"COPING IN CRISIS: RESTAURANT WORKERS' ATTEMPTS AT DIGNITY MAINTENANCE
AMID COVID-19 LAYOFFS"

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Sociology—Doctor of Philosophy

2023

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic brought taken-for-granted activities to a halt—even those as seemingly routine as work. Suddenly, people were stripped of their identities as workers and were forced into periods of isolation, uncertainty, and increasing precarity. This dissertation explores the various ways that out-of-work restaurant workers navigated the COVID-19 pandemic through a series of coping mechanisms. By conducting open-ended, semi-structured interviews alongside a nation-wide survey, I am able to meaningfully understand the various coping mechanisms utilized and create a theoretical undergirding to understand who participates in these particular coping mechanisms, and under what conditions these coping mechanisms are undertaken.

Specifically, to highlight these possibilities, my research question explores: 1) How are restaurant workers impacted by the mass layoffs caused by COVID-19? And, 2) What, if any, are internalized and externalized strategies for maintaining dignity amidst this crisis—at the individual, relational, and collective levels? Based on my analyses, I identify three primary ways that people coped during their period of joblessness: education, organizing and philanthropy, and projects. I show how each one of these coping mechanisms is linked to an identity as a restaurant worker. Furthermore, I examine if and how each of these coping mechanisms contributes to an individuals' sense of personal dignity maintenance. This dissertation contributes not only to the discussion on the human desire to find or maintain dignity during periods of upheaval, but also sheds an important light on the issues that restaurant workers continue to face in an increasingly informalized economy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In late March of 2020, I found myself wondering why no one was participating in my research. This research aimed to understand how predominantly Latinx immigrants felt about and dealt with prejudice, harassment, and maltreatment in the restaurant industry. After reaching out to several hundred people and various immigrant organizations—I had only received a few responses indicating interest in participating. It was just a week after the stay-at-home order was instated in my home state of Michigan (the stay-at-home order was effective 16 March 2020 in Michigan). After a few more weeks with no activity, it began to dawn on me: my research was no longer relevant. People did not want to talk about this topic right now—people were out of work, afterall. They only wanted to return to work—to return to normal. Furthermore, it is likely that such a transient population as immigrant workers in the food industry dispersed after becoming unemployed and became even more distrustful of researchers collecting data about their precarity.

It had become apparent that what people really needed to talk about was how they were doing during the beginning stages of the pandemic. This is what most people needed to talk about—no matter the interaction or platform. Realizing quickly that my once novel research objectives and questions were now wildly out of touch with the reality of our current world, I pivoted. I was still interested in how people maintain a personal sense of dignity amidst potentially non-dignifying situations, and utilizing grounded theoretical methods—so how could I reframe the question to match the situation and tailor the methods to meet strict no in-

person research restrictions? After talking to a number of recently out-of-work restaurant workers at a food drive I participated in, a new set of research questions became prescient:

1) How are restaurant workers impacted by the mass layoffs caused by COVID-19?

2) And, what, if any, are internalized and externalized strategies for maintaining dignity amidst this crisis—at the individual, relational, and collective levels?

While the research questions had changed and so had the environment in which I was conducting my research—the heart of the research remained the same: how can I allow the voices of restaurant workers to be heard in a way that gives them power over their narrative? In a time when restaurant work and all service work is seen as menial and impermanent, how can workers' stories about their experiences, both in the industry and being out of work during the COVID-19 pandemic be told in a way that accurately represents their thoughts and feelings and gives dignity to a profession that is often thought of in a negative or, otherwise unimportant light? It is with these project aims that I moved forward with my new research plan.

In this space of uncertainty, sense of despair, and unknown risks of a novel virus, this project began in its second iteration in April 2020. There were certainly ranges of emotions felt—first the fear of the unknown, then the excitement of a "work vacation," followed by despair, loneliness, and boredom—often happening both simultaneously and non-linearly. Furthermore, different groups of society had vastly different experiences based on profession, locations, socio-economic status, race, and other factors. This study, therefore, attempts to capture the human need to cope and seek out the preservation of a personal sense of dignity, within the messiness and inequality experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. While this

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study only looks at a particular sector—workers in the food and beverage industry—as we will see in chapter two, it was the most economically impacted sector of the U.S. economy and can provide useful insight into how most people deal with potentially non-dignifying events.

1.2 The Crisis of Crisis

To better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on industry and individuals, it is first important to identify and define this particular phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic and related events as a crisis. To define a crisis, I borrow from mid 20th century psychiatry, and the evolving field of crisis response therapy. I use the field of Psychiatry rather than the field of sociology to define crisis, because I believe that there is a more uniform and established understanding of crisis within Psychiatry that allows for a more complete analysis on multiple levels. I adopt a framework of crisis put forth by Eastham et al (1970) who rely on a combination of definitions of crisis—and the ways that individuals, communities, and societies respond to crisis. Therefore, I identify the COVID-19 pandemic as a particular crisis using three criteria: 1) "The stressful event poses a problem, which is, by definition, seen as insoluble in the immediate future;" 2) "The problem taxes the resources of the [unit], since it is beyond their traditional problem-solving methods;" and 3) "The crisis situation awakens unresolved key problems from the near and distant past" (Eastham et al 1970). These three measures support crisis designation for the COVID-19 pandemic because it is something that is not immediately resolvable, it places unpredictable and unprecedented burden on a particular function of society, and it highlights unresolved issues of the past. Through this designation it becomes possible to understand how it is that both structural (governmental oversight) and natural (the

virus) forces combine during moments of crisis to create unforeseen problems and burdens on society—and on marginalized members of society, in particular.

To understand how the COVID-19 pandemic was able to unfold in ways that had rippling effects on the economic systems and social structures in the United States, it is important to highlight the historical and current circumstances of various groups and members of society. By analyzing the socio-historical context in which the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, it becomes possible to recognize how different groups respond in unique ways—based on structural forces—that affects the whole "organisim" (Eastham et al 1970). Put more plainly, the COVID-19 pandemic did not happen in a vacuum, and therefore necessitates an unpacking of the social, political, and economic factors that contributed to this particular crisis. Therefore, the Psychiatric definition will be combined with more traditional Sociological foundations.

Scholars have analyzed the strong relationship between work and racialized and gendered identities, which is made possible by a persistent and intentional hierarchical structure within the framework of a post-industrial capitalist society (Sassen 1996). Through a process of increasing separation of work, between the primary labor market and the secondary labor markets, inequalities and marginalizations continue to grow along racial, gender, and immigration boundaries (Sassen 1996; Venkatesh 2006). Restaurant work is a workspace that attracts marginalized workers because of the relatively low barrier to entry (particularly linked to the food and beverage's link to informal and "off the books" employment). Because of the particular kind of work (service labor) and the marginalized communities that are connected to it, restaurant workers are particularly susceptible to the impacts of economic shifts and unemployment (Jayaraman 2013; 2016; Leidner 1993). The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be

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the worst economic conditions for restaurant workers in modern history—spurred on by the fact that many workers within the industry are not eligible for unemployment or other social benefits because of their status (whether as an undocumented immigrant or an informal worker).

The purpose of this study, then, is about understanding how those most impacted by layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic cope with unemployment and uncertainty and if—and how—various coping mechanisms lead to personal dignity preservation. This research can be explained by a larger body of literature that understands the human response to difficult circumstances as not simply oppressive and all-consuming (Massey and Denton 1993), but rather there is a human need to attempt resistance (Scott 1985), assert personal identity and agency (Waters 1999), seek out empowerment (Rowlands 1995;1997), and in fact reclaim or maintain dignity (Hodson 2001). This research utilizes Historical Contingency Theory (Prechel 199) alongside a social constructionist framework to understand how attempts at resistance, identity reclamation, and change happen at the individual level (Cerulo 1997; Lamont 2002; Sharpe 20165; Waters 1999). The methodologies I employ in this research follows a grounded theoretical approach from a constructivist framework (Charmaz 2014), an epistemological approach that seeks knowledge from the community being researched (restaurant workers) to understand how to frame the project from the outset.

This research combines unique fields of study and offers a way to combine them in a new and meaningful way. While several authors have focused on, for instance, the ways that people cope with potentially exploitative situations at work (Hodson 2001; Hennigan and Purser 2021; Wilcoxson and Moore 2019), the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a new set

of circumstances that necessitate different types of coping mechanisms—ones that rely less on the physical/emotional/mental impacts of being at work, and simultaneously deal with feelings of being out of work and how that intersects with one's own identity. Therefore, I fill a gap in the literature, by providing a new outlook at the nexus of crisis, personal and workplace identity, and dignity. By filling this current gap in the literature, it becomes possible to untangle the various ways that people seek out dignity preservation—even in periods of time where that might seem unlikely or difficult. Such an analysis allows for personal identity to become a salient component to understanding a variety of outcomes. By analyzing both coping and dignity together I can better understand how some coping mechanisms may lead to different outcomes than others—and how positionality can play a large role in one's ability to both cope and find a personal sense of dignity. As such, this study has implications, not only for understanding what happened to out-of-work people during COVID, but also for much broader audiences.

1.3 Overview of Dissertation

My introductory chapter has introduced some background for the study and the project scope and aims. Subsequent chapters will provide more in-depth analysis for the literature background, methodological focus, and findings.

Chapter 2 focuses on the dramatic structural impacts on food and beverage industry workers due to the shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic—with a particular focus on regional effects and responses in the state of Michigan. By first focusing on the structural components of government, industry, and crisis management, I can understand how and why workers in the food and beverage industry were disproportionately affected by COVID-19. I

explore this phenomenon through first identifying the nature of crisis, and then through gaining

a better understanding of how the federalist system operates in the United States as it relates

to policy implementation during crisis. I will then explore the nature of restaurant work through

its embeddedness in a late-stage capitalist society that relies heavily on precarious work—

which is only able to function by using the labor of, disproportionately, women, people of color,

immigrants, and other marginalized groups. By gaining a better understanding of the nature of

work in our current socio-political environment, I am able to show the ways that the crisis

management of COVID-19 led to a predictable and catastrophic collapse of the entire food and

beverage industry. However, this literature review—and indeed entire research project—does

not stop with the structural components of our society and the implications that it has for

precarious workers in our economy. I also seek to show the individualized ways that people

cope amidst crisis and the ways in which collective coping can lead to a dignity construction

framework. By illuminating the social constructivist approach—paying particular attention to

Historical Contingency Theory—I center social actors with autonomy and agency, dignity

preservation, and resistance in otherwise oppressive structural confines.

Chapter 3 examines the methodological approach I adopt for the investigation of this

research to better understand coping and dignity maintenance strategies that people engage

during periods of joblessness, underemployment, and uncertainty about one's own chosen

career path. This project contributes to the literature on workplace dignity in a unique way; I

borrow from various existing literatures on dignity strategies in the workplace (Hodson, 2001)

to describe the experience of food and beverage workers through the unprecedented historical

event of the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodologies I employ follow a grounded theoretical

approach from a constructivist framework (Charmaz 2014), an inductive epistemological

approach that seeks knowledge from the community being researched (restaurant workers) to

understand how to frame the project from the outset. I worked closely with restaurant workers

throughout the process to understand what it is that restaurant workers were experiencing

during the pandemic—and specifically the knowledge that would be useful to them. By

employing an iterative mixed-methodological process, whereby the project direction was

analyzed at each crossroads—based on information and feedback from the research

participants, I was able to meaningfully produce knowledge with and for the community being

researched (Charmaz, 2014). Rather than to start from a specific theoretical approach, I allow

the responses of individuals to dictate the direction of my study. This inductive approach allows

for more flexibility in changing direction based on responses. Through this research process, I

seek to flip the script of traditional research on marginalized communities, by showing the

various ways in which people who are thought of as marginalized seek to maintain agency and

command dignity. I do this as a way to redefine whose voices are being heard—and how those

voices are being heard—within academia.

Chapter 4 unpacks experiences of restaurant workers leading up to the COVID-19

pandemic and the initial experiences of participants in the immediate wake of restaurant

closures. This was achieved by a first round of national surveys, aimed at capturing the broader

social and financial impacts of the pandemic on restaurant industry workers. It was sent out

right as waves of lockdowns were happening across the country—allowing me to understand

the structural challenges and constraints that people were experiencing during the immediate

aftermath of COVID shutdowns in March and April. From those respondents to the survey, 41

people were selected to participate in in-depth interviews that allowed me to explore

individuals' backgrounds, how they got into the industry, how they felt about the industry, and

how the COVID-related shutdowns impacted their current situations and future in the industry.

Gathering this background information allows me to understand not only the relative

positionality of my respondents, but also how identity formation is central to restaurant

workers' experiences of unemployment during the pandemic.

      Chapter 5 unravels the ways that restaurant workers seek out coping mechanisms to

deal with this new crisis; as such this study employs two primary modes of data collection to

identify both the structural issues surrounding restaurant workers' lives and employment and

the lived experiences and coping mechanisms that people utilized to get through the pandemic.

Using Ferguson and Cox's (1997) defining attributes of coping[1] and Rowlands[2] (1997)

empowerment scale as guides, the coding process uncovered three types of coping

mechanisms that restaurant workers in my sample adopt, which serve them in a time for

reflection, improvement, and change in one's own life and one's relationship with the

restaurant industry.

      Specifically, the three types of coping mechanisms[3] I identify in this study are 1) formal

educational endeavors, 2) organizing and philanthropic work, and 3) projects. I code "formal

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[1] "what individuals believe coping behaviours are designed to achieve," 2) the behaviors: "what action is taken, "and 3) styles: "a group of behaviours and/or cognitions which are similar in terms of their mode of action" (Ferguson and Cox, 1997).

[2] Individual level as the smallest measurement and collective level as the largest along the scale.

