical feedback. In another instance, a guest who visited the lounge wanted to enjoy a glass of Pinot Noir but felt disappointed because she had also hoped for food, and no one asked if she would like something to eat. She complained and left a negative review regarding the service. In response to staff concerns about complaints, we have often offered complimentary drinks, discounted bills, or, in rare instances, complimentary meals. In particularly serious situations, we provide a complimentary meal, known as the 'WOW recovery' gesture, to address unsatisfactory service delivery. However, the WOW recovery can sometimes lead to unintended consequences, as it often serves only as a short-term fix that fails to fully resolve the initial concern. Inadvertently, it has encouraged some guests to exploit the situation by finding fault and complaining. This has resulted in an increase in complaints, as previous efforts to resolve issues have shown that complaining can yield benefits.

I once attended to a couple who were dissatisfied with their menu selections during high tea, at which point we offered them a complimentary dinner. Later, they asked about my colleague who had made their reservation, specifically regarding their wine. They inquired whether it would be possible to upgrade individual glasses to a bottle for their complimentary wine. I explained that my colleague was off duty and that the note regarding their complimentary drink outlined the arrangement. My perspective on the situation shifted when I noticed the guests seemed disappointed. It appeared they were more interested in taking advantage of the situation than genuinely appreciating the privilege offered to them. This incident, among others, has led me to avoid forming emotional connections with such guests. This reluctance affects my

understanding of fellowship, or ‘pakikipagkapwa’, resulting in a more intersubjective perspective. While my commitment to relational hospitality will continue in providing quality service to others, I refrain from sharing my emotional experiences with them.

#### 4.11 The Stories Inside My Uninhibited Inner Thoughts

My relational hospitality is fundamentally anchored in intersubjectivity, with my sense of fellowship being both discerning and selective. I will exemplify this through two stories: the first narrates my experience hosting two refined high tea guests, while the second recounts a meeting with an elderly Indian businessman in the Chandelier Lounge. These narratives act as a litmus test for gauging the boundaries of my understanding of my sense of ‘fellowship’ or ‘pakikipagkapwa’. Through these anecdotes, I seek to provide insights into my unfiltered and authentic inner thoughts and how I navigate encounters with challenging guests. Therefore, these stories reflect my candid musings, which I call the chronicles of my uninhibited inner thoughts.

##### *4.11.1 My Litmus Test of Otherness - Incident Number One*

Two mature women arrived for our third high tea seating during a Sunday dinner shift. A colleague welcomed them, explained the high tea service, and allowed them time to select their drinks before bringing out their high tea stands. After my colleague delivered the high tea stand, she informed me about an issue with one of the savoury dishes. It turned out that only one of the guests was a vegetarian, but both savoury items we provided were vegetarian options. I immediately approached their table to ask about their concerns, ensuring I had the correct information regarding their complaints. I thanked them for their feedback, which allowed us to address the issue promptly. During our conversation, I discovered it was the other woman’s birthday. I greeted her friend with “Happy birthday” and informed them that my colleague was inquiring about the savoury dish. I suggested they might enjoy a glass of bubbles to celebrate. Initially declining, they changed their minds and requested two glasses of Cinzano Prosecco. I gladly told them, “Certainly.” However, the situation changed when I returned to their table with a bottle of Cinzano Prosecco and two flutes. As I prepared to pour the Prosecco, the first woman expressed dissatisfaction with the size of the flutes. She informed me that she also had experience working in the hospitality industry and felt I had overcharged them. She suggested using Pinot Noir glasses instead of our standard flutes for serving bubbles, but I politely declined, explaining that it was our standard pour for serving bubbles. Despite their initial

dissatisfaction, they eventually changed their minds. I told them that, since it was her friend's birthday, I would give them the Prosecco as a complimentary gesture and hoped they would enjoy their celebration. Somehow, I could not connect with them. Later, my colleague returned from the kitchen to serve them the pieces of bite-sized savoury items, and we excused ourselves, encouraging them to enjoy their high tea. I consistently checked on their table to ensure they felt well looked after during the service.

When I cleared their table, the celebrant's friend pointed out a discrepancy in the number of thin kumara chips meant as a garnish on the savoury dish; one piece had three, while the other only had one. I assured the guest I would bring an extra serving. I had an extra savoury item she wanted from a high tea stand due to a no-show high tea guest. When I returned with the additional dish, she voiced her dissatisfaction with the sandwiches, claiming they were soggy. I explained that I could only offer a different sandwich since the *garde manger* chefs had already left for the day. I then asked my colleague to speak with the in-room dining kitchen chef about preparing a new sandwich for the guest. After delivering the sandwiches, she again raised an issue, this time with the scones, which she cut in half to show that a portion inside needed to be fully baked. At this point, she vented her frustrations to me, expressing that her friend's birthday celebration had been ruined. I paid close attention as she began recounting her experience. She mentioned that the price of the high tea was exorbitant, the kumara chip garnishes were soggy, and the sandwiches I gave them were dry, leaving her and her friend unhappy.

Uncertain how to respond, I empathised with her dissatisfaction and sincerely asked if there was anything I could do to help improve her experience. I politely encouraged them to continue enjoying their birthday celebration, offering another glass of Prosecco, which they declined. Her friend remained silent throughout the interaction. As I couldn't do much to please them, I politely excused myself to attend to our other guests and asked them to let me know if they needed anything.

Shortly after, she called me, asked for their cheques, and mentioned they would use their hotel membership to apply the discount to their payment. I requested their membership number, but she didn't have it. Her friend then offered to provide her own membership number. Once I had the number, I went to the counter and processed their cheques with the discounts applied. I went back to let them know that I had already applied the fifteen percent discount to their bill, and they could settle their payment whenever they were ready.

When I explained, the woman asked,

*“We have a voucher; why do we need to pay? Did you not check?”*

I was confused, so I went to verify their actual booking this time. Indeed, they did not need to pay because they had a pre-paid high tea voucher. I was puzzled as to why they would request a discount for a pre-paid high tea. Feeling utterly bewildered, I remained composed and replied, *“Okay, no payment is needed.”*

Ironically, my calmness only seemed to annoy her further. She exclaimed,

*“This is ridiculous. You ruined everything—my friend’s birthday and our celebration!”*

I could only stare at her, feeling more bewildered than emotionally impacted. All I saw was that she was trying hard, internalising her anger to make me feel guilty for disappointing her with their experience. I responded,

*“Okay.”*

However, once again, my calm demeanour seemed to intensify her frustration. She eventually stood up, repeating three more times that I had ruined their experience before leaving. While part of me anticipated her reaction, my mind felt clouded. I listened closely but struggled to fully process her words. Despite her verbal outburst, I felt strangely insulated from its impact as she walked away. I could only manage a quiet ‘Okay’ as she reiterated her grievances before departing.