[3] These three "categories" of coping mechanisms are certainly not the only types of coping that people engaged in—in fact there was a variety. However, the purpose of this study is to understand the ways in which coping mechanisms during periods of crises lead to personal and societal change. Therefore, activities like drinking, smoking, sleeping, general malaise and despondence—while valid coping mechanisms—will not be analyzed here.

education" as any pursuit of education with the intended goal to make a career shift or to explore an avenue of interest. I code "organizing and philanthropic work" as activities that people are doing outside of themselves to change society or give back in some way. Finally, I code "projects" as activities that engaged participants in something they didn't have time, money, or (mental) space for before the pandemic started.

All three of these coping mechanisms must be understood along a spectrum of identities and structural constraints. Identity can be understood as one's own relationship to the restaurant industry—whether or not they identify as a "restaurant worker" or whether they merely find themselves in the industry and if they see this field as a career. Structural constraints can be understood as privilege relating to one's own social location (including age, race/ethnicity, gender, marital status, having children, etc) and one's own ability to pursue endeavors to fulfill personal interests or pursuits. The complexities of structural constraints and one's own personal identification as a worker within the restaurant industry impacts the coping mechanisms employed throughout their periods of joblessness. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to identify if and how the three primary coping mechanisms lead to personal dignity maintenance based on Hodson's (2001) rubric for understanding how dignity is achieved. Through this process of identification of the relationship between coping mechanisms and dignity maintenance, it becomes clear that certain behaviors lend themselves to better longterm outcomes. However, personal privileges and marginalizations must be considered; certain coping mechanisms are more available to certain groups based on a number of structural constraints. The data collected allows a narrative to unfold about both the structural context during the pandemic and the lived experiences of individuals—one that is complicated,

nonlinear, and nuanced. Ultimately, this research has implications for how individuals cope during crisis and how a more equitable distribution of resources may create different outcomes.

Finally, chapter 6 offers a discussion of the importance of the findings, how my personal experience as a professional chef shaped this research, the limitations of this kind of research, and future directions for further research. Additionally, I offer a few key implications that this study may have for a broader audience in understanding how it is that people cope with periods of personal crisis and if and how those various strategies lend themselves to personal dignity maintenance.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A Policy and Social Introduction

Although the "novel coronavirus" had already begun rapidly spreading throughout the globe in January of 2020, it was not until March 13 that this—already named—pandemic was considered a national emergency in the United States (AJMC 2021). While creating a national emergency did release funds and aid for millions of U.S. citizens, there was not a national uniform response such as mask mandates, stay-at-home orders, shutdown orders, and social distancing guidelines, which created a chaotic state-by-state response. Governors and state legislatures had complete control in deciding the next steps for the state in how best combat the spread of the virus. 43[4] out of 51[5] U.S. territories issued some sort of complete stay-at-home and/or shutdown orders starting as early as March 16 and as late as April 7 (all 51 territories recommended school closures for at least some period during this time). These shutdown and stay at home orders were vastly different from state to state, and their implementation, enforcement, and length of order was highly dependent on politics and other social factors.[6] Despite the varying responses and shut-down protocols, with the exception of one state, South Dakota, every state and territory in the United States had one thing in common: the food and beverage industry was completely closed to all in-person dining (several states remained at least partially open for curbside pickup or to-go service throughout stay-at-home orders) for at least a two-week period from March 16 to May 30, 2020[7]. The immediate

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[4] Five states issued no recommended or mandatory shutdown order: Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Three states issued partial orders (on a county-by-county basis: Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming.
[5] Includes District of Columbia.
[6] Republican states tended to have fewer restrictions and have more lenient enforcement whereas Democratic states tended to have more restrictions and more strict enforcement.
[7]Two-week shutdown was an outlier, as many state had dining restrictions that went far beyond this time frame.

and dramatic effect was certainly felt throughout the entire economy. By the end of April, the

national unemployment rate would reach the highest level since the Great Depression at

14.8%, with the hospitality industry suffering the most severe losses in jobs (BLS.org 2021).

In the state of Michigan, for instance, the hospitality and leisure industry[8] went from a

high of 4,355,000 workers in February 2020 to a low of 1,935,000 workers in April 2020. As of

September 2020, the total number of workers employed in the hospitality and leisure industry

in Michigan was 3,364,000[9][10]. In the four major metropolitan areas in Michigan (Detroit, Grand

Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Lansing) there was a net decrease of 35.9%[11] in employment in the

hospitality and leisure sector between December 2019 and December 2020. Other states with

similar shutdown protocols also had similar unemployment figures. By contrast, states that had

very limited restrictions on the hospitality industry (i.e., Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, North

Dakota, and South Dakota) saw a combined net decrease of 14.31% in employment within the

hospitality industry during the same period.

Therefore, considering that the service industry relies largely on face-to-face customer

interactions—where the goods being sold are services, such as a dining experience—the

absence of customers, resulted in many workers left suddenly without a job. While this study

does pay special attention to the serious impacts of joblessness and unemployment, it focuses

primarily on the ways that food and beverage industry workers coped with joblessness, and

if/how these coping strategies led to dignity maintenance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[8] No restaurant specific figures available for restaurant industry. Hospitality and Leisure industry includes: Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services.
[9] Net loss of 22.76% from February to September 2020.
[10] Holiday-related COVID spikes resulted in reduction in employment in November and December 2020.
[11] This figure is averaged from the employment figures from each of the four metropolitan areas in Michigan.

2.1.1 Unemployment During the Pandemic

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the food and beverage industry[12] remained a fairly stable industry between 2017 and the beginning of 2020, with unemployment rates hovering between 5-7% (bls.org 2021); The unemployment rate for the food and beverage industry is slightly higher than the overall unemployment average for the whole U.S. during this time period. From February to April 2020, the unemployment rate for the service industry rose to a high of 35.4% (bls.org 2021). The high unemployment rate did steadily go down to a rate of 18.8% in September 2020 and continued to decline, with the exception of an uptick in unemployment during the winter 2020 COVID spike and subsequent temporary shutdown to control the spread of the virus. Employment rates in the hospitality and leisure industry went from a high of 123,081,000 workers in February 2020 to a low of 63,334,000 workers in April of 2020 (bls.org 2021). By September of 2020, the number of employees in the food and drink service sector rose back to 101,871,000[13] and growth tapered off (with slight dips during the holiday COVID spikes) (bls.org). Overall, it's estimated that around 3 million jobs have been permanently lost in the United States because of COVID-related restaurant closures.[14] Around 17% of restaurants have permanently closed due in part or in whole because of COVID-related economic non-viability[15] (National Resturant Association December 2020). A far higher percentage of restaurants were running on reduced staff because of shortened operating hours, limited dining options (limited seating or takeout only), and a smaller and simpler menu.

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[12] Food and Beverage Industry includes full-service restaurants, limited-service eating places, special food services, and drinking places.
[13] Net loss of 17.23% from February to September 2020.
[14] Long-term employment outlook from BLS.
[15] Study from the National Restaurant Association from 1 December 2020.

For the remainder of 2020, many restaurant workers were out of work or with greatly reduced hours while a small number of workers found themselves working longer and harder to accommodate budget cuts throughout the restaurant. Even for workers who were not formally let go during the height of the first shutdown[16], temporary layoffs or furloughs presented a unique challenge. Many workers were not told if they still had jobs and when they would be back to work—in part because many restaurant owners and managers did not know what to expect—or just how long shutdown orders would remain in effect. The ineffective communication caused by uncertainty—from government officials that trickled down to business owners and managers—created a logistical nightmare when it came to filing for unemployment benefits and figuring out their next steps.

2.1.2 Financial Assistance During COVID-19 Pandemic

Many workers across the whole economy were simply told not to come to work for the foreseeable future had to rely on private and public assistance measures—amidst a very uncertain future with increasingly strained resources. During the first week of the shutdown order, 2.9 million people filed for unemployment benefits (tcf.org 2021). Within a month, about 20 million Americans filed new unemployment benefit claims. From March 2020 to March 2021, a staggering 104.4 million new unemployment benefits were claimed which amounts to about one in every four Americans who filed a new unemployment claim during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (tcf.org, 2021).

Unemployment benefits are handled at the state level, often using very out-of-date technology—making the system vulnerable to glitches because of too much traffic, and fraud

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[16] March 2020

because of easily hackable infrastructure. The systems were simply not prepared for an event of this magnitude. Because of major malfunctions in states' systems, many people did not receive their benefits quickly, or were simply unable to even file for their benefits. Many people turned to local governmental and private organizations for immediate assistance. Food banks, charities, and emergency funding organizations saw unprecedented and unmanageable demand for services. People were suddenly without paychecks and any means for gaining employment; and as the first of the month drew near, millions of out-of-work Americans were left wondering how they would be able to afford rent.

On the 27th of March 2020, the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act was signed into law (CARES ACT 2020). The CARES Act released 2.2 trillion dollars of economic stimulus to be funneled into the economy, which enabled direct stimulus checks for most Americans, additional and exceptional provisions for unemployment benefits, business loans, and a moratorium on evictions, among other things. CARES provided a small respite for desperate people who had now been unemployed for two weeks, with no end in sight and no opportunity for employment. Due to issues with the systems and the surge in new unemployment claims, stimulus checks and unemployment funds took well beyond the two-to-three-week time period expected to receive funds.

This literature review focuses on the dramatic structural impacts on food and beverage industry workers due to the shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic—with a particular focus on regional effects and responses in the state of Michigan. By first focusing on the structural components of government, industry, and crisis management, I can understand how and why workers in the food and beverage industry were disproportionately affected by COVID-

19. I explore this phenomenon by first identifying the nature of crisis, and then by gaining a better understanding of how the federalist system operates in the United States as it relates to policy implementation during crisis. I then study the nature of restaurant work through its embeddedness in a late-stage capitalist society that relies heavily on precarious work—which is only able to function by using the labor of, disproportionately, women, people of color, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. By gaining a better understanding of the nature of work in our current socio-political environment, I am able to show the ways that the crisis management of COVID-19 led to the economy—and specifically the food and beverage industry. I also seek to show the individualized ways that people cope amidst crisis and the ways in which collective coping can lead to a dignity construction framework. By framing my work through a social constructivist lens—paying particular attention to Historical Contingency Theory—I center social actors with autonomy and agency, dignity preservation, and resistance in otherwise oppressive structural confines.

2.2 A Collective Crisis

To better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on industry and individuals, it is first important to identify and define this particular phenomenon as a crisis. I borrow from mid 20th century psychiatry, and the evolving field of crisis response therapy. I adopt a framework of crisis put forth by Eastham et al (1970). Eastham et al (1970) rely on a combination of definitions of crisis and the ways that individuals, communities, and societies respond to crisis. Therefore, I understand the COVID-19 pandemic as a particular crisis using three criterium: 1) "The stressful event poses a problem, which is, by definition, seen as insoluble in the immediate future;" 2) "The problem taxes the resources of the [unit], since it is beyond their traditional

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problem-solving methods;" and 3) "The crisis situation awakens unresolved key problems from

the near and distant past" (Eastham et al 1970). By using these three key measures, we

understand the COVID-19 crisis as something that is not immediately resolvable, it places

unpredictable and unprecedented burden on a particular function of society, and it highlights

unresolved issues of the past. By doing so, it is possible to understand how it is that structural

forces combine during moments of crisis to create unforeseen problems and burdens on

society—and on marginalized members of society, in particular. Once crisis is conceptualized, it

then becomes important to understand the various responses to crises presented by social

scientists.

The first approach I use to define crisis response is named the "organismic approach,"

which fundamentally theorizes that an organism is knocked out of "homeostatic limits" by

continuing disruptions (Demerath and Wallace 1957; Eastham et al 1970). In this study, the

"organism" is society and the disruption is the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding society as

an organism under stress creates the need for problem-solving or adaptation in behavior to

reach a new equilibrium (Grinker and Spiegal 1945). Yet, the stress placed on the organism

(society) may result in a new equilibrium, because responses to crisis often lead to

maladaptation and "chronic stress" (Eastham et al 1970; Grinker and Spiegal 1945). This

approach is most often used to describe "environmental disturbances"—including illness

outbreaks like tuberculosis (Holmes 1957) and war (Grinker and Spiegal 1945).

The second approach for understanding crisis in this study is called the

"interpersonal/sociocultural" approach (Eastham et al 1970). The interpersonal and

sociocultural response to crisis theory relies heavily on social networks to understand how the

individual will respond to crisis (Eastham et al 1970, Hill 1949; 1958). The Socio-interpersonal approach emphasizes an individual's need for having strong socio-cultural ties to overcome crisis (Eastham et al 1970; Hill 1958).

By combining the organismic approach and the interpersonal/sociocultural approach, I examine the ways that individuals and society as a whole respond to crisis. At the individual level, each person is uniquely able to respond to experiences based on several factors, including their social networks and interpersonal connections. However, to understand a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to also be able to identify how each different society/organization/culture/group responds to affect the whole "organism." By adopting a combined approach, I can better understand and analyze this unique crisis (COVID-19) that is situated in a particular moment. The events, cannot, therefore, be understood without also considering the socio-historical context in which it occurred. Put more plainly, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic did not happen in a vacuum, and therefore necessitates an unpacking of the social, political, and economic factors that contributed to this particular crisis. To begin unpacking this, I look at how the labor market developed in the 20th and 21st centuries to create a "perfect storm" for a labor and economic crisis.

2.3 The State of Work in Pre-Pandemic Post-Industrial Capitalist Society

2.3.1 Rise of Informal Labor Markets

While the COVID-19 Pandemic is indeed a crisis unlike any other in recent memory, the social and political structures in a post-industrialist society such as the United States undeniably contributed to a near-collapse of the economic structure. It is, therefore, necessary to examine

the creation and maintenance of an increasingly informalized economy to understand the implications for an economic (and public health) crisis.