I watched them leave, experiencing a strange sense of detachment. Suddenly, a thought in my head said, *“Okay, I am looking forward to reading your complaint.”* However, a louder inner voice countered, *“That’s it, bitch, leave...”* which made me grin.

#### *4.11.2 My Litmus Test of Otherness - Incident Number Two*

Months passed, and during winter, I faced another challenging experience that tested my patience as a host. Around 8 p.m., four mature Kiwi gentlemen arrived for drinks during one of my dinner shifts. It was a quiet evening with only a few occupied tables. The gentlemen held a business meeting at tables 10, 11, and 12 while ordering drinks. Later, they were joined by an older Indian businessman and his two younger Indian escorts. The situation made it apparent that they were engaged in serious business discussions. My colleague informed me that the three new guests had ordered three shots of Rémy Martin XO; unfortunately, we had run out. My colleague asked me to see them and suggest a different XO cognac, which I did. As I made

my way to their table, I overheard the older man expressing his dissatisfaction with the group of four men, saying,

*“Listen, you always have excuses, but you do not seem to address the issues raised in any of the feedback. I am not happy with how you handle these matters.”*

The other four men seemed to listen quietly without contributing to the conversation. I politely excused myself to inform them that we were out of Rémy Martin XO. The older gentleman interrupted me and asked,

*“Who are you talking to?”*

I realised the order was for the older man sitting across from the large, three-part joined table from me. Moving closer, I explained,

*“We ran out of Rémy Martin XO. Could we serve Hennessy instead?”* which he accepted.

However, we were also out of the Hennessy XO, with only two shots left to offer. When I returned to inform him, he started to show indifference and insisted,

*“No, I want three shots of XO.”*

I reassessed the situation and said,

*“Let me check if I can do anything.”*

Unfortunately, after thoroughly inspecting our back liquor storage, I returned empty-handed. I apologised to him and explained that I had nothing else in stock. The older gentleman responded without hesitation,

*“It is not our concern. We only require the XO.”*

I clarified,

*“I do have XO, but it’s insufficient for three shots.”*

The elderly gentleman insisted,

*“No, I need three servings of the XO.”* Then he added, *“If you cannot provide three shots of XO, you will have to pay for our drinks.”*

I asked,

*“How is that fair?”* to which he replied,

*“That is not my concern. Just go buy the XO we want from the dairy in the corner.”*

At this point, I had closely observed the four men who had arrived earlier. They seemed to find the situation amusing rather than apologetic or sympathetic. I realised the older man was trying to impress his four Kiwi business partners by showing off his assertive personality.

I told him,

*“That is not how it works here.”*

He shot back,

*“You can make it happen.”*

I said,

*“I will not”,* and then explained, *“If you really want the XO, I can give you two servings and offer a different cognac to the third person. Take it or leave it.”*

The elderly man replied,

*“Ask him.”*

I approached and asked the third person,

*“What would you like?”*

At that moment, one of the four Kiwi gentlemen chimed in,

*“This guy is something”,* prompting laughter from all four.

I asked again,

*“What would you like?”*

The younger man, acting as the older man’s security escort, awkwardly repeated his employer’s request for the XO. I told them,

*“I can’t assist any longer; I need to return to other tasks.”* I then asked the third individual, *“Tell me once more, do you want me to serve the three drinks—yes or no?”*

After he nodded in agreement on behalf of the group, I quickly went to the bar to prepare the drinks myself to speed up service.

When I returned to serve the drinks, the younger man asked again,

*“Are these the three XO?”* I remained silent. He said, *“We will not pay for these if you do not provide the XO.”*

I walked away from their table and stood at the counter. About an hour later, I noticed the older man's party preparing to leave. One of the younger men waved at me, signalling that they were leaving. The older adult just walked out, showing no concern for paying. Shortly after, two other gentlemen from the group also left.

The last two men approached the counter to settle their bill. They apologised for their older business partner's behaviour and offered to pay for the cognacs. They mentioned that the older gentleman was affluent and had recently purchased a franchise from them. One of them openly admitted that they had a misunderstanding with him because of miscommunication.

After the guests left, I cleared their table and noticed that the two young men had hardly touched their drinks while the older man's glass remained untouched. I couldn't shake the feeling that I had completely embarrassed him in front of his partners. A wave of guilt washed over me as a voice in my head sighed,

*"Sorry, old man, but you really shouldn't be so rude."*

Another inner voice chimed in,

*"He will never be clever enough. You aren't a superstar in this lounge just for nothing."*

#### 4.12 The Big Story of My Theory of Alterity in Hospitality

I had the privilege of hosting Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, along with her sister and mother, during our high tea service. Upon their arrival, I was in the back area gathering some supplies for the bar. As I returned, I noticed the three women standing at their designated table. I was pleasantly surprised when Ms Ardern looked and smiled in my direction, giving me the impression that she knew I was in charge of their high tea that day. I greeted them with a smile, pulled out their chairs, and seated them. After they had settled, I explained the details of our high tea service. The three ladies ordered a glass of Cinzano Prosecco, which I poured into their flutes before placing their high tea stands on the table. After ensuring they were comfortable, I conveyed my wish for them to have a pleasant experience and encouraged them to reach out immediately if they required assistance. I felt honoured to serve one of the most impactful figures during the global pandemic. I also checked on the other high tea and à la carte guests. I later went back to Ms Ardern's table to ensure they were satisfied, and they confirmed it positively. I asked if there was anything I could offer them that they liked, but they informed me that they were already quite full and needed more time to finish the remainder of their high tea.

Shortly after, the Prime Minister inquired about taking her leftovers home, so I offered to pack them for her. As I was sorting through the box, I accidentally dropped the small apple tarte tatin, ruining its fragile form. I chose to leave the small piece of pastry on the plate rather than putting it in the box. After that, I took the box to her and cleared their table, giving them plenty of clean space. As I came back to remove the last of the dishes from their table and offered them additional drinks, she smiled, raised her hand, and remarked,

*“I just remembered I still have the apple tarte. Could I also have that, as my daughter loves apple tarte?”*

I returned her smile and replied,

*“Certainly, ma’am.”*

Since they did not require more drinks, I collected their empty dishes, placed them on my tray, and headed to the back area. After stacking the empty dishes on the dish station, I headed to the kitchen to speak with the head pastry chef.

*“Chef, Jacinda loved the apple tarte tatin. I need three more for her. Could you expedite the process? I will be back shortly to collect them. Thank you,”* I said.

I returned to the back fridge, retrieved a specially prepared plate for the Prime Minister, and returned to her table. I placed the plate with French petit fours before her and said,

*“Ms. Ardern, we have a little surprise for you.”*

A plate featuring a message in chocolate conveyed our appreciation for her contributions to the nation. She smiled, thanked us, and even took a photo of her cake. After excusing myself, I welcomed the team leader for the dinner period at the bar as he started his shift. I returned to the pastry kitchen, grabbed the apple tarte tatin, packed it into a box, and made my way back to the Prime Minister. I handed her the box and said,

*“Ma’am, your daughter will be delighted to get three of these, too.”*

She smiled once more and thanked me. I replied,

*“It was my pleasure,”* and then left them to enjoy the rest of their time before they departed.

I made a conscious effort to engage with all the guests in the lounge, ensuring they felt as valued as our VIPs. The evening went smoothly, and importantly, every guest left happy. As the Prime Minister, her sister, and her mother were about to leave, she approached the bar,

causing me to pause and acknowledge her, prepared to help if she needed assistance. She went to the counter to settle the bill for their Prosecco, which my colleague informed her was already covered. Grateful, she thanked my colleague, approached me, shook my hand, and said,

*“Thank you so much. You are amazing.”*

After her initial visit, Prime Minister Ardern returned to the Chandelier Lounge twice in the following weeks. During her second visit, I discreetly offered a glass of water at her table, where she was meeting a friend. She warmly greeted me when she acknowledged me, saying, *“Hello, my friend,”* to which I replied,

*“It’s a pleasure to see you again, ma’am. Please let us know if you need anything.”*

*She nodded and smiled.*

Ms Ardern arrived with her small group during her third and final visit while I was on shift, which occurred the following month. I welcomed them and led them to the spacious table facing the bar. I looked at her, and she smiled as she said,

*“We’re back,”* I replied,

*“It’s always a pleasure to have you in the lounge.”*

Once they were seated, I offered them glasses of water and handed out some menus. Noticing they were engaged in a delicate conversation, I decided to give them a moment before taking their drink order. As I got busy taking orders at another table, my colleague had already gathered their coffee requests. That morning, we also had some guests who enjoyed coffee and ordered à la carte from the menu.

As I conducted my meal check at each table, I glanced over at the Prime Minister’s table to ensure everyone had what they needed and that their water glasses were topped off. Next to them, a young family was enjoying their lunch. The mother struggled to eat as her little boy kept playing and interrupting her. I spoke to the boy, asked for his name, and helped him settle down, allowing his mother to enjoy her meal. I also picked up a napkin that had fallen from their table onto the floor.

I also noticed that a gentleman was approaching the cashier to pay. I quickly took a fresh napkin from our side station and returned to replace the dirty one with a clean napkin, placing it on his mother’s lap. I spoke to the little boy, saying,

*“Let Mama eat, okay?”*

I greeted the gentleman, asking how he was and about his drink. He smiled and said, “*Great,*” then settled his bill.

As the Prime Minister’s party started to wind down and was set to leave, I positioned myself behind the bar, ready to help anyone from their group who came to settle the bill. It was not long before Ms Ardern herself approached the counter.

I smiled at the Prime Minister as she approached the counter to pay for their coffee. She graciously thanked me, saying,

“*Thanks for looking after us.*”

I replied,

“*It was truly my pleasure.*”

That was the last brief moment I spent with her in the Chandelier Lounge. Yet, her simple words lingered and prompted me to reflect on their significance. Caring for others goes beyond mere obligation; it demonstrates my genuine concern for our guests and stirs profound emotional responses within me. I realised that some of the most heartfelt expressions of gratitude I receive from departing guests are “Thank you for looking after us” and “Thanks for your hospitality.” These emphasise the deeply relational and emotionally rich nature of these interactions. It resonates strongly, as anything that evokes my positive feelings enhances my overall well-being.

#### 4.13 Your Ego, My Id

Pleasing guests in the lounge is relatively simple. However, my pursuit always focuses on authentic emotions. Genuine experiences are rare, much like truffles, and just as prized truffles deliver unique joy, authentic experiences offer profound emotional fulfilment. Genuine emotions resemble deep wells; the deeper you delve, the richer your emotional journey becomes. While these experiences are often the most challenging, time-consuming, and exhausting, they never leave you drained—instead, they consistently inspire you. This inspiration drives my desire to connect deeply with others. I strive to offer emotional satisfaction, as it nourishes my ego and enriches my well-being.

One notable encounter was with John. He is an elderly Australian man in his early 70s who visits me whenever he comes to Auckland, where he exclusively stays at our hotel. John visits

Auckland for regular medical appointments at Auckland Hospital. When I first smiled at him in the Chandelier Lounge, he just stared back, waiting to be seated. This made him seem like a demanding guest. After he was seated, I handed him the menu and a glass of water. He was reserved yet precise, providing instructions only once.

John moved items he did not need into the far corner of his table and left me with the initiative to read what was on his mind. After a while, when I returned to take his order, he asked for the fish and chips and ordered the Alchemist mocktail. He also requested a glass of water with ice and lemon, an extra glass of ice, and an extra slice of lemon on the side. So, he shoved the glass of water I brought earlier to the corner of his table. I learnt his name when I checked the room number he provided. When I returned to deliver his drink, I began addressing him by name and set up his dinner table.

It was a bustling evening, and we were nearly fully booked, so there was a wait for the food. As I do with every table, I informed John about the wait and inquired if he would like some pretzels as a snack while waiting. He nodded. I gave him some pretzels in a small bar snack dish, but he remained silent, again giving me the impression that he was a reserved guest. When I noticed that he was enjoying the pretzels and that his dish was empty, I returned with more pretzels and said,

*"Have some more, John."* I reassured him, *"Your meal will be ready soon, all right?"*  
He nodded.