A capitalist system necessarily relies on the availability and permanence and of the informal sector because reducing costs and increasing profits demands that such an on-demand labor pool exist (Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris 2014; Portes and Haller 2005; Sassen 1991; 1996. Through giving those living informally a category, bureaucracies have, in a way, created legitimacy and "formalization." Thereby, the capitalist economy has rationalized their understanding of informalization—and by creating a category—they allow the informal sector to operate mostly outside of a legal realm (Vankatesh 2006). The informal labor market is an increasingly on-demand workforce that operates at the will of employers, often with unstable schedules and shifts, which leads to unstable income and difficulties planning for the future for workers (Halpin 2015). While some sectors of the informal labor market have provided increasingly flexible schedules for non-traditional workers and indeed do provide some opportunity to have a higher income than traditional labor markets (Herod 2018), many workers who find themselves in the informal labor market are already marginalized because of race, gender, class, and immigration status and this type of work may lead to increasing precarization as a result of work inconsistency and monetary instability.

With the developing trend of informalization for laborers within all industries, debates have arisen as to the nature of the informal sector and how it fits into the larger economic system. While some scholars look to informal labor as a promising change, and as creating opportunities for workers and employers alike, other scholars suggest that informal labor can be instrumental in creating or maintaining precariousness for workers. Kalleberg (2009; 2013;

2018) may be the most prominent scholar currently, as it relates to precarization. He notes the

changing dynamics of the American economy. While many developing nations have utilized

informal labor—and have endured precariousness—Kalleberg notes that there is a new system

of labor developing in the Global North (Kalleberg 2013). Technological innovations have

created new sectors and the near extinction of traditional manual labor, resulting in a dire need

for skilled positions. Additionally, public policy has placed increasing pressure on personal

responsibility and job maintenance in order to receive public assistance (Kalleberg 2018). The

changing dynamics of public policy, "workforce innovations" that have radically changed the

workforce, and increases in cost of living (relative to wages) has created an environment of

increasing precarity for workers. Additionally, rising costs to employers and economic

constraints have created more on-demand and contract work that disproportionately impacts

low-wage workers. While workers on the high end of the knowledge-sector spectrum likely

view this newfound mobility as a good and convenient change, many workers in service and

other low-wage sectors are likely to experience greater precarity as a result of the increasing

informalization of labor (Kalleberg 2013). Therefore, informal jobs become even more

precarious in this changing labor economy.

2.3.2 The Food and Beverage Industry: A Site for Precarious Labor Markets

The food production industry is a specific industry where informal and precarious

labor—especially for historically marginalized groups—has been prevalent (Pachirat 2011;

Silbergeld 2016; Waltz 2018). These worksites are places where dangerous and difficult work

has been done, prominently, by workers who tend to occupy transient and precarious identities

(Pachirat 2011; Waltz 2018). Since as early as the beginning of the 20th century, the safety and

health risks associated with the food and beverage industry has been well-documented, yet little has been done to stop dangerous practices in the food production industry (Sinclair 1906). To extend this conversation, several scholars have gone in-depth into the worker's conditions and treatment, as well as health concerns in the various aspects of the food production industry—specifically farm labor and meat packing labor (Ocejo 2017; Pachirat 2011; Silbergeld 2016; Waltz 2018).

Waltz (2018) weaves together individual struggles of workers in a meat packaging plant and also shows the national and international stories of immigration issues and labor rights playing out in the background. This work (Waltz 2018) is important because it sheds light on the vast numbers of undocumented immigrants who find work in slaughterhouses. Low wage, informal workers are often brought into work without proper documentation—with knowledge and consent from employers. However, when issues arise—such as conflict, and pressure from governmental agencies—informal laborers are often the first to be let go, hired to work for less money, or worse, deported. Immigrants work for less money, are not given access to reasonable housing, and are not given the same rights as their white, or even black, counterparts. Therefore, they face a specific set of hardships that helps to produce cycles of precarity. Similarly, Pachirat (2011) details how the harsh reality of working in the plant leaves many workers disgruntled. Unfortunately, there is little practical recourse for workers who have experienced hazard, injury, or injustice.

2.3.3 The Gendered and Racialized Components of Food Labor: Demographics of the Restaurant Industry

The workers across the entire food production and service industry are incredibly diverse across racial, social, economic, gendered, and immigration categories. Within the industry at large, there are even more distinctions between the owners, managers, and high-ranking employees and the overwhelmingly people of color, un(der)documented, and may have difficulties finding stable employment elsewhere (Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 2014). The findings of previous research supports the notion that across the entire food production and service industry—from field to table—there is incredible disregard for human life, dignity, and safety for those who have the least amount of legal or social recourse (Harris and Giuffre 2015; Johnson, Rodney, and Chong 2014; Leidner 1991; 1999; Waltz 2018) .

Nationally, prior to COVID, black and brown employees made up over 40% of the work force in food service jobs while women made up over 50% of workers in the food service industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Yet, these two groups are concentrated in the lowest paying and status positions (Jayaraman 2016). Despite the high demand for workers, low-skill service work can be an inconsistent form of employment, since low-skill laborers, such as those who do food preparation and other menial tasks, are relatively interchangeable, and scheduled according to restaurant demand (Jayaraman 2013). These low-skill positions can thus be characterized as forms of precarious labor (Kalleberg and Vallas 2017; Kalleberg 2018; Kalleberg 2013).

Other analysts of service work and restaurant labor similarly note the precarity with which low-wage workers operate. As a relatively low-skill and marginalized work force, low-

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wage restaurant workers are seen as exploitable and replaceable (Loscocco 2017; Jayaraman 2013). Kitchens, like other foodwork with large immigrant and people of color populations are highly gendered and racialized spaces (Pachirat 2011; Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 2014). While some chefs and restaurateurs do receive widespread fame, monetary success, and acclaim for their creativity, finesses, and charisma, they are predominantly white males (Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 2014; Opazo 2016). Most cooks do not receive widespread acclaim and wealth from their work.

Instead of the glamorized views of professional cooking made popular in the late 1990's by the Food Network and reality tv shows, Fine (1996) highlights what kitchen life is like for most cooks: a low-paying and demanding environment that does not induce a sense of creativity, but rather demands docility and repetition. Fine (1996) explores the sociology of work by analyzing the culture and structure inside restaurants in Minneapolis, Minnesota. While a few cooks may achieve the autonomy and creativity afforded to the cooking elite, most will become a surveilled and regulated worker through the material, spatial, and literary forms of power that exist in most kitchens today (Escoffier 1921; Fine 1996). This examination of restaurant work shows an unglamorous side of the job, which is often overlooked in popular portrayals (Rodney, Johnston, and Chong 2014). While this work might be confused with the routinization of factory work (Burawoy 1982), Whyte (1949) shows the complexity of kitchen work in his analysis of restaurants. Whyte's analysis (1949) shows how kitchen work does in fact differ greatly from manufacturing. He contends that the immediacy with which food is created and consumed changes the nature of this workplace (Whyte 1949). Rather than factory goods like brake pads or nails—or even manufactured food products like packaged cookies or

candies—when food is being made to order and for immediate consumption, demands of supply, timing, and customer preference are built into daily work (Fine 1996). Kitchen workers, thus, must necessarily be more creative and adaptable than other low wage workers (Wilcoxson and Moore 2019).

The demand for a flexible and creative workforce is part of a larger trend in the late 20th century that expects increasing worker productivity despite increasing wage disparity and job precariousness. Authors have examined how this trend in labor is tied to neoliberal policy overahauls beginning during the Reagan administration and cemented by President Clinton's signing of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (United States Congress 1998). These policy— and societal shifts—have an overall expectation of personal responsibility and autonomy, while simultaneously and confusingly maintaining docility to be considered a "good worker."

Hochschild (1983) borrows from Goffman's theory of the frontstage and backstage self (1959) to analyze how service workers utilize different types of emotional engagement for different situations (Hochshild 1983). Here, the real self is often hidden, and the performative self is presented so as to meet the expectations set by customers and employers (Goffman 1959; Hochschild 1983; Leidner 1999). Hochschild (1983) analyzes the regulation of emotions in service work—predominantly for women—through "feeling rules." Emotional labor requires the coordination of mind and feeling while caring for others' emotional well-being (Hochschild 1983). Emotion management is demanded for front-of-house and public facing workers carried out—both within the private self and the work self. Hochschild uses a predominantly interactionist perspective to analyze how humans adapt to social situations and new environments through managing emotions (Hochschild 1983; Leidner 1999). Hochschild's study

of emotional labor suggests that organizations create and oversee acceptable behaviors" for workers, therefore creating more emotional labor for low-wage service workers who are trying to navigate employer expectations and customer demands. In addition, Halpin (2015), discusses another factor that workers must increasingly face at work by highlighting the precarity of undocumented workers in the restaurant industry through the creation of "mock" schedules.

"Mock" schedules can be described as the formal fulfillment of labor requirements with no intentions to keep those schedules. This is a micro process whereby employee control is maintained through "scheduling manipulation" (Halpin 2015). That is, workers—particularly low-wage and precarious workers—are stuck in a cycle of "restrictive flexibility," a process that increases employee buy-in because it makes them physically present daily to check schedules (Halpin 2015). Because workers are required to know their ever-changing schedules, their consent to this abusive structure is unconsciously given through their continually coming back to work. To keep moderately-skilled workers placated, employers would do just enough to prevent workers from quitting or complaining—like giving them extra shifts and small pay raises (Halpin 2015).

The notions of emotional labor and flexible employment, put forth by scholars like Fine, Hochschild, Leidner, and Halpin, highlight challenges that workers face in an increasingly informalized work environment (Sassen 1996). Analysis of the unseen aspects of service work is important, especially considering precarious labor and increasingly informal labor for low-wage workers. Low wage and precarious workers have specific and increasing demands being placed on them to perform and are simultaneously given less ability to challenge the system—even— or especially—at the lowest positions.

2.4 Historical Contingency Theory as an Explanatory Theory

After analyzing the structural mechanisms that were at play in the United States' current labor and economic system, it is important to then focus on the variety of ways that individuals respond to these larger structures through personal agency. By analyzing various measures like, positionality and identity—within various structural dimensions—this study seeks to recognize how it is that individuals uniquely experience and cope in crises through different ways and how individuals can affect change at the structural level. To do this I turn to Historical Contingency Theory.

Historical Contingency Theory puts forward a hybrid model for understanding how public policy (and large-scale societal shifts) is formed and changed (Willyard 2016). Rather than to focus on simply a state-centered (Block 1977) or a society-centered (Mizruchi 1987) policy formation, Historical Contingency Theory understands that historical conditions largely determine which factions (state or society) will be more important in shaping policy at a particular point in time (Prechel 1990). Prechel (1990; 1991) is the preeminent scholar analyzing how Historical Contingency Theory affects industrial interests and labor. In Prechel's model, there is a continuum between state-centered and society-centered influence, and at various times, based largely on socio-political and economic factors, the state or societal actors will have greater power to control public policy development (Prechel 1990, 1991, 2003). While this model traditionally understands "society" through a Marxist capitalist lens with competing class interests (Marx 1977, Poulantzas 1978), I slightly shift the model so that "society," instead organizes around social movements (Quadagno 1992). Using the lens of Historical Contingency Theory, I aim to weave together a narrative about how the COVID-19 pandemic crisis was

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created and persisted and how laborers and other social actors demanded worker rights and

safety reforms and social justice policy implementations in its aftermath.

2.5 Social Constructionist Framework for Understanding Dignity Strategies Amidst Crisis

While Historical Contingency Theory relies on larger structural shifts (Prechel 1990;

1991), it is also important to understand how changes happen at the individual level. More

recently, scholars have aimed to place a more central focus on power to show the potential

political implications for identity formation and collective identity. Critical race scholarship on

identities has focused on mechanisms of power, social arrangements, and being, which has

allowed scholars to focus on how personal agency is exercised (Cerulo 1997; Lamont 2002;

Sharpe 20165; Waters 1999). Increasing demands for workers in the food industry—such as

emotion management, demands for flexible schedules, and other forms of self-regulation

create many tensions within the workplace and lead to certain forms of work discontent

(Wilcoxson and Moore 2019). However, new constructionist frameworks of identity formation

can help us to understand how marginalized groups can claim and reclaim identities—making

efforts of resistance possible. A focus on how these discontents rise and how efforts of agency

emerge can lead to new theories on the identification process, whereby symbolic boundaries

(Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Lamont, Pendergrass, and Pachucki

2015) and distinction (Bourdieu 2013) are being explored (Cerulo 1997). These shifts in focus

have led to a changing perspective of how scholars analyze identity formation for people of

color, immigrants, and ethnic minorities.

Many scholarly efforts within labor research underscore a number of coping strategies

that workers may utilize, similar to those in Hochschild's work (1983). However, the workers in

many of these studies do not push the boundaries for the full exploration of worker and labor

resistance movements. Scott (1985) explores the individual "weapons" that marginalized

people may use as acts of resistance. He presents the legitimate and effective forms of peasant

resistance through collective and community action. Scott's (1985) work shows that traditional

theories on hegemony (Gramsci 1971) do not adequately describe all those in subordinated

positions. By revealing "everyday resistances" that these poor and "weak" villagers display—

especially among the women—Scott (1985) contests ideas of totalizing domination and

subordination. Instead, he reveals that people in all hierarchical positions in society have the

ability to assert some elements of agency—and potentially power—that falls somewhere on

the spectrum between compliance and resistance. Although villagers of all statuses publicly

showed general deference and amicability, Scott's (1985) work analyzes methods of resistance

that happen behind closed doors. These individual forms of resistance may seem small but can

ultimately contribute to larger movements.

Scholars who adopt a social constructionist framework for identity are important

because while individual efforts of resistance can be powerful and meaningful, to change the

system, there needs to be actionable consensus by a group that is powerful enough to take on

corporations that only serve capitalist interests. Through understanding how employers'

expectations have shifted in the last several decades, we can then understand how to shift

organizing principles to bring about worker equality.

While several authors have focused on the ways that people cope with potentially

exploitative situations at work, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a new set of

circumstances that necessitate different types of coping mechanisms—ones that rely less on

the physical/emotional/mental impacts of being at work, and simultaneously deal with feelings of being out of work and how that intersects with one's own identity. Hodson (2001) identifies how work and labor occupy a large part of workers identities (whether it is conscious or unconscious) and when workers are forced to experience periods of joblessness—not by one's own choosing—the identity as a particular kind of worker must necessarily shift. To better understand how this may have happened for out-of-work individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic, I turn to authors that focus on various forms of personal dignity preservation, empowerment, and coping mechanisms.

2.6 Defining the Terms for Analysis

Previous sections of this literature review have outlined 1) how scholars understand crises and how the particular crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic arose, 2) the state of work and the rise of the informal economy in a post-industrial capitalist society, 3) the unique challenges within the food and beverage industry, and 4) how scholars have attempted to understand individual and societal level responses to certain conditions. Each of these previous sections has helped to provide narrative for the context of this study. By understanding the social, political, and economic factors it is easier to understand the conditions of restaurant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by taking a step further and adopting a social constructionist framework, I am to provide a lens for viewing how workers within this study navigate crises. In the following section, I build on the narrative to define the terms used to analyze how it is that people respond to crisis through measures of coping. By adopting a framework of resistance and dignity, I build on the literature that suggests people consciously and unconsciously seek out ways to preserve a personal sense of dignity amid potentially nondignifying situations.

2.6.1 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies may take on a number of forms to achieve a wide range of desired and unintentional outcomes when dealing with a stressful situation. Among Psychologists, there is a general consensus as to the properties of coping—though the finer points may be disputed (Cox and Ferguson 1991). According to Ferguson and Cox (1997), coping can be defined by three different attributes: 1) the functions: "what individuals believe coping behaviours are designed to achieve," 2) the behaviors: "what action is taken, "and 3) styles: "a group of behaviours and/or cognitions which are similar in terms of their mode of action" (Ferguson and Cox 1997). Applied together, these three attributes can be called the Functional Dimensions of Coping Scale (Ferguson and Cox 1997). I adopt the general Functional Dimensions of Coping Scale framework (FDC) and apply it to better understand the various patterns that individuals use to cope amidst the crisis of joblessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. While functions can be relatively difficult interpret because decisions by an individual may not be known to the person or may not be shared with the researcher, context clues can be helpful in determining where a particular function fits on the FDC (Ferguson and Cox 1997). The behaviors are perhaps the easiest to understand; they are simply the action (or inaction that people take in order to deal with a particular situation. Coping styles can be found by grouping people together based on similar characteristics of both the function (intent) and the behavior (action) (Ferguson and Cox 1997). Using coping styles along with the coping functions allows me as the researcher to make sense of the data through creating coding frames (Krippendorf 1980).

While Ferguson and Cox (1991; 1997) utilize a strictly quantitative approach to determine the FDC in their research—by applying Confirmatory Factor Analysis to their data—I

take a more qualitative approach to make sense of how restaurant workers cope during the pandemic. I also add in layers of analysis to understand the scale upon which the coping is being done. To aid in this more qualitative understanding of coping, I turn to the feminist empowerment literature. Jo Rowlands (1995; 1997) is a feminist empowerment scholar who seeks to understand how women resist oppressive authority and gain a personal or societal sense of power and autonomy. Her work uses a scaled approach to understanding how female empowerment is achieved (Rowlands 1995; 1997). The individual level is the most personal and smallest scale that empowerment can be achieved (maybe this is internal empowerment or one's own actions). The largest level at which empowerment can be achieved is at the collective level. At this level, multiple people are involved—and it may involve some structural shifts in the way women are seen as empowered beings (changing a societal norm involving women). I utilize this scale (Rowlands 1995) to understand the various styles of coping (Ferguson and Cox 1997) that people use. I define points along the scale as: the individual (micro), interpersonal or relational (meso), and collective (macro) levels to clarify coding processes—and therefore enable a clearer understanding of if and how particular types of coping lead to personal dignity preservation.

2.6.2 Dignity Maintenance

After the concept of coping is clearly identified and codified, it is then important to understand what exactly is meant by dignity—and specifically dignity maintenance and/or preservation. Although dignity as a concept often lacks clarity amongst scholars (Lukas 2015), I adopt a definition that states "dignity is a psychological or cognitive outcome whereby individuals achieve a 'sense of' dignity, self-worth, value, self-respect, or esteem" (Keisu 2017;

Hodson 2001; Lukas 2015). This definition of dignity allows for personal and subjective feelings of self-worth to be as valuable as more external measures of dignity. Moreover, this understanding of dignity comes from a grounded theoretical approach (Charmaz).

Hodson (2001) considers dignity as he seeks to "aid in the development of concepts appropriate for the study of dignity". To complete his goal of understanding how dignity at work is possible, Hodson (2001) highlights four ethnographic studies that show ways that people create dignity, and times when creating dignity becomes challenging because of workplace settings. The four types of dignity (resistance, citizenship, creation of independent meaning systems, and development of social relations at work) seek to combat the challenges (mismanagement and abuse, overwork, limits to autonomy, and contradictions on involvement) often faced at work (Hodson 2001). Hodson shows how workers seek out dignity to realize their full dignity. Borrowing from Marx (1977) and Weber (1978), Hodson updates the theoretical foundations of alienation, and rationalization. Essentially, because of a capitalist system, workplaces continue to invent challenges for producing worker dignity, through overwork, negative co-worker interactions, and mismanagement (Hodson 2001). Hodson contends that while workplace conditions have changed since the early 20th century, dignity remains central to the needs of workers. And, while industry owners will continue to fight worker dignity to keep them organizing and demanding change, organizations would actually benefit from this process (Hodson 2001). Understanding that dignity should be a basic human right organizes both individual and group level action. I adopt Hodson's (2001) 4 measurements for understanding workplace dignity: 1) resistance, which includes a variety of strategies to mitigate the power of employers and highlight personal agency, 2) citizenship, the sense of

belonging to a particular workplace, 3) the creation of meaning systems, which is the variety of ways that people seek out and find meaning in and through their work, and 4) the development of social relations through bonding, befriending, and confiding in coworkers, to evaluate the nebulous space occupied by food and beverage industry workers in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although I define the specific type of dignity as workplace dignity, I recognize that many of the food and beverage industry workers that participated in this research were, in fact, out of work.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature has outlined 1) how scholars understand crises and how the particular crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic arose, 2) the state of work and the rise of the informal economy in a post-industrial capitalist society, 3) the unique challenges within the food and beverage industry, 4) how scholars have attempted to understand individual and societal level responses to certain conditions, 5) how individuals respond to crisis, and 6) the ways that individuals (and particularly workers) seek out dignity preservation strategies despite the environmental conditions.

In the following sections, I build on previous work by utilizing the coping and dignity frameworks from this literature review to analyze the various coping mechanisms that individuals and groups took on during periods of joblessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. I hypothesize, that by using the outlined frameworks in conjunction, it becomes possible to untangle the various ways that people seek out dignity preservation—even in periods of time where that might seem unlikely or difficult. Such an analysis allows for personal identity to become a salient component to understanding a variety of outcomes. By analyzing both coping

and dignity together, I can better understand how some coping mechanisms may lead to different outcomes than others—and how positionality can play a large role in one's ability to both cope and find a personal sense of dignity. Better understanding how workers cope during periods of joblessness and attempt to preserve dignity has implications, not only for understanding what happened to out-of-work people during COVID, but also for how various strategies may be implemented in the future for better outcomes during periods of crisis (such as mass unemployment, economic collapse, etc).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Chapter Overview and Epistemological Foundations

In this chapter, I describe the epistemological and methodological approach I adopt for

the investigation of this research to better understand coping and dignity maintenance

strategies that people engage during periods of joblessness, reduced employment, and the

resulting uncertainty about one's own chosen career path. My dissertation contributes to the

literature on workplace dignity in a unique way; I borrow from various existing literatures on

dignity strategies in the workplace (Hodson, 2001) to describe the experience of food and

beverage workers through the unprecedented historical event of the COVID-19 pandemic. The

methodologies I employ in this research follows a grounded theoretical approach from a

constructivist framework (Charmaz 2014), an epistemological approach that seeks knowledge

from the community being researched (restaurant workers) to understand how to frame the

project from the outset. I worked closely with restaurant workers throughout the process to

understand what it is that restaurant workers were experiencing during the pandemic and how

this research may be useful to workers in the industry. By employing an iterative mixed-

methodological process, whereby the dissertation direction was analyzed at each crossroads—

based on information and feedback from the research participants, I am able to meaningfully

produce knowledge with and for the community being researched (Charmaz, 2014). Through

this research process, I seek to flip the script of traditional research on communities

experiencing precariousness, by showing the various ways people seek to maintain agency and

command dignity. I do this as a way to redefine whose voices are being heard—and how those

voices are being heard—within academia.

Primarily, this research dissertation closely follows Charmaz's approach to data collection and coding (2014), by utilizing a grounded theoretical approach to better understand how it is that food and beverage workers coped during the COVID-19 pandemic and if and how their coping strategies lead to dignity maintenance. An inductive methodological approach was utilized, whereby theory was developed through the research and coding process, helped me as the researcher, to understand what exactly "coping" and dignity" meant to and looked like for the research participants. Allowing the participants to construct a narrative about what they did to cope with the COVID-19 crisis allows me as a researcher to add to the body of literature that speaks to dignity. By employing grounded mixed methodology, I am able better understand what dignity means in practice. Dignity as a concept in academia often lacks clarity amongst scholars (Lukas 2015). To clarify this research's use of the term dignity, I adopt a definition that states "dignity is a psychological or cognitive outcome whereby individuals achieve a 'sense of' dignity, self-worth, value, self-respect, or esteem" (Keisu 2017; Hodson 2001; Lukas 2015). I adopt Hodson's (2001) 4 measurements for workplace dignity: 1) resistance, 2) citizenship, 3) the creation of meaning systems, and 4) the development of social relations to evaluate the nebulous space occupied by food and beverage industry workers in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although I define the specific type of dignity as workplace dignity, based on the body of scholarly literature that precedes me, I recognize that many of the food and beverage industry workers that participated in this research were, in fact, out of work.

3.2 Methodologies Employed

To answer my research questions: 1) How are restaurant workers impacted by the mass layoffs caused by COVID-19? And 2) What, if any, are internalized and externalized strategies

for maintaining dignity amidst this crisis—at the individual, relational, and collective levels? I

engage in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. By utilizing surveys created with the

help of restaurant workers and interviews as my primary source of data collection, I seek to add

to knowledge production through a grounded approach that understands that non-

academicians can be experts in their fields and of their lives (Smith 2021). The research

methods, and, indeed the pandemic itself as the subject matter, were developed as events

were unfolding and necessitated constant adjustments to not only the research questions but

also the methods used. In part, this research also takes advantage of the only available

methods for data collection during a global halt to previously taken-for-granted styles of

communication—and evaluating findings after the data had been collected.

The use of surveys and interviews allowed me to gather data on workers in the

restaurant industry who have experienced reduced workloads or joblessness as a result of

COVID-19. There were two surveys created with the intent to build a narrative as to how

workers were experiencing increased precariousness as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondarily, these surveys tried to capture working conditions for restaurant workers before

the pandemic—as well as understand projections for the future of restaurant work after the

pandemic is over. Interviews allowed for a more in-depth discussion about how workers coped

with the pandemic and if and how those coping strategies lead to dignity preservation and/or

newfound dignity.

3.2.1 Positionality and Trustworthiness

To effectively and ethically conduct and analyze this research, it is imperative to note

the ways in which my privilege as a white researcher from a well-respected university may

impact the choice of research, as well as the outcomes of this research. As someone in a position of privilege, I recognize that much of the previous work and dignity research has analyzed macro level data to show the ways in which bodies of color are subordinated to those in power—predominantly white men. I recognize that my position as a white researcher has given me access to organizations and resources that might not be available to others outside of the academic community. To lessen the power differential that may be perceived between me (as the researcher) and research participants, which may have affected the information gathered, I attempted to gain "in-group" status with research participants through identifying myself as a former restaurant worker of nearly a decade. By disclosing both my status as a researcher—and also someone who has worked in their industry—I was able to gain access to opinions, thoughts, and feelings, which may otherwise go unheard.

In the midst of a global pandemic where any in-person research was prohibited, I had to gain the trust of food and beverage industry workers in different ways than originally intended. It was, therefore, more difficult to gain access to workers and to know how reliable the data would be. Trustworthiness or validity is increasingly important within the bounds of qualitative methods. To increase the rigor of my data I used triangulation. Triangulation is a set of multiple methods used to "develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomenon" (Patton, 1999). In my study, I achieved triangulation by employing multiple methods of contact with research participants. My data collection spans more than one year, helping to ensure sufficient engagement with research participants. For example, by using two different surveys given at two different times and to two unique groups, I was able to verify the responses by comparing the two groups.

3.2.2 Project Background and Timeline

This dissertation was both hindered and enabled by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The original research topic (and the topic of my IRB approval and successful dissertation proposal defense on December 2, 2019) was meant to focus on immigrant workers experiences with exploitation in the restaurant industry. By March 1, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was starting to rage across the country. I had begun my research on the exploitation of immigrants in the restaurant industry—having sent out the original survey via social media at the end of February. However, after about 10 days of having the survey "live" I was receiving no responses to my inquiries. Suddenly, and because the pandemic was bringing a halt to business, rendering people out of work, my original topic felt out-of-touch and inappropriate for what was happening around the country and globe. On March 16, 2020 a majority of states put a stay-at-home order in to effect that shut down most food and beverage establishments, effectively ending my original line of questioning. To continue my research, I realized that I needed to pivot my original research topic and to utilize COVID-appropriate research methods. While the epistemological and theoretical portions of my research remained unchanged (grounded theory and the concept of dignity), revisions to the methodological approaches were necessary. In April 2020, appropriate revisions were sent to the IRB and dissertation committee. As a result, I was able to implement multiple rounds of surveys and interviews to gather as much data as possible and to continue to let people talk about their experiences during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic between April 2020 and March 2021. Figure 1 outlines the timeline of the entire project.