Later, the kitchen called to tell us his food was ready. I served him his fish and chips and asked if there was anything else I could get for him. He responded,

*"I'm good."*

I suggested another drink, but he declined, indicating that he was content. I noticed that there was no ice in his glass, as it had mostly melted. I took the glass with me, returned with a fresh glass filled with ice cubes, and refilled his water. I wished him an enjoyable dinner and then left. As I inquired about his meal, he nodded in response, indicating everything was fine. When he finished, he asked for the check. After I presented it and he signed it, I pulled out his chair to assist him. As he stood up, I thanked him and walked with him towards the stairs, wishing him a pleasant evening. He thanked me and left.

The following evening, he returned. I greeted him with a broad smile and said,

*"Welcome back, John. I'm delighted to see you again."*

Even though his face beamed with joy, he remained quiet. That evening was the same as the previous night, as he ordered the same meal and drink. When I set up his table, I had already brought him a glass with ice and a slice of lemon, a glass of extra ice and extra slices of lemon on the side, and this time, I gave a more generous portion of pretzels. He beamed and nodded. The service was quicker this time, so he finished his dinner faster. When he requested the check, I smiled widely and said,

*"I hope you enjoyed everything, John."*

He beamed and replied,

*"Yes."*

As he left, I thanked him, saying,

*"Thank you, John. Have a pleasant evening."*

On the third evening, he returned for dinner. John was already smiling at me before I noticed him. I greeted him with a broad smile and said,

*"Welcome back, sir. How are you today?"*

He responded,

*"I'm good. Thank you."*

Before seating him, while pulling out his chair, I asked,

*"Are you having the fish and chips again this evening, John?"*

He replied,

*"Yes, I am."*

*"The same drink?"* I asked.

He said,

*"Yes,"*

I replied,

*"Okay."*

After he had his meal, he asked to get his check a bit earlier. When he signed it, I walked with him to the counter. I said,

*"Thank you, John. Have a pleasant evening, okay?"*

He replied,

*"This night is my last stay."*

I inquired,

*"Where's home?"*

He responded,

*“I am from Australia,”*

I replied,

*“I see. Have a safe trip back home. I hope you enjoyed your stay.”*

He said,

*“Yes, I did,”*

I replied,

*“I am glad to hear that. Thank you, and goodnight, John,”* I reached out for a handshake, and he graciously accepted my gesture.

*“It was a pleasure serving you,”* I expressed.

*“Thank you for your hospitality,”* he replied.

I was overwhelmed with emotion as the authenticity of our conversation deeply touched me. The following month, John returned for his regular medical appointment at Auckland Hospital. After checking in at the reception, already past six in the evening, he stopped by the lounge, greeted me with a smile, and said,

*“I am back.”*

Returning his smile, I responded,

*“I am pleased to see you again.”*

He mentioned,

*“I will be back right after I drop off my things and have dinner.”*

I assured him,

*“Okay, I will reserve your table.”*

*“I will see you soon,”* he said before heading up.

When he reappeared, he was unchanged. I was finishing up with another guest when he arrived. He waited patiently as I escorted him to his seat, where he ordered his usual meal and drink.

Every time I served a meal at his table, I made sure to check in and confirm that everything met his expectations.

He mentioned that he would only be staying for two nights this time.

Unfortunately, I did not see him the following night as I was off duty. The subsequent encounter was during my high tea shift as I prepared to open the bar. He noticed me in the bar as he was heading to reception to check out and stopped by to say hello. He mentioned that he had an

appointment at the hospital and could not stay for coffee. I offered to accompany him to reception, as I had some spare time. I was genuinely pleased to see him again before his departure and bid him farewell. I said,

*“I hope everything goes well today, John. Have a safe trip back to Australia.”*

As I was about to return to the lounge, he said,

*“Sorry, but I didn’t ask. What is your name?”*

I smiled and replied,

*“My name is Kirk.”*

He said,

*“Thanks for looking after me, Kirk. I appreciate your hospitality.”*

I responded,

*“It is my pleasure, John.”*

I then excused myself and headed back to my station. Upon returning to the lounge, I felt high-spirited, knowing I had made a new friend.

#### 4.14 My Deep Contemplation of Alterity

My view of Otherness centres on actively enhancing the emotional well-being of others. This involvement truly brings me fulfilment and elevates my self-esteem. The happiness I gain from our collaborative and synergistic connection, grounded in our shared emotional experiences, uplifts my spirits, strengthens my emotional health, and contributes to my overall mental well-being. Nurturing the unique aspects of my mind is crucial for my psychological health, aligning with the insights shared by Mill (1979) and Husserl (1991) regarding these entities that exist in our consciousness. These entities manifest through my analytical, reasoned, focused, and linear thoughts, which Husserl refers to as the alter ego. From my experiences, I recognise that my alter egos are a constant presence in my inner thoughts, and there is only so much I can do to manage them. My alter egos can either weaken or strengthen my motivation, and I cannot suppress or control how they express themselves. Their opinions are significant, as they directly influence my emotions, which play a crucial role in shaping my motivation.

In the same way, my internal emotions play a vital role in shaping how I perceive the world. When immersed in positive feelings, my logical and analytical thoughts naturally gravitate towards open-mindedness, seeking inspiration and beauty in all aspects of my surroundings. Conversely, when confronted with negative thoughts, my rational mind compels me to explore

uncomfortable truths, enabling me to explore both my intuitive and analytical tendencies until every truth is unveiled. This introspective process can have a significant impact, momentarily diverting my attention from urgent matters, causing mental unrest, disrupting my sleep, and affecting my overall well-being, factors crucial for maintaining focus at work.

However, I possess a strong drive for excellence, fuelled by my ability to learn, adapt, and rapidly master new skills. I attribute this to my mental sharpness, which encompasses focus, logical reasoning, analytical capabilities, and critical thinking skills (Hazell, 2009). These conscious mental abilities that Husserl describes as the alter egos or the “Other” that form the phenomenology of consciousness thrive abundantly and uncontrollably within my mind, presenting both advantages and disadvantages. They serve as a wellspring of creative thinking when my mind is positive, allowing me to feel psychologically sound and fostering happiness.