Figure 1: Research Process Timeline

Activity	Oct-December 2019	January-March 2020	April-December 2020	2021	2022	2023
IRB Approval	▓					
Dissertation Proposal Defense	▓					
Original Survey Design Implementation (discarded)		▓				
IRB Amendment			▓			
S1 Design Implementation			▓			
Potential interviewees contacted			▓			
Interviews conducted			▓			
Interviews transcribed				▓		
S1 data cleaned				▓		
S2 Design Implementation				▓		
S2 data cleaned				▓		
S1 and S2 data recoded and merged				▓		

Figure 1 (cont'd)

Interview coding and analysis						
Writing						
Dissertation Defense and Submission						

3.3 Mixed Methods Project Design, Creation, and Implementation

3.3.1 Surveys

Surveys are an incredibly useful and time-tested method for analysis. Surveys allow researchers to capture large sample-sizes in a relatively efficient manner. They are seen as the standard for quantitative analysis since they generally provide close-ended responses that can more easily be coded and lead to the final analysis. While there is no "standard" for creating a survey, there are standards for how to create a high-response and high-accuracy survey that is based on a theoretical foundation of social exchange theory (Dillman et al, 2009). While both randomized and representative data may be ideal, these survey sampling methods relied on snowball survey distribution to reach the broadest audience. The tradeoffs between representative sampling and snowball sampling were deemed to be worthwhile, as limited time and money could not necessarily ensure that equal representation could be achieved (Kish, 1949).

Snowball sampling in this research dissertation relied heavily on input from a few key members of the community (restaurant workers) to create an accessible and informative survey instrument. These restaurant workers involved in early survey creation also enabled me to gain

access to other members of the restaurant community (Harkness, 2003). The survey creation

for this research utilized Dillman et al's useful manual on surveys for best practices regarding

question creation and survey implementation (3rd edition, 2009).

3.3.1.1 *Survey 1*

The first survey is a 42-question close-ended survey (referred to as S1), which asks

restaurant workers about some of their personal demographic information, including

race/ethnicity, gender identity, relationship status, age, educational background, and their

current living situation. In addition to demographic data, survey participants were also asked

about their work in the restaurant industry previous and current, and how they have been

coping with loss of work as a result of COVID-19[17]. The survey was tested by five current

industry workers through my restaurant industry network. Revisions were made and then the

finalized survey was created through Qualtrics and distributed via weblinks.

To reach a broad audience, various national restaurant worker online forums were

asked to share the survey information and distribute it to members. The survey link was also

sent out to personal restaurant contacts for dissemination. Over 100,000 people had access to

viewing the survey through Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, member email lists from

various nonprofit organizations were used to distribute the survey link. In all, this survey has an

estimated sampling frame of close to 150,000 people[18]. A total of 379 surveys were collected

from this survey. To ensure there were not multiple responses by one respondent, responses

were monitored using an IP address tracker. Only surveys that had at least 33% of all the

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[17] A complete list of questions can be found in appendix C

[18] It is difficult to determine response rate since the rate of interaction with the link is unknown. 150,000 people represents the total number of people who could have possibly seen a link to the survey.

questions answered were kept and analyzed. Surveys were collected between April 1st, 2020

and June 30th 2020. Survey respondents were from 40 out of 51 states (including the District of

Columbia) and 324 unique postal area codes. The state of Michigan represented the largest

sampling area, followed by Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois[19]. The states not

represented in the survey data were: Alaska, Hawaii, Missouri, Maine, Montana, Nebraska,

North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, and Vermont. Survey respondents were not

paid for taking the survey but were given the option to register for a paid in-depth interview.

The survey data was collected anonymously using the Qualtrics platform. Respondents

had the option to "opt-in" to providing contact information in the event that they were

interested in conducting a paid interview. The email addresses were downloaded into a

separate file and then deleted from the survey so that there was no remaining identifying

information. About 200 people indicated that they would be interested in an interview; all 200

people were contacted.

3.3.1.2 *Survey 2*

The second survey (referred to as S2) consists of 67 close-ended questions and was

created in conjunction with the School of Human Resources and Labor Relations for a grant

through the Midwest Mobility Poverty Network[20]. This dataset targeted only the greater

Lansing area as well as Michigan more broadly—as its primary function was to analyze

restaurant workers' economic mobility specifically within the state. S2 asked the same

demographic data as S1, (I was an author of both, therefore demographic questions and

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[19] Michigan had 70 respondents, Florida had 21, Pennsylvania had 20, Ohio had 19, and Illinois had 18. All States were determined by Postal Codes provided by survey takers.
[20] This survey was part of a grant project funded by MMPN through the University of Michigan.

classifications remained constant) including race/ethnicity, gender identity, relationship status,

age, educational background, and their current living situation. In addition to questions related

to past and current experience in the restaurant industry, and COVID-related questions, S2 also

focused on the conditions that restaurant workers have faced and will continue to face at work

(since at this point, workers had been returning to work)[21]. S2 was created through Qualtrics

and distributed via weblink and QR codes. It was distributed first through local nonprofit

organizations' email lists. Additionally, canvassing restaurants in Central and Southeast

Michigan and paid targeted Facebook ads were used to gather more responses. The total

sampling frame is estimated to be 2,000 people[22]. A total of 300 completed surveys (surveys

that had at least 33% completion rate) were collected from this survey. To ensure there were

not multiple responses by one respondent, responses were monitored using an IP address

tracker. Surveys were collected between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021. A majority of

respondents came from the Lansing and East Lansing Area, followed by Grand Rapids, Detroit,

and Ypsilanti[23]. The first 100 survey respondents received a five-dollar gift card for participating,

and respondents were entered into a drawing to win one of five gift cards worth between

twenty-five dollars and fifty dollars[24].

3.3.1.3 *Combining and Analyzing the Survey Data*

Once all surveys had been collected, downloaded as .csv's, they were uploaded to SPSS

and cleaned. Data "cleaning" was done by standardizing any variables or responses (e.g. making

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[21] A complete list of questions can be found in appendix D

[22] Based on information gathered from Facebook analytics, email lists size, and number of employees at each restaurant location.

[23] East Lansing/Lansing had 50 responses, Grand Rapids had 17, Detroit had 13, and Ypsilanti had 9.

[24] Respondents had to "opt-in" to drawing using a "blind" weblink embedded within the survey.

sure "time worked in the industry" was represented in months and all "hourly wages" were

recorded using standardized American currency). After each dataset (S1 and S2) was cleaned,

they were merged into a new dataset in SPSS. After the datasets were merged, recoding was

done as necessary to make sense of the data[25]. The process took place in August 2021. S1 and

S2 were merged (all demographic data was coded the same). Because I designed and

implemented both S1 and S2, cleaning and recoding was easily done with precision and respect

to individual respondents. All overlapping questions were merged and any unique questions

from S1 or S2 remained unchanged in the newly created dataset. To understand the distinct

surveys all S1 surveys were given an ID of 2020 while S2 surveys were given an ID of 2021. It is

unknown if there are overlapping respondents between the two surveys, however, because

different groups were targeted, and therefore different samples were used, it is not very likely

that there is significant overlap between the two. Finally, the cleaned and recoded data was

then transferred into STATA for more in-depth analysis.

Table 1 provides demographic insights for each dataset.

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[25] For example, some continuous variables were made into categorical variables, some categories were deleted or merged into other categories if not properly or meaningfully populated.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Surveys

	S1	Count	Percent	S2	Count	Percent
Racial and Ethnic Background						
White or Caucasian		332	87.60%		267	89.00%
Black or African American		10	2.60%		17	5.70%
Hispanic (white)		18	4.70%		16	5.30%
Indigenous (including Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander)		6	1.60%		3	1.00%
Other (including Middle Eastern, Jewish, and Non-White Hispanic)		9	2.40%		8	2.70%
Multi-Racial		11	2.90%		6	2.00%
Prefer not to Disclose		7	1.80%		10	3.30%
TOTAL		**393**	**100.00%**		**327**	**100.00%**
Gender Identification						
Male		31	8.20%		56	18.70%
Female		338	89.20%		237	79.00%
Transgender/Gender Queer/ Non-Binary		4	1.10%		4	1.30%
Prefer not to Disclose		1	0.30%		3	1.00%
TOTAL		**375**	**100.00%**		**300**	**100.00%**
Educational Attainment						
Some High School		10	2.70%		12	4.00%
GED or High School Diploma		78	20.70%		68	22.70%
Post-secondary Trade School		13	3.50%		8	2.70%
Some College (includes Associate's Degree)		181	48.10%		157	52.30%
Bachelor's Degree		74	19.70%		44	14.70%
Graduate School		20	5.30%		11	3.70%
TOTAL		**376**	**100.00%**		**300**	**100.00%**
Relationship Status						
Single		88	23.50%		80	26.80%
Dating/In a Relationship		120	32.00%		76	25.40%
Long-term Partnership		38	10.10%		37	12.40%
Married		98	26.10%		85	28.40%
Divorced or Widowed		31	8.30%		15	5.00%
Prefer not to Disclose		0	0.00%		6	2.00%
TOTAL		**375**	**100.00%**		**299**	**100.00%**
Type of Food or Beverage Establishment						
Fine Dining		52	14.00%		46	15.50%
Casual Dining		273	73.40%		163	55.10%
Quick Service/Fast Food		9	2.40%		25	8.40%
Café/Bakery/Deli/ Sandwich Shop		5	1.30%		14	4.70%
Food Establishment Outside the Restaurant Industry (Residential Dining	NA*	NA*		14	4.70%
Other (Not Specified)		33	8.90%		34	11.50%
TOTAL		**372**	**100.00%**		**296**	**100.00%**
Job Title						
Front of House Manager, Assistant Manager, or Shift Manager		50	13.40%		49	17.10%
Host		7	1.90%		6	2.10%
Waiter/ Server		183	49.20%		79	27.60%
Barback/Busser/Dishwasher		73	19.60%		76	26.60%
Bartender		0	0.00%		3	1.00%
Back of House Manager or Chef		17	4.60%		19	6.60%
Cook or other Kitchen Personnel		14	3.80%		34	11.90%
Other		28	7.50%		20	7.00%
TOTAL		**372**	**100.00%**		**286**	**100.00%**

	S1	N	Mean	Max	S2	N	Min	Max
Age		369	33.38	65		299	19	66
Time in Industry (in years)		367	12.66	47		294	0.01	40.00
Hourly Wage		347	$9.00	$45.00		291	$2.13	$50.00

*response category not given on this survey

3.3.2 Benefits and Limitations of the Survey Data

Surveys are very useful tools for collecting information, particularly because of how easily they can be quantified (Maxim 1999). The ability to capture data and analyze it with relative ease allows for the smooth transference from the data collection to analytic phase. The quantifiability of, specifically, close-ended surveys provide a limited number of options for respondents to choose from, which, therefore, narrows down the possibility for range of responses (Saris and Krosnick 2000). This limited number of variations in responses makes coding and analyzing data much easier.

There are, however, tradeoffs with the use of surveys. Surveys tend to be very focused on objective measures—focusing on a narrow set of correlations between different data points. This positivistic mindset can often lead researchers to become tunnel-visioned on creating a narrative based on "relations among variables or causal forces (Abbott 2004). The focus on objectivity can lead researchers to see numbers and figures, as opposed to the people who are acting as test subjects. It also focuses on "transcendent" knowledge instead of "situated" knowledge, which creates a power imbalance between the expert and the lay person. The blurring between people and numbers can also contribute to this power divide (Blau 1964). No longer does the participant feel an active part of the research, but rather becomes just an object in the process. The natural process of surveys lends itself to these power dynamics and requires a lot of focused attention as to how to mitigate this possibility.

In addition to the methodological benefits and limitations of survey data, the particular data gathered from the two surveys provides both unique opportunities and challenges for the purposes of research design, implementation, and analysis. S1 and S2 were widely distributed

using both local and national channels. Overall, there was a sample frame of over 250,000 people. However, only 679 people completed these surveys. From the literature, we know that online surveys have a higher non-response rate than traditional survey methods[26] because there is a relatively high level of non-engagement with links or anonymous emails. Therefore, the response rate is somewhat expected.

My combined demographic data (from S1 and S2) is skewed more heavily female, white, and (more) educated than the restaurant worker population at large. While 51% of food and beverage workers identify as women[27] (BLS 2020, https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm), 84.7% of my survey respondents identify as women. Whereas the national average of white restaurant workers is just about 60%, white respondents in my data represented 88.2% of all survey participants. Similarly, the national percentage for workers who identify as Hispanic/Latino is 27.5%, whereas Hispanic/Latinos only represented 5% of my survey respondents. Additionally, while the average[28] level of education among the entire food and beverage industry is "high school diploma or equivalent" (https://www.bls.gov), survey respondents for my research had on average "some college (including an associate's degree)".

From the literature, scholars know that whites are more likely to participate in traditional survey research than non-whites (Curtin et al 2000; Groves, Singer, & Corning, 2000; Voight, Koepsell & Daling, 2003). There is also evidence to suggest that women are more likely to respond to surveys than men[29] (Kwak & Radler 2002; Saxon, Gilroy, and Cairns 2003; Smith

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[26] Phone, mail, or in-person
[27] All job titles and work environments combined
[28] The mean, according to BLS data on food and beverage industry workers over the age of 25 for 2018-2019.
[29] No matter the distribution method.