They also have downsides, however, as they can be easily provoked. All these other sentient beings (Mill, 1979) create havoc in my mind, are critical, and always have something to say simultaneously in every situation. I have alter egos that can disrupt or dampen my motivation because they become furious when I am upset or embarrassed. They are a formidable force within my inner thoughts, and I can only do so much to calm them when they are angry. When upset, they speak loudly in discussions at the back of my mind. These entities are incredibly astute when conversing. They analyse past and future events, using intelligent reasoning to understand what is happening. Their clever reasoning and keen judgment sway my emotions and disturb me. They are dominant and do not want to feel aggrieved. I become critical, moody, and unhappy because they keep me awake all night with their incessant talking, leaving me emotionally challenged, psychologically distressed, and physically exhausted, ultimately leading to biological stress. This has been the vicious cycle of my unhappiness. My alter egos become irate when I am unhappy, and I struggle to rein them in. Thus, the revealed insights into the tipping flute phenomenon have led to a significant discovery that has profoundly transformed my perspective on life.

#### 4.15 My Deep Insight into the Event of July 23, 2021

The pivotal tipping flute incident prompted a personal revelation that brought profound realisations and subsequent changes. This event led to deep introspection and a series of insightful revelations. Initially, I believed it was possible to understand others’ emotions as I experienced them from our guests, who managed to mitigate what could have been my most

unforgettable and distressing career experience. This experience was perceived through a unique awareness, leading me to reflect further on the phenomenon. I realised how those individuals had subdued my turbulent state of mind simply by understanding and valuing me, calming the more unruly aspects of my consciousness—the other sentient beings within my thoughts. Moreover, while these Others respond solely within the boundaries of my thoughts, I also acknowledge that they have their own minds and emotions. However, I believe they can be persuaded just like me, as I come from what is seen as a happy culture. If they share traits with me, they should also be forgiving, reflecting the forgiving nature of my upbringing in this presumably happy culture. At the very least, my alter egos should share this cultural inclination; our Filipino core value of self, deeply rooted in our interconnectedness with others, is inherently forgiving as we nurture joyful relationships continuously. Therefore, even when these internal thoughts become agitated, they can be easily appeased because they embody a forgiving culture due to their inherent nature.

To put this into context, based on my observations as a Filipino, I have consistently noticed the generally cheerful disposition of our people. This observation is backed by a study conducted by Porio and See (2017), which found that 72% of Filipinos reported being reasonably happy. This is a significant finding that sheds light on Filipino cultural disposition. Notably, Mindanao, the second-largest and most significant island in the Philippines (and my birthplace), reported the highest level of happiness in the country at 76%. These findings are consistent with the 2016 Social Weather Stations survey (Gonzales, 2017). Even amid the global pandemic in 2019-2020, the Gallup Global Emotions Report ranked the Philippines among the countries with the highest positive experiences in recent years (Gallup, 2021, 2022, 2023). This highlights the unique resilience and happiness of the Filipino people. Filipinos are culturally inclined to maintain a positive and joyful outlook, even in challenging circumstances. Clearly, my alter egos and I must also have this distinctive cultural awareness and sensitivity. This understanding has led me to my second theory, which suggests that these inner voices are hypersensitive and emotional. I recognise that their delicate emotions can be easily calmed, a realisation that became clear during one of the most challenging and awkward moments of my career, when I accidentally spilt the flutes while serving two consecutive tables during a busy high tea service.

When I accidentally tipped the drinks on the guests, these inner personas in my mind began to panic, expressing their dismay loudly as they, like me, felt thoroughly embarrassed. At the first table, one voice exclaimed,

*“Oh my God, what have you done???”*

At the second table, another voice yelled,

*“Again???”*

These internal forces can often be quite harsh and unforgiving, which can be annoying. However, I have discovered that they can be tempered. When the guests at both tables displayed genuine understanding and compassion towards me, which Stein (1917) refers to as empathy of intentionality, it subdued these inner voices and silenced them within my mind. Once these inner entities were calmed, they fell silent, with nothing more to discuss within my thoughts.

Though initially harsh, I understand that these inner voices can show forgiveness when genuinely understood and valued. Therefore, when I silenced these conflicting thoughts within myself, it provided a sense of relief, allowing me to focus on my current tasks and dismiss the incident as an embarrassing but honest mistake that did not need to weigh heavily on my mind.

This brings me to my second theory: that genuine appreciation can calm these conflicting thoughts, which in turn led to my third critical theory: the belief that expressing genuine respect can ease these thoughts and help me manage their critical and rational nature. Expanding on this, I speculate that if others can understand someone’s emotions, it must be through a unique dimension where we perceive our impressions, communicate our intentions, and, in turn, comprehend our feelings. It is possible to handle my intense thoughts about a situation, similar to how others can affect our emotions through their perceptions. Considering this, I arrive at two hypotheses for my fourth theory. First, I must respect my thoughts to ease my intense emotions. However, this kind of respect must stem from genuine feelings. Only genuine feelings can subdue intense emotions. To calm them down, these conflicting thoughts must be genuinely cherished with sincere feelings. To alleviate these contradictory thoughts, they must be soothed through authentic appreciation and positive emotional experiences. However, the real challenge lies in how to achieve this. I cannot trick myself into internalising manufactured emotional experiences to genuinely deceive my own thoughts; they are too discerning to be manipulated.

Since I cannot independently generate these emotional experiences, I deliberately tap into the emotional experiences of others during service interactions by enhancing their emotional satisfaction. Consequently, I draw upon these interactions to shape my own emotional experiences. Essentially, I can only suppress these intense emotions by consistently fostering positive emotional experiences within myself. By esteeming myself and maintaining a positive mindset, I can gradually diminish the impact of these intense emotions lingering in my thoughts. Esteeming myself is crucial, as it allows for my self-care and self-respect. As the emotions subside, it becomes easier to maintain a happy attitude. Nevertheless, I can only do so much to cultivate my happiness and conquer the negative feelings that cloud my thoughts. In this respect, I draw esteem from the emotional experiences of others. How? By genuinely caring for our guests with attentiveness, I cultivate a specific relational connection that enables them to recognise the excellent hospitality they have received, thereby instilling a sense of personal importance and ultimately leading to emotional satisfaction. Their emotional satisfaction is what I seek to internalise, to counteract my inner intense thoughts. In turn, it becomes a mutually beneficial exchange. I offer esteem to others, and they, in turn, offer esteem to me, creating a cycle of reciprocity that contributes to my happiness. My genuine happiness as a host comes from embracing a positive demeanour and being authentic in my interactions with our guests.

#### 4.16 The Most Important Aspect of My Reflection on Happiness Related to Otherness

I derive immense satisfaction from my role at the Chandelier Lounge despite the emotional challenges inherent in customer service. My time there has been the most inspiring and motivating period of my professional journey. I have come to understand that hospitality is a demanding industry, but I did not fully grasp the extent of that demand until I joined as an intern at the Chandelier Lounge in 2021. I have witnessed many colleagues come and go, as the intense emotional demands of the lounge make it difficult for individuals to commit long-term. However, I have been an exception. While others labour with emotions, I thrive in this environment. My interactions with guests bring me a deep sense of joy and fulfilment that I have never experienced in a work setting. I have never felt so profoundly fulfilled or intrinsically motivated at work as I have due to these emotional encounters, where each of which is unique. This resonates with Maslow's (1943) concept of self-actualisation as outlined in his hierarchy of needs. According to his theory of human motivation, self-actualisation

represents the highest level in the hierarchy of needs. It signifies the realisation of one's potential, self-fulfilment, the pursuit of personal growth, and peak experiences. This level of need pertains to the complete actualisation of an individual's potential, which involves the desire to achieve all possible accomplishments and "become everything one is capable of becoming" (p. 64).

While Maslow (1943) acknowledged that genuine self-actualisation may be uncommon, he contended that individuals experience moments of self-actualisation, termed 'peak experiences', during transient occurrences. From the diverse and meaningful emotional connections that I establish with our guests, I encounter transient moments that allow me to have these peak experiences and convince me that I am indeed experiencing self-actualisation. These transient moments, arising from my emotional interactions, are numerous and varied, providing an ever-changing experience that prevents monotony in my daily guest interactions. I derive intrinsic motivation from anticipating new guest encounters daily, making this the only job I have ever had that never feels like work. I converse with our guests while my colleagues attend to other tasks during the shift. It is a meaningful trade-off, as my colleagues may not always be inclined to engage in extended guest interactions. As a result, I remain on the floor, dedicated to hosting our guests. I emphasise our positive reviews, which showcase my satisfaction during my shifts, creating an emotional experience for our guests and enhancing their satisfaction. The satisfaction of our guests, reflecting my fulfilment, directly impacts our Net Performance Score (NPS), an essential measure of guest happiness. The emotional experiences I offer, affecting our NPS ratings, arise from the joy I find in sharing these moments with our guests. My performance in this area is consistently strong.

I am undeniably a driving force behind guest satisfaction ratings at the Chandelier Lounge. When guests experience genuine happiness, their positivity uplifts both them and the entire service team. Serving delighted guests makes it much easier to be engaging, enthusiastic, and authentic, ultimately contributing to my colleagues and my overall satisfaction. My colleagues' contentment is equally vital as it directly influences their productivity. By inspiring, supporting, and encouraging my colleagues, I help them tackle their tasks with enthusiasm, enabling me to concentrate on the other important responsibilities I enjoy most. Everything flows seamlessly during my shift when we cheerfully carry out our functions. When both guests and colleagues are happy and the shift goes well, it brings me the greatest joy. This no-nonsense approach is the basis for effectively managing my shift and is why I am regarded as the most influential

and well-liked team member at the Chandelier Lounge; my inclusive philosophy is why many enjoy working with me. As a result, my colleagues' morale is intrinsically linked to my happiness. This is evident in their reactions when we encounter challenging guests. My co-workers tend to be overly protective when they perceive guests as being rude to me. Their reactions show that they sometimes take a more protective stance than necessary when we encounter disagreeable guests.

In the rare instances that involve frustrated or inebriated guests—whom my colleagues perceive as repulsive—they show heightened concern and strive to shield me from what they view as offensive behaviour. When confronted with rude guests, my colleagues often react by saying, *“That person is rude. Call security if they are rude to you again,”* or, *“Ask them to leave if they cannot be civil to you.”*

These reactions show my colleagues' genuine concern while working with me. I reassure them by saying,

*“It's okay. I'm in control of the situation. Don't worry.”*

However, deep down, I cannot help but find my colleagues' reactions somewhat amusing. In light of their responses, I find myself envisioning a figure in my mind, chuckling and stating, *“We cannot do that.”*

Then, suddenly, another inner voice arrogantly utters,

*“Don't worry. We ignored that jerk.”*

My ego thrives in this environment. Unlike those previous colleagues who left too soon and departed from the lounge, the Chandelier Lounge feeds my ego so much that it has become big and fat.

Moreover, my ego feels significantly uplifted, grounded, and empathetic due to the delightful emotional connections I build with our guests. The diverse and plentiful experiences in the Chandelier Lounge are so enjoyable that it genuinely feels like I am personally hosting every visitor in my own home. Whether I am navigating a quiet day shift or managing a bustling evening, I constantly strive to find new ways to engage with our guests. Often, during peak times, I skilfully evaluate the needs of our guests at each table. For instance, when attending to the à la carte guests at table 12, part of my focus is already poised to serenade the grandmother turning 78 at the large high tea group celebrating her birthday at table 2, making her feel special.

After that, I intend to quickly stop by for a high-five with the one-year-old boy savouring his steamed broccoli at table 6 and then attempt to elicit a smile from the infant in the crib with her parents at table 5 before sharing some wicked jokes with a mixed group of adults in my age range at table 7, who are enjoying various wines, cocktails, and spirits. When I think I have done enough, my attention also shifts to our guests at other tables, knowing there is even more I can do to enhance their emotional experiences.

These interactions ignite my enthusiasm, inspiration, and motivation. My mind races, and I experience a deep sense of drive. I often reflect, “*These are extraordinary moments,*” hinting at numerous fulfilling experiences by the end of my shift. Nevertheless, the intensity of these emotional exchanges can be exhausting, leaving me physically depleted at the end of my workday.

#### 4.17 The Difficulties I Encountered in Telling My Story of Alterity for My Dissertation Stemming from My Experiences of Otherness.

My current employment situation uniquely challenges my extracurricular pursuits, particularly my academic endeavours. Despite the consistently exciting experiences at the Chandelier Lounge, I have encountered a potential difficulty in maintaining focus while writing about my autoethnography on alterity. My interactions with our guests have fostered strong bonds with our long-term VIP hotel patrons, regular guests, and visiting tourists, leading to spontaneous emotional exchanges. These high levels of social interaction, however, have left me physically drained, often impeding my ability to concentrate on writing my university assignments. Following a shift, I find myself too mentally exhausted to engage in dissertation writing, and attempts to force inspiration late at night often prove unproductive. Interestingly, the other sentient beings that used to occupy my inner thoughts are no longer as prominent. I can only assume they are exhausted and emotionally spent from my interactions with guests in the Chandelier Lounge. Nevertheless, I am grateful that despite my exhaustion, I can achieve deep sleep as my mind finds peace at night. However, this has led me to procrastinate when I require time to stimulate my creative and critical thinking. Although I recognise my tendency to procrastinate when inspiration is scarce, I find comfort in producing quality work when I am well-rested. This cycle of exhaustion and rejuvenation ultimately contributes to my ability to generate profound and astute ideas.