2008: Underwood, Kim, & Matier 2000). The skew toward higher education than average (for the industry) also adds an additional layer of necessary reflexivity within my data sample.

It is reasonable to suggest that my oversampling of white women was, in part, a result of the online-only methods required during a global pandemic. Whereas in-person contact would have been made (via in-person restaurant distribution) and could reasonably target a more representative sample, an online and electronic-only distribution favored white women— women who were likely able to stay at home (instead of seeking out other employment) and had time to complete a survey. Women also make up a majority of social media platform users like Facebook and Instagram. As of July 2021, 55% of all Facebook users in the US were women (statista.com). The oversampling of white educated people in the surveys is a bit more nuanced, and potentially difficult to explain away. However, the fact that this study was conducted by a white PhD candidate for the fulfillment of a dissertation[30] and white educated folks typically have more social and physical capital than non-white and less educated folks, this response rate may not be surprising.

3.3.3 Interviews

In contrast to most survey methodology, interviews tend to be in-depth conversation with relatively few people, thus making them less generalizable, but perhaps increases the ability to garner substantive information (Abbott, 2004). Following Charmaz's example for interviewing through a grounded theoretical approach, I opted for semi-structured interviews that are fluid based on individualized discussions (Charmaz, 2014).

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[30] Educational attainment is heavily correlated with socio-economic status and race, and therefore the disproportionate response of white women may be an explanatory factor for greater levels of educational attainment.

Conducting interviews with participants, in conjunction with the survey distribution, allows me to recall information and gain a deeper understanding of restaurant workers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews provide me the platform to follow up on survey questions and dive deeper into how workers coped with loss of work, and the ways that they do or do not seek to maintain dignity. While the survey information largely provided background as to the realities of life during COVID and their feelings during this time, conducting interviews enabled me to ask in-depth questions as to how coping during the pandemic could lead to dignity maintenance. While a basic script was used to help in the interview and coding process,[31] I adapted the script continuously through conducting early round interviews and changing questions based on how questions were perceived and answered. For example, in early interviews I took for granted (based on my own biases) that interview participants believed the pandemic was real and should be taken seriously, and that the advice of governing bodies (such as the CDC) should be followed. However, after just a few interviews I realized that my own bias was influencing the questions being asked, so I adapted the interview tool to help me as the interviewer better understand how interviewees, 1) interpreted the COVID-19 pandemic and its protocols, and 2) their general sentiment about safety and level of concern. Ultimately, the ways that respondents answered these questions altered the way that I led the rest of the interview.

Overall, I reached out to about 200 survey respondents via email (who had indicated interest in a paid interview), sixty of whom responded to my request for a one-hour, paid interview. Forty-two people followed through with their intent, by arranging a time and

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[31] The interview script is attached as Appendix E

providing me with contact information and were called at an arranged-upon date and time. All

interviews took place between May 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020—after the first survey, but

before the second.

All interviews were done over the phone. Upon starting the call, I asked participants for

their preferred method for financial compensation (i.e., phone app, paypal, or mailed gift card).

All participants chose a phone app or paypal method, and I sent the money, immediately while

on the phone, to ensure payment went through. I had previously sent all participants consent

forms to read through, and after the payment was confirmed, we reviewed the document

together. I received a verbal consent from all participants—which was recorded using a third-

party recording device—before the start of the interview. All interviews lasted between 30-90

minutes, with the average being around 45 minutes.

3.3.3.1 *Coding Process*

A third party transcription service transcribed all the interviews in early 2021. I

downloaded the transcribed interviews as .docx files and saved using the name and the date of

the interview. I then uploaded the interviews to a qualitative software package, Dedoose, for

coding. During the coding process, all participants were given pseudonyms, which I kept kept in

an encrypted file separate from notes and analysis. I coded interviews according to themes that

emerged as a result from review of the literature as well as during the field research process

(Saldana 2009; Charmaz 2014). Coding was an evolving process. While initially, I coded the data

using a matrix (with internal and external on the x axis and individual and collective on the y

axis), this format did not fit the data well. Therefore, I created a new method for coding the

level of coping analysis, which was adopted following Rowlands (1997) use of a linear scale

between individual and collective. Based on this scale for understanding level of analysis, as well as the dimensions of coping scale (Ferguson and Cox 1997) and Hodson's theory for maintaining dignity at work (Hodson 2001), I developed the following codes for analysis:

- Background of industry work

    o Length of time in industry

    o Positions held in industry

    o Views on industry as a career

    o Current employment status

    o Overall satisfaction with the restaurant industry

- Personal adherence to COVID-19 rules, regulations, and protocols

- Personal descriptions of mood changes since the onset of COVID-19 (Ferguson and Cox 1997)

- Methods for coping during periods of joblessness during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ferguson and Cox 1997; Rowlands 1995; 1997)

    o Individual (done by one's self and/or for one's self)

        ▪ Identity preservation coping strategies

    o Relational (interpersonal relationships)

    o Collective (done with a group and for organizing purposes).

- The ways that individual, relational, and collective coping strategies do or do not lead to personal dignity maintenance (Hodson 2001).

- Understanding rights as a worker (Hodson 2001).

- o Recognize need for change in the industry (pay, treatment of workers, benefits, etc)

- o Willing to be part of the change

- Making meaning and looking to the future (Hodson 2001)

  - o Hopefulness about one's own future

  - o Hopefulness about the future of the restaurant industry

Throughout the qualitative data collection period, I developed these additional codes (based on participant experience)s:

- Workplace discrimination in the restaurant industry

- Gender-based sexual harassment in the industry

- Internalized insecurities about being in the restaurant industry (how they believed others perceived their work)

3.3.4 Benefits and Limitations of the Interview Data

The interviews I collected do have limitations beyond the lack of generalizability that needs to be considered. The first limitation of these interviews is demographic data (race/ethnicity, gender) were not uniformly collected. Only when an interviewee provided such detail was demographic data recorded. This has limitations in that it is difficult to see trends along a variety of potentially useful demographic boundaries. While the decision to not collect this type of personal information was done intentionally to protect interviewees privacy, the lack of specific demographic data does present challenges.

An additional limitation to this set of interviews is that, because of COVID-19-related restrictions, all interviews were conducted via phone call. Phones were used rather than other

forms of online or video communication to increase accessibility to a range of potential participants. While the use of phones did increase the relative ease of conducting interviews, making it possible to conduct a large number within a short timeframe, this method does reduce some of the benefits that interviews traditionally have provided. Specifically, the use of body language and other non-verbal cues to help interpret meaning, intent, and potentially the reliability of the interviewee. Because these non-verbal cues could not be utilized, it was important to the interview process to allow for more pauses between questions to allow for freedom and continuation of thought, instead of relying on visual cues to move on to the next question or set of questions.

However, although there are limitations with this particular set of interviews, the benefits of this data outweigh the limitations. Interviews are incredibly useful tools simply because they allow a story to be told using the participants own words. I, as the researcher, was able to create a narrative based on a conversation and not simply yes/no, categorical, or more simple formats that surveys generally capture. I was able to generate robust and powerful data based on the lived experiences that people shared with me. The interviews in this research study provide unique insight in that they act as a supplemental tool to the survey data—they build upon the knowledge gained and allowed for a more in-depth analysis at particular issues.

3.4 Value of this Mixed-Methods Data

Although the data I collected during this research process does have its challenges and limitations, it ultimately provides unique and meaningful insight for food and beverage industry workers. To my knowledge, this is the only study of its kind that asks questions about pandemic-related job losses. Additionally, this study has the unique advantage of spanning over

a year of time and asking a broad range of questions—from experiences with harassment and discrimination to methods of coping during stressful periods. The data and analysis helps to build on the literature of how and why people maintain a personal sense of dignity; an important contribution to understanding, not only the conditions of food and beverage workers before the pandemic—but also a glimpse into the reality of the future industry and the demands for change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The use of a mixed methods approach, from a Grounded Theoretical perspective, mitigates some of the particular challenges of using either interviews or surveys separately. Particularly a mixed methods approach addresses the issue of the imbalance of power that can accompany more positivistic approaches, the lack of generalizability of interviews, and the lack of substantive information garnered from survey close-ended survey responses.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodological approaches I adopted aims at understanding the coping and dignity maintenance strategies that restaurant workers in my study engage during periods of joblessness, underemployment, and uncertainty about one's own chosen career path. The survey and interview methodologies I employed in this research follow a grounded theoretical approach from a constructivist framework (Charmaz 2014). By employing an iterative mixed-methodological process, I was able to meaningfully produce knowledge with and for the community being researched (Charmaz, 2014). Through this research process, I have sought out ways to make the voices of low wage and precarious worker communities not only heard, but part of the research process itself. As discussed in this chapter, the data collected for this project has both strengths and weaknesses; yet the mixed

methodological approach adopted helps to mitigate some of the particular challenges for both surveys and interviews. While my dataset is not representative of the population analyzed, it still provides valuable insights into the coping strategies and dignity maintenance strategies of restaurant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS: A BACKGROUND

4.1 Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic brought taken-for-granted everyday activities to a screeching halt, many in the hospitality industry found themselves suddenly out of work. Restaurant workers became newly unsure of their status as workers—the uncertainty surrounding lockdown—and the virus in general—created a confusion as to if and when restaurants would reopen. In the first weeks, restaurant workers found themselves trying to navigate the logistics of this new reality. There was an immediate loss of income, fear about an unknown virus, and complete uncertainty about their future. This "crisis" of mass unemployment, economic instability, and uncertainty about one's future led me to explore how those in the restaurant industry, most affected by joblessness as a result of COVID-19 found coping mechanisms and strategies for self-preservation and dignity.

To better understand the ways that restaurant workers seek out coping mechanisms to deal with this new crisis, this study employs two primary modes of data collection to identify both the structural issues surrounding restaurant workers' lives and employment and the lived experiences and coping mechanisms that people utilized to get through the pandemic. A national survey was sent out first via social media outlets and restaurant groups and email lists, aimed at capturing the broader social and financial impacts of the pandemic on restaurant industry workers. It was sent out right as waves of lockdowns were happening across the country—allowing me to understand the structural challenges and constraints that people were experiencing during the immediate aftermath of COVID shutdowns in March and April. From those respondents to the survey, 41 people were selected to participate in in-depth interviews

that allowed me to explore individuals' backgrounds, how they got into the industry, how they

felt about the industry, and how the COVID-related shutdowns impacted their current

situations and future in the industry. Using Ferguson and Cox's (1997) defining attributes of

coping[32], Rowlands[33] (1997) empowerment scale, and Hodson' four mechanisms for achieving

dignity (2001) as guides, the coding process uncovered three types of coping mechanisms that

restaurant workers in my sample adopt, which serve them in a time for reflection,

improvement, and change in one's own life and one's relationship with the restaurant industry.

Specifically, the three primary types of coping mechanisms[34] I identify in this study are 1) formal

educational endeavors, 2) organizing and philanthropic work, and 3) projects. I code "formal

education" as any pursuit of education with the intended goal to make a career shift or to

explore an avenue of interest. I code "organizing and philanthropic work" as activities that

people are doing outside of themselves to change society or give back in some way. Finally, I

code "projects" as activities that engaged participants in something they didn't have time,

money, or (mental) space for before the pandemic started. These three coping mechanisms are

not uniform in their achievement of maintaining a sense of personal dignity. This chapter will

explore how and why that may be.

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[32] "what individuals believe coping behaviours are designed to achieve," 2) the behaviors: "what action is taken, "and 3) styles: "a group of behaviours and/or cognitions which are similar in terms of their mode of action" (Ferguson and Cox, 1997).

[33] Individual level as the smallest measurement and collective level as the largest along the scale.

[34] These three "categories" of coping mechanisms are certainly not the only types of coping that people engaged in—in fact there was a variety. However, the purpose of this study is to understand the ways in which coping mechanisms during periods of crises lead to personal and societal change. Therefore, activities like drinking, smoking, sleeping, general malaise and despondence—while valid coping mechanisms—will not be analyzed here.

The types of coping mechanisms adopted were, in part, related to peoples' identities

existing within structural constraints. Identity can be understood as one's own relationship to

the restaurant industry—whether or not they identify as a "restaurant worker" or whether they

merely find themselves in the industry and if they see this field as a career. Structural

constraints can be understood as privilege relating to one's own social location (including age,

race/ethnicity, gender, marital status, having children, etc) and one's own ability to pursue

endeavors to fulfill personal interests or pursuits. It is my contention that both the complexities

of structural constraints and one's own personal identification as a worker (specifically within

the industry) impacts the coping mechanisms employed throughout their periods of

joblessness. Therefore, these identities—which can be defined as a unique combination of both

objective (statuses that are assigned, unchangeable, or established) and subjective (statuses

that are chosen or socially constructed)—together with structural constraints should be

understood as spectrums primarily because very few people have a single identity, privilege, or

marginalization (Cherney and Lindemann 2014; Lindemann 2007). Every "identity" that is used

to describe and examine people is offered voluntarily. Although the national survey asks

(anonymous) detailed questions about demographics and personal background, I intentionally

did not ask those questions in the interviews (which were done remotely as a result of COVID-

related research restrictions). At the time, it felt unnecessarily invasive—in light of sharing

other very intimate details about their lives and careers. As a result, I have very little identifying

information about individuals, except what they chose to disclose to me—a white, female

researcher who has a background in the restaurant industry. Therefore, for many interviewees,

these self-disclosed identity markers are very salient to who they are, how they see themselves,

and how others see them (as it pertains to their work in the industry). The combination of data collected uncovers a narrative about both the structural context during the pandemic and the lived experiences of individuals—one that is complicated, nonlinear, and nuanced.