Furthermore, I can cultivate a deeply joyful mindset when my mind is fully at rest. Balancing my academic studies and a full-time job is demanding. However, I wholeheartedly embrace the challenge with contentment. Despite the difficulties I face with my dissertation, the joy I find in my career makes it all worthwhile. Working serves as a welcome break from the intense mental efforts that my dissertation requires. It would be much more taxing if I were stressed at work while grappling with my dissertation, as that combination would only lead to severe mental exhaustion. Additionally, my ability to get restful, rejuvenating sleep positively influences my physical well-being. Kudrnáčová and Kudrnáč (2023) suggest that sleep is a crucial predictor of well-being, and a longer average sleep duration is associated with greater life satisfaction. My role as a happy host is firmly rooted in my psychological calmness, which allows me to enjoy restorative sleep and maintain my physical health. This state of psychological and physiological well-being significantly impacts my emotional stability and happiness. My overall well-being, encompassing physiological, psychological, and emotional aspects, culminates in a greater sense of contentment. Therefore, my contentment as a happy host results from my biological well-being, leading to elevated life satisfaction. I can only embody a positive perspective on life by achieving greater life satisfaction. Indeed, my physical health is vital, as it directly impacts my mental and emotional well-being, which are all closely linked to my happiness. Hence, I attribute my profound happiness to my psychological and emotional health, which contributes to my overall well-being and enables my life to adopt a deeply happy and resilient disposition.

#### 4.18 How Do I Conclude My Personal Story of Alterity

As I bring my narrative to a close, I am reminded of Frank's (1991) approach; he deliberately chose not to provide a definitive conclusion to embrace the performative nature of storytelling in his autoethnographic work. Like Frank, I have also resisted the urge to present a conclusive interpretation of my narrative. According to him, narratives invite various interpretations. My story delves into the core of my identity as a gracious host, intricately intertwined with my journey of self-discovery. This journey, encompassing my physical, emotional, and mental well-being, has laid the foundation for a positive perspective and a profound sense of fulfilment. My journey as an enthusiastic host began with my internship at the Chandelier Lounge on 23 July 2021, which marked a pivotal moment in my quest to understand my role. Taking on this role led to a significant realisation about the essence of Otherness. The experiences of that day revealed personal insights that have greatly influenced my perspective

on life. This encounter introduced me to Stein's (1917) concept of empathy—a unique and purposeful act involving immersion in the experiences of others. The intentional act of empathising aligns with my understanding of Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness, enabling me to perceive and fulfil other people's emotions (Husserl, 1931). Through my research and deliberate interpretative analysis of my lived experience as a happy host, I have linked this experience with the Filipino core value of 'pakikipagkapwa', reflecting a sense of 'self for others'. This cultural value embodies a sense of fellowship and relationality, resonating with Levinas's (1981) concept of exterior alterity within hospitality, as discussed in the literature review. My understanding of pakikipagkapwa inspires me to offer sincere hospitality, deepening my appreciation of the concept of alterity. Embracing the role of a joyful host, I am committed to engaging in authentic, intentional, and empathetic actions to provide guests with emotional fulfilment, allowing me to share a similarly unique experience. My Dasein, defined by my identity as a joyful host and my unique situatedness—an experience of existing in the world linked to Otherness—forms the central theme I interpret in my narrative.

Sparkes (2000) presented a compelling argument that is pivotal to concluding my narrative. He contends that the theories he incorporated into his autoethnographic sections, which influenced his interpretation of the texts, were intended to foster development rather than exert control over the narrative. Sparkes maintained that he intentionally left gaps for readers to fill as they wished. His perspective was influenced by Frank (1991), who authored an autoethnography/self-narrative that profoundly resonated with and moved others. According to Frank, he wanted his writing to be experienced as if one were touching letters, folding, unfolding, and responding to them. He emphasised the importance of 'talking back'—finding one's experiences in someone else's story. This suggests that while we each tell our own stories, others can interweave their lives with ours and adapt our narratives to suit their situations, thus fostering a dialogue between us. Frank argued that our experiences are not templates for what others should expect or experience; each of us must navigate our own path. However, in shaping and sharing our narratives, "we do not necessarily have to be alone" (Frank, 1991, p. 5).

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I will summarise the findings of the interpretative phenomenological analysis and the autoethnographic investigation of my experiences as a joyful host. I will provide a clear overview of my interpretations of the research and its limitations. Finally, I will discuss the broader implications of this study and provide recommendations for future research.

### 5.2 Summary of Interpretations

My research is deeply personal and centred on achieving intrinsic happiness by serving as a host at the Chandelier Lounge. This pursuit draws inspiration from Stein's idea of intentional empathy, referred to as alterity (Stein, 1917). My encounter with Stein's notion of deliberate empathy enriched my understanding of Otherness, a key element of my naturally joyful demeanour as a host. I have interpreted Stein's intentional empathy using a phenomenological approach to a critical event I refer to as 'the phenomenology of the tipping flute,' which occurred on 23 July 2021. This event triggered a transformative self-discovery, leading me to apply Heidegger's interpretive analysis and propose a research study informed by my historical background, socio-cultural context, and scholarly literature, which clarifies the concepts, theories, and philosophies surrounding Otherness as the foundational aspect of the happy host's phenomenology (Heidegger, 1996). Heidegger's methodology includes a descriptive, interpretive, and analytical approach to studying a phenomenon. I initiated this research by exploring Mill's theory on *The Problem of Other Minds* (Mill, 1979). As discussed, this concept is crucial for grasping the nature of the Other, especially in its connection to human emotions. I developed a coherent framework informed by Husserl's (1991) phenomenology of consciousness and his concept of the alter ego to gain a deeper understanding of Otherness. Drawing from Husserl's phenomenological philosophy, I also explored Heidegger's concept of Dasein, extending my inquiry beyond the alter ego alone. Instead, I scrutinised the relativity of my experiences that shaped my understanding of happiness, aiming to elucidate Heidegger's notion of Dasein as it pertains to an individual within a specific and unique context.

Furthermore, I have delved into Levinas' concept of ethics, focusing on understanding alterity as hospitality and expanding the notion of the self to include others. Building on Levinas' ethical ideas (Levinas, 1981), I have demonstrated how alterity extends hospitality to others, ultimately providing emotional fulfilment for our guests. Offering emotionally fulfilling experiences to guests and experiencing those emotional encounters in my unique way align with Derrida's concept of self-interruption, which involves an act of substitution in hospitality (Derrida, 2000). However, my understanding of happiness is shaped by a complex interplay of social and cultural influences, as well as the historical context of my experiences. I view my role as a host through the lens of Dasein, finding immense pleasure in providing hospitality. My thoughtful approach to serving our hotel guests involves careful analysis of its deeper significance. I appreciate and feel supported by our organisation, and this has instilled a strong sense of value in me. This support also encompasses the emotional fulfilment I derive from interactions in the Chandelier Lounge, which is vital in enhancing my self-worth, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Additionally, it supports my psychological and emotional well-being, allowing me to maintain a healthy biological state, which is crucial for finding contentment and sustaining a positive outlook on life. My experience as a happy host embodies an intrinsic phenomenon that resembles Maslow's (1943) theory of self-actualisation, triggered by an event on July 23, 2021, which led to self-discovery through the phenomenon of Otherness.

### 5.3 The Constraints of this Study

This study lays a strong foundation by leveraging the strengths of IPA as a research method. Although IPA is advantageous for this study due to its researcher-friendly characteristics, it is essential to recognise its limitations.

1. The IPA methodology is based on prolonged engagement with individually lived experiences, emphasising its commitment to understanding the human experience, which necessitates a significant amount of time. This research has practical implications for comprehending human cognition and behaviour, requiring deep introspection that cannot be achieved through a short research process. The interpretative phenomenological analysis of the 'Phenomenology of the Happy Host' indicates that a whole year is essential for a thorough analysis, ensuring quality research outcomes. This timeline is workable, considering the researcher serves as both the investigator and the only participant in this study.

2. The IPA is a rigorous qualitative research approach that explores how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences. It centres on the subjective meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences and is not intended to be broadly generalisable due to its focus on specific cases.

#### 5.4 The Generalisable Implication of this Study

The Phenomenology of the Happy Host is an innovative study that addresses the persistent challenges in the hospitality sector, particularly in frontline roles such as food and beverage service. This research provides valuable insights into the experiences of forefront hospitality workers, many of whom struggle to view the industry as a viable long-term career due to the substantial emotional labour it demands. This study demonstrates that it is possible to find genuine happiness in the hospitality sector, even amidst the industry's inherent challenges. The findings have the potential to impact the industry, fostering a more compassionate and joyful hospitality atmosphere. This autoethnographic research underscores the importance of authentic emotional well-being in enhancing employee motivation, efficiency, productivity, and the stability of workplace relationships, particularly in the hospitality sector. It has the potential to shape the industry by advocating for the development of more empathetic and joyful hospitality environments.

#### 5.5 Recommendations for Future Research Studies

This research reveals insights drawn from personal experiences that mirror broader societal truths for frontline workers in the hospitality sector, making it significant for future studies. The study suggests the further exploration of two critical initiatives to foster positive changes in the hospitality industry, which can inspire a hopeful future in this field.

1. This study examines empathy through the lens of alterity, highlighting the deep connection between the welfare of others and our own well-being; the principle of mutual support has greatly influenced my personal development. Furthermore, the research underscores the crucial role of alterity, emphasising the need to prioritise both individual and collective welfare to foster a workplace where everyone can thrive and succeed. Additionally, alterity is a complex and multifaceted concept, and incorporating it into the principles of organisational leadership could unveil effective strategies for managing cultural diversity within organisational behaviour. This approach has the

potential to improve employee satisfaction and cultivate a positive workplace culture, offering a unique and meaningful solution, especially in addressing the ongoing turnover challenge in the hospitality industry, which is frequently connected to the emotionally demanding nature of this field.

2. This study advocates for the adoption of a phenomenological framework in future research within the hospitality sector, placing particular emphasis on interpretative phenomenological analysis to identify workers who are likely to excel in this field. It provides valuable insights into the blend of traits that contribute to successful careers in hospitality—an industry fundamentally rooted in personal relationships and authentic empathy. The research establishes a foundation for understanding Otherness and diversity, which is essential for confronting the negative perceptions that frequently depict frontline hospitality roles as undesirable. The findings carry significant implications for the hospitality industry, encouraging initiatives aimed at cultivating a more empathetic and welcoming environment for both employees and guests. These unique insights will illuminate and guide the sector, equipping professionals with the necessary understanding to foster a more compassionate and enjoyable future in hospitality.

This autoethnographic study highlights the genuine joy experienced by a hospitality frontline worker despite the emotional challenges of the industry. The ‘Phenomenology of the Happy Host’ provides insightful perspectives that can creatively influence the evolution of the hospitality sector. This perspective transitions from offering superficial solutions to tackling genuine issues within the industry, cultivating a hopeful view for its future. This outlook inspires us to reflect on our happiness, enabling authenticity in hospitality and adopting a positive philosophy that helps us navigate the challenges of the industry. It highlights a philosophy focused on alterity aimed at attaining true happiness by dedicating ourselves to hospitality.

The essence of hospitality lies in the authentic joy that comes from our commitment to this field. This happiness shapes our genuine approach to hospitality and fuels our dedication to the profession. Recognising the vital connection between our joy and commitment, the industry must implement strategies to uncover the intrinsic motivations behind the happiness that inspires our engagement in this work. Our joy must thrive within this profession, as our ability to deliver heartfelt hospitality is tied to it. Moreover, our sense of fulfilment must flourish in

this arena, as it would be impossible to sustain our dedication to this field without it. This viewpoint highlights a significant issue in the sector: elevated staff turnover resulting from a pervasive lack of joy. Many individuals struggle to find fulfilment in this industry, which prompts them to pursue more rewarding career paths elsewhere. To effectively address this issue, the sector must cultivate intrinsic methods that enhance genuine motivation and foster authentic happiness. Only by attaining a deep sense of fulfilment can we uncover a significant purpose that nurtures our commitment from within. Ultimately, our dedication—rooted in the joy of our genuine hospitality— provides an optimistic perspective for this challenging industry.

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