4.2 Meeting the Workers

People join the restaurant industry—like any industry—for a variety of reasons. However, the service industry, like other forms of work within the secondary labor market, are made up primarily of women, people of color, immigrants, and others with low socio-economic status, therefore adding a dimension of precarity, instability, and a greater sense of transience (Halpin 2015; Harris and Giuffre 2015; Hochschild 1983; Jayaraman 2013).

When I asked the survey participants about their reasons for being in restaurant work, their primary reasons were: 1) overall enjoyment of the industry, and 2) money-making opportunities. Other reasons were: 3) friends in the industry, 4) few work alternatives, and 5) flexible schedules. To better understand how and why people entered the industry, I relied on interviews to gain additional information on how workers came to work in the restaurant industry. While many people did identify reasons like those listed above (e.g. money-making opportunities, few work alternatives, friends in the industry, etc) an overall theme emerged— one that was more binary. Either workers felt as if they had intentionally begun working in the industry, intending to make a career of this work, or many explained that they simply "fell into it" through a variety of means and never left. These two "ports of entry" helps us understand the many individualized reasons that people choose to work in the restaurant industry—and why they stayed.

4.2.1 Accidental Entry

Some folks got into the industry, as they describe, "on accident." Sean is a restaurant

industry veteran from Massachusetts—having worked as everything from a dishwasher to a

head chef for over 28 years. The morning we spoke, Sean became unemployed from the

restaurant he was helping to open. The owners simply could not weather COVID shutdowns any

longer. When asked about how he came to work in restaurants, he says,

> *I first started working in restaurants as a dish washer when I was in high school, around the age of 16. That was my side job for a little while throughout high school. Then during college, I worked on and off as a baker and a cook. I actually went to college to be a history teacher and discovered that I actually liked kitchens better. I ended up staying in the restaurant industry, something more or less working in the restaurant industry now for 28 years, which is weird to say that now (Sean, 6.15.20).*

Similarly, Sarah, a 40-year old server from Pennsylvania explains her journey through

the restaurant industry this way:

> *I started working in the restaurant industry when I was a teenager. My first job was at Dunkin Donuts. I moved up to Pizza Hut, where I was a server. I started working at Friendly's right after that. I worked in the restaurant until maybe four or five years through late high school and college (Sarah, 6.5.20).*

This type of almost "accidental" experience was very common amongst the restaurant workers

I interviewed. Many people explained that they had entered the industry young—during their

high school or college years as a way to make money—and had simply never left or returned to

the industry after periods away.

4.2.2 On Purpose

Other workers found their way into the industry very purposefully—and as such, have

never envisioned a life outside the restaurant industry. Whether it was their passion for

cooking, a family business, or simply a knack for customer service, many of the people I

interviewed had never really considered another career. Michael, a mid-40's restaurant general

manager from Detroit, Michigan explains his entrance into the restaurant industry this way:

> *My family owned a retail wine, spirits, beer, delicatessen, family-owned sort of an elevated party shop, if you will, from my early childhood, whether it was just going into that environment with family or with my dad for a little while, but that was my first job in the industry at 16, sorting bottles, returnables, stocking shelves, things like tha. tI started working the counter, able to legally sell alcohol, and I was there until I was about 20, on and off. I attended Michigan State University and began working at a dueling piano bar in the Lansing area. I was there for 12 years and worked from entry-line-level security, floor person, up to general manager and operating partner. I've worked as a manager at a high-volume, 100-plus unit beer tap restaurant, smaller general manager positions at non-chain establishments. I've been an opener and operating partner of a grocery outlet inside metro airports. Currently, I'm the General Manager of one of Michigan's largest brewery tap-house concepts (Michael, 6.24.20)*

Similarly, Kevin, a head chef at a popular upscale ramen shop in Detroit Michigan

explains that he always knew he wanted to work in restaurants. He says:

> *I started in the restaurant industry when I was 15. Started as a dishwasher, I was a line cook at a sports bar while I was going through culinary school at school culinary college. From there, I went to a little bit of a nicer place in Ferndale called CORK wine club. Then from there, I moved out to Johnny Noodle King in Detroit where I currently am where I started as a line cook for $10 an hour, and now, I'm the chef (Kevin, 6.27.20).*

The people who entered the industry purposefully tend to have established

relationships in the industry (like Michael's family owning a store) or were highly skilled (Kevin

as a chef). Entering the restaur industry as a choice is a unique career trajectory and can often

require social connections, money, and a certain amount of privilege (being a white male for

instance) (Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 2014). Men tend to make up a majority of the high-

status and high-paid jobs in restaurants that require more "skill," whereas women and people

of color tend to make up a majority of the low-skill and low-paid jobs (Fine 1996; Halpin 2015;

Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 2014). While undoubtedly, Kevin and Michael worked hard to

have the career they do, they also had certain privileveges that others who enter the restaurant industry do not.

4.2.3 Other Reasons for Entering the Industry

4.2.3.1. Flexibility of Work

Among women, the demand for flexibility was key for entering—and remaining—in the industry (Hochschild 1983). Serving and bartending is often viewed as a quick, easy, and flexible way to earn an income, often working around the needs of children and other household members. "Flexibility" for some women often includes taking time off from the industry—to pursue other careers or to be primary caregivers to their children. Regardless. the women I interviewed always found a way back to restaurant work. Sarah, a 40-year mother server from Pennsylvania explains why she left the restaurant industry—and decided to come back:

> *I stopped working [at the restaurant]…Got married, got pregnant, and then became a stay-at-home mom. Then I had my daughter shortly after so I went through maybe like five or six years of not working at all. Then when my daughter was two, she's my last, I went back to working at a restaurant. That was eight years ago" (Sarah, 6.5.20).*

Similarly, Johanna, a single mother in her 40's who lives in Massachusetts and works as a server at a high-end seafood restaurant states that although she worked restaurant jobs through school, her divorce ultimately necessitated a return to the industry:

> *My first job was a family-owned Chinese restaurant. I was 20. I was gone for a long time and then I went back in 2012 after I got divorced and I needed a job…I needed flexible hours, so I could be with my children whenever I wanted to. If they had school things, that really wouldn't work for the 9:00 to 5:00 job being a single mother because they live with their father. Restaurant business was good-looking to me because I could manipulate the hours (Johanna, 5.13.20).*

SB, a restaurant manager from Chicago, also explains how even when they have taken

time away from restaurants, they have always found their way back. SB had this to say about

how they got into working in restaurants:

I started in college as a lot of people do just working part-time to get some spending money. After I graduated from University of Illinois, I have some just entry-level positions that required a little bit of extra money to supplement my income so the service industry was always there for that. It was always great to be able to go in for a dinner shift or something after working the normal 9 to 5 and then I decided to take a little break from my career about five years ago, and then I got back into the service industry full time and got into the management side of it from that point (SB, 4.28.20).

These few excerpts from interviews highlight the variety of experiences and

backgrounds that interviewees had. Whereas differences are highlighted in the experiences and

paths among them. Yet, themes persist amongst them and identities around their work in the

restaurant industry became apparent throughout the interview process. People took periods of

time off, while working in other industries. However—something about the industry drove their

return; whether it was the creativity and sociability that the work provided and for others the

ease with which they could come and go, or the flexibility (pre-pandemic) that other jobs did

not. In the following section, I explore the varied experiences that people had while working in

the industry—both the good and the bad—and seek to understand why this work often pulls

people in.

4.3 Workers' Experiences in the Restaurant Industry

4.3.1 Enjoying Work in the Industry

While many of those who participated in this study did experience and expressed having

negative experiences in the restaurant industry, people do overwhelmingly describe their

satisfaction and enjoyment of the industry. In fact, when asked these questions in the survey,

about three-quarters of respondents indicated that they **enjoyed** their work in the industry—

while 72% said they are **satisfied** with their work. Only 11% of survey respondents indicate that

they were **dissatisfied** with their work. So, while the problems within and throughout the

industry are numerous, workers overwhelmingly find meaning, satisfaction, and enjoyment in

their jobs. Why is this?

While interviewing restaurant workers during a period of incredible crisis and transition,

many people remember their jobs fondly. Some of the fond memories may be attributed to the

fact that these people were nearly all unemployed and so there may have been a certain

amount of "rose-colored glasses" when remembering what they had just weeks ago. However,

most people seem to genuinely enjoy many aspects of their work.

There is a broad array of reasons interviewees gave as to why they enjoyed the

restaurant. Perhaps the most common response about what they like most about the industry

is the people. Respondents indicated that they enjoy things like: a sense of comradery that

accompanies work in the industry, the ability to be social, or the people they were able to meet

and connect with.

Some people really enjoy the social aspect of their work and being able to engage with

many different people everyday. Gabrielle, a 24-year-old server at a casual dining chain, from

Louisiana, is new to the industry. She has this to say about why she enjoys her work:

> *I currently am working at Olive Garden right now. It's my first restaurant job. I love it. I'm very person-oriented, I guess. I really like making people happy. All of my friends said that the restaurant biz especially front of house is a really good place to do that (Gabrielle, 5.14.20).*

Mike is also a server. He works at Cracker Barrel (large, casual, nationwide chain serving "homestyle" or "country" Americana cuisine) in Ohio. He explains, like Gabrielle, why he loves the service industry:

> *I love talking to people…They all love me. My guests are always like, 'You make us feel like we're your friends and stuff. I said, 'You are, I guess' (Mike, 6.12.20).*

Jennifer, a middle-aged woman from the Detroit suburbs—who began working in the restaurant industry in 2018 as a way to make money while she was in nursing school—has this to say:

> *I forgot how much I liked the restaurant industry. I work with some really great people. I love seeing the people that come in. The place I work has a pretty good size, regular crowd. It's been very fun to get to know them (Jennifer, 5.14.20).*

And Carrie similarly states,

> *You just become family, because they know what's going on in your life, because when you're slow, you sit around and you talk to each other. When you're busy, you might get mad and yell, but nobody takes it personal. Nobody. It's just that's what it is, deal with it. What do you need? Move on. You end up spending more time with these handful of people that you work with than anybody else, and you have this comradery, and it just works (Carrie, 5.18.20).*

All of these workers describe the varied nature of restaurant work—it is never boring. Restaurant work enables their outgoing personalities and love of people to be constantly engaged. Many workers also expressed that they feel supported by their coworkers, in a way that differs from other industries.

Others express that they enjoy the creativity of being in the food industry. For the most part, these respondents who enjoy the creative nature of restaurant work are either cooks or bartenders—able to create either food or drinks for customers. They feel as though their work has an element of creativity embedded into it, which makes them feel the importance of their

work—they are creating tangible goods that have an immediate effect on their customers.

Charles, a chef at a high-end restaurant in Ferndale, Michigan expressly states that he enjoys

the creativity that comes along with this job—every day is different and the ability to create

new items is always available (Charles, 6.23.20).

Sean, another chef, states his enjoyment this way:

I really enjoy creating. That's the biggest thing for me, is the creative aspect of cooking. The managerial side isn't as much fun, but I do like the fact that I can go and create really good food, and I'm very good at being organized and calm, and good under pressure. I do like that feeling of the chaos that is the restaurant industry shift (Sean, 6.15.20).

Whether it is the customers the creativity, or the flexibility—a majority of interviewees

find something they really love about the industry. There is a certain amount of tension

between the "problems" that people identify within the industry, but also the overwhelming

sense that most interviewees really enjoy their work. Whether they are in it for the long or

short haul, I as both a researcher and former industry worker, am able to understand that most

of the people I interviewed have formed some type of identity around being a restaurant

worker.

Whereas, there are, of course negative aspects to this work that people speak, there is

always a sense—often at odds with itself—that people almost love to complain about the work

almost as much as they find joy in it. There has always been a sense of comradery among

industry workers (highlighted in the previous section) (Harris and Giuffre 2015). And built within

this sense of comradery is a desire—and perhaps need—to complain about one's work. Within

this complaining process, one fulfills a contradictory yet necessary aspect of the restaurant

world—an oddly addicting, painful yet exhilarating, and unique experience that is only shared

between one's self and one's coworkers. Perhaps similar to what ER teams or deployed military persons experience (albeit with far fewer consequences), the act of "going to battle" and being "in the weeds" (a colloquialism often used by restaurant workers to signify being buried by work) with your fellow workers bonds you in a way that cannot be identified by outsiders and endears you to the process through the incredible rushes of adrenaline and sense of completion after a particularly difficult shift. So, even for those who have plans to eventually leave the restaurant industry, building an identity around being a restaurant worker is almost vital in creating a sense of belonging and engaging in the rituals surrounding this type of work. (Ocejo 2017; Opazo 2016; Wilcoxson and Moore 2019).

Feelings about one's own identity as a restaurant worker are complex. While many express positive experiences in the industry—there are many research participants who have experienced the harsher, sometimes exploitative and dehumanizing, side of the restaurant industry.

4.3.2 Negative Feelings About the Industry

One of the biggest contradictions in interviewees feelings was about their work in the industry and their feelings about how others viewed their work. When asked, nearly half of the interview respondents, responded that they feel their work was important—specifically, they feel a sense of personal accomplishment and that their work created an overall benefit to society. However, when asked how they think others perceived their work, about 60% feel as though their work in the restaurant industry is perceived in a negative light (not important, not "difficult," or not being worthy of being considered a career, etc).

Similarly, while about half of people feel as though their work does have meaning and is important for society, over half of respondents suspect that their customers do not feel the same way about their work in the industry. The mismatch between personal feelings of importance and their feelings about how others perceive their work is recognizable in the ways that restaurant workers characterize their least favorite aspects of working in the restaurant industry. While lots of interviewees claimed that the social aspect was one of the best parts of the industry, almost all interviewees stated that customer service is wildly unpredictable and can be quite challenging at times. This response spans from customers who seem ungrateful and rude, all the way to those who make unwanted sexual advances.

4.3.2.1 The Social and Emotional Labor of Restaurant Work

One of the well-documented issues in the restaurant industry is overall discrimination and harassment (Jayaraman 2013). The research conducted in this study corroborates what has previously been written about in the literature (Harris and Giuffre 2015; Jayaraman 2013; Johnston, Roney, and Chong 2014). Findings from S1 and S2 indicate that one third of respondents report suffering mistreatment by their coworkers, while 20% report mistreatment by management at their place of work. Over half of workers report being mistreated by customers[35]. In all three circumstances (coworkers, management, and customers) around 6% identify that they were "Not sure" if they had been mistreated. Similarly, when asked about experiences with sexual harassment in the workplace,[36] 35% of survey respondents report

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[35] Figures are calculated by a respondent responding to ANY form of mistreatment, including: gender, sexual orientation, age, race/ethnicity, immigration status, appearance, or "Other."
[36] Defined as unwanted sexual advances, inappropriate touching, or inappropriate comments.

experiences with sexual harassment by coworkers, while 19% report it by management, and a full 57% report sexual harassment by customers.

The theme of perceived mistreatment is also seen throughout the interview process. Twenty-one interviewees report that they have experienced some form of discrimination or sexual harassment while at work. The experiences that interviewees share varies quite a bit. However, there are a few commonalities amongst the different experiences. For women in the industry, unwanted sexual advances from coworkers, managers, or particularly customers, are seen as "normal" and "anticipated" aspects of working in the industry.

For example, Lena, who is a 35-year-old line cook from the Detroit, Michigan suburbs has multiple experiences with sexual harassment. She started working in restaurants when she was 15, at IHOP, and has been working in them since. Before the pandemic started, she was working as a cook and was the sole breadwinner for her family. She explains her experience working in the industry like this:

> *I'll tell you the honest truth. I've been in this business so long, and I've been around back of house type of people. Until it went too far, I didn't even consider it as sexual harassment. Comments and just sexual innuendos, stuff like that, because that's just like kitchen talk. It didn't bother me until it became specific towards me. I just told him no…After that, our relationship completely changed. He didn't physically touch me or anything like that, but he definitely smeared my name with some of the higher ups because he wanted to get to them before I did (Lena, 6.26.20).*

For many, this just getting used to "kitchen talk" was pervasive. Many people simply expect this type of behavior because it is so normalized in the restaurant industry. A few interviewees did not even recognize that their experiences were inappropriate until after we had been talking about it.

Women like Deborah, a 32-year-old hostess and server at a casual chain bar and restaurant in the Cleveland, Ohio area downplay their experiences with harassment in the workplace. When talking about instances of harassment or unwanted advances, Deborah shares stories in which men had been blatantly harassing, yet she chalks it up to the fact that "People get a little drunk sitting at a bar/restaurant" instead of labeling it sexual harassment (Deborah, 5.14.20).

In another case, Angela, simply describes harassing behavior as kitchen "antics" and just something to be expected (Angela, 5.19.20). She is from Hilton Head, South Carolina and has been in the industry for over 20 years—most of that time as a chef. Angela recently (pre-pandemic) decided to take some time off from full-time restaurant work and take a job as a receptionist for a chiropractic office. While she considers the harassment as simply "antics" she simply had to live with, the overall work environment she had experienced for the last two decades made her worn out—and led her to consider pursuing other careers.

Unlike some of the other women, Christine, a 30-year veteran bartender working at a supper club in Wisconsin, did not perceive the sexual harassment as negative and instead stated that she felt as though women had an "advantage" because they (women) were able to use their sexuality to affect customers' experiences (and therefore their tips) (Christine, 5.14.20). For her, the harassment and "antics" she received from male customers was overwhelmingly positive, because she could, in her opinion, earn more money by making herself more appealing to the male gaze. Many women, who particularly worked in customer-facing roles, like Christine, Deborah, and Angela did not describe or even recognize harassing

behavior as inherently negative, in part because this type of behavior from male coworkers and customers is simply a normalized part of working in the industry.

In contrast to what many female servers describe, female chefs have a particular set of experiences in terms of their feelings of discrimination and harassment. I spoke to three female-identifying chefs who describe very similar experiences in the restaurant industry. For them, discrimination and harassment is simply part of the job—and part of the reason why they were not sure if they could continue in this career forever. Sam describes a chef she worked with who was particularly "handsy" (Sam, 6.25.20). Lena and Arielle also share similar experiences of being young cooks with their male superiors. But, it was not just dealing with "handsy" coworkers or fielding other unwanted sexual advances—female chefs that I spoke to often feel that they have to fight for being taken seriously as a woman in the industry. Simply put, male chefs do not believe that women could "hack it" as a chef. As Lena explains,

> *It took me a while to get a real line cooking job. They [male chefs and restaurant owners] like to start you off on like pantry area. If you don't know what that is, is basically just making salads. They like to start you out there no matter what kind of training or experience you might have had elsewhere…I've had chefs say stuff like, 'Oh, she can't do that,' or, 'Don't give that to her to do'… I had an experience with a chef that it was basically like if all the women didn't cater specifically to him, that he would barely even talk to you. He would completely ignore you. You weren't up for promotions or anything like that (Lena, 6.26.20).*

Arielle has something similar to say about having to prove herself in ways that their male counterparts did not:

> *This one guy … he would be so mean to me, and then he would be really nice to me and just like, really mess with my head like that, where he would be like, 'Oh, to make you stronger in the kitchen, I'm going to put a sheet tray in the oven at 500 degrees and make you stick your arms out so I can burn you'… It's like, If you can get through this, then you can make it in the kitchen (Arielle, 6.2.20).*

4.3.2.2 Racialized Dimensions of Restaurant Work

In addition to gender-based-discrimination and harassment that is rampant in the industry, race-based discrimination and immigration-based exploitation are also very common occurrences amongst interviewees. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was the dominant topic of this study, this research did not happen in a vacuum. In the summer of 2020, particularly after the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, the Black Lives Matter movement and recognition of ongoing racial discrimination and tensions bled into my conversations with many interviewees. When asked if she had experienced racial discrimination in the workplace, Tiffany responds, "I don't know if I would say it's been all-out discrimination as so much being subject to stereotypes or having to be extra performative" (Tiffany, 5.30.20). However, when asked if she has experienced racial discrimination by employers, she recalls several instances in which she (and other people of color) were "relegated to the menial task[s]" (Tiffany, 5.30.20).

Elliott, a middle-aged black man who has worked as a server in high-end restaurants all over the country and Caribbean, further discusses his experiences during the decades he has spent in the restaurant industry. He explains,

> *For me it's-- I can't really lie to anybody. I'm African-American, and a lot of people really don't want to see me coming to their table. They don't know that I'm the sommelier for the room, they don't know my background, or who I've worked for, who I know. They have no idea, but they literally, before I get to the table, they don't want to see me coming to their table. I think that I have to win over tables a little bit more than some of my colleagues, and that can get frustrating. Some days you wear that on your sleeve (Elliott, 5.29.20).*

Our conversation about his experiences in the industry bring him to tears as he is forced to think through various racialized interactions he has had while at work.

Both Elliott and Tiffany initially attempt to downplay their experiences—similar to how many women have spoken about sexual harassment. Like the conversations with women in the industry, through the course of the conversations, both Tiffany and Elliott begin to reveal more and seemingly come to acknowledge the weight of what they have experienced.

Immigration-based discriminatory practices often intersect with race-based discrimination (Loscocco 2017; Ray 2019; Rocco 2016; Rumbaut 2009; Waters 1999; Waters and Eschbach 1995). The restaurant space is known for being a haven for un(der)documented workers, primarily from Central and South America, which is a result of the common illicit practices by restaurant owners of paying wages under-the-table to avoid paying a variety of taxes for employees . As has been well-documented, the combination of an under-documented workforce and illicit activities leaves room for the exploitation of already marginalized communities (Pachirat 2011; Waltz 2018). Indeed, this study, on the outset was aimed at better understanding how Latinx (in particular) workers experience discrimination in the workplace. Several factors, including a pandemic and rising xenophobic sentiment, contributed to my inability to find people willing to speak about their experiences. However, I was able to talk to a few people who identified as immigrants and other workers who could attest to the discrimination and exploitation faced by the immigrant workforce. Luis, a skilled bartender from Detroit Michigan says this:

> *Where are you from,' it's one of those-- the wording is so particular, like, 'Where are you from, is very funny because there's a poet and singer from South America, I think, I want to say Argentinean who had a song that says, 'I'm not from there, and not from here, either.' A lot of times, I feel that way, because I was born in the US, but because I lived in Mexico, I have this accent, and because my family's-- I'm the modest of modest, my family has very several different ethnical [SIC] backgrounds, or racial backgrounds or whatever it is. I know I'm a very ambiguously ethnic person. It's a weird thing. Even*

though I identify myself as a Latinx, I maybe don't fulfill all the stereotypes of a Latinx…Most of the people have not ever guessed that I'm Mexican. They always assume that I'm either, Spanish, or Portuguese, or Brazilian, or Colombian...because the stereotypes that they have for Mexican is very particular. I always think that what people think of Mexican here in the US is like a short, dark brown with curly short black hair, and the mustache or something like that, I'm not even sure anymore, it's so ambiguous at this time. Because of that, I definitely encounter some assumptions. Especially, a lot of times when I encounter that in my level of educating people, I encounter them asking me that very specific question, "Where are you from", instead of, "What's your background", or "What's your ethnicity", etc. I find it weird (Luis, 6.12.20).

My own conversation with Luis revealed that he felt he had to "justify" his existence both at work and throughout his daily life. At the outset of every conversation with an interview, I asked some version of the same question: "Tell me a little about yourself, your background, where you're from, how you got in the restaurant industry, and how long you've been working in it." I was asking where people were from because they had participated in a national survey and there was no way of knowing their location before beginning the conversation. However, when I ask Luis this question, there was a noticeable—and awkward—pause as he contemplates both the intention of the question and how he should answer it. The feeling of not belonging and being constantly questioned about where one is from is common amongst all immigrant communities—but especially with ones who experience general societal displeasure and hostility toward their very existence in our country. Almost immediately, I understood my question's meaning and significance to him. However, it is not until the above conversation that we had a chance to talk about what had, undoubtedly been an uncomfortable and disconcerting opening to our interview. For Luis, and others in similar situations, this type of moment plays out multiple times a day for front-of-house restaurant workers with brown skin and accents. There is a constant management of potential hidden

meanings behind every conversation. This was merely one illustration of that playing out in Luis' daily life. This situation is the best of circumstances—where a perceived micro-aggression was able to be discussed and cleared but. But, Luis, and others do not have that same luxury at work—and often, people are actually ill-intentioned with their questions and comments.

Mike, a white chef who has been in the industry for about 15 years, corroborates the experiences of workers like Luis. He has watched overt and covert racism play out in the kitchen, as he shares how he has personally benefitted from being a white male in the industry. He notes that Latinx workers are often given the stereotypes of hard and quick workers and are often kept to a higher standard than their white counterparts in the kitchen—while also being relegated to more menial and more physically-demanding positions (line cooks, butchers, prep cooks, just as a few examples). He also describes that the pay gap between white and brown workers and the language barrier that many immigrant workers experience also hinders their advancement in the industry meaning that they are more likely to stay in the same low-wage job for longer because they are valued for their relative willingness (and therefore, exploitability) to do more difficult labor for less money. Mike points this out when he said,

> *They [Latinx and Black cooks] don't get the educational opportunities like I do. With the situation right now, I like to look at this and think, 'What the hell is that?' I'm the sous chef of a restaurant that I've worked at for five months now. The other employee that has worked with the boss for 16 years has more restaurant experience [than me] (Mike, 5.22.20).*

Mike, and other white workers like him are repeatedly given opportunities to advance in their careers, while others—primarily black and brown workers with less relative "status"—are continually passed over for promotions.

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Racialized and gendered dimensions of work certainly affect an individual worker's

feelings about the restaurant industry. This section has explored the various ways—both

positive and negative—that people experience their work in the industry. As discussed, these

experiences and interactions are not necessarily linear, but rather, peoples' overall feelings of

satisfaction and enjoyment are more nuanced around one's own strength of ties around the

industry. The following section seeks to understand how one's identity is (or is not formed) as a

restaurant worker.

4.4 Building an Identity around Restaurant Work

No matter how workers find their way to restaurant work, for many interviewees,

restaurant work has become a part of their identity—for better, and sometimes for worse.

Nearly 4 out of 5 interviewees identify restaurant work as their primary form of income (prior

to Covid)[37]. Of those who indicate that restaurant work was their primary form of income, more

than one-third indicate that restaurant is their chosen career. Those who consider restaurant

work as a career, for the most part, have a strong identity as a restaurant worker—they feel

fulfilled by their work and see this as a viable longterm career (again, prior to Covid).

Carrie, a mid-40's server at a national bar, restaurant, and arcade-style chain in Detroit,

Michigan previously considered leaving the industry. However, she always comes back to her

enjoyment of her work and the relative freedom she has. She says,

> *I've thought about looking for something full-time in that and not working at a
> restaurant anymore, but I like it. I like the interaction. I like the different things. Like I
> said, I'm only there three days a week, it's not like I'm there all the time, but I'm only
> there a couple of days a week. I've had a set schedule since I started working there and it*

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[37] 20% of interview respondents indicated that restaurant work was not their primary form of income, most often
supplemental to other forms of income (either household or self).

just works. I like it. I like the variety and you really never know what you're walking into [chuckles] (Carrie, 5.18.20).

Similarly, Alex, a bartender in Tennessee describes himself at work as "a happy boy" (Alex, 5.12.20). Like Carrie, Alex was always open to the possibility of a future career change—but is not actively or passively pursuing alternate careers. Both felt comfortable in their enjoyment and money-making possibilities in the industry. The feeling of comfortability, enjoyment, and belonging is mimicked by many interviewees—even those who were unsure of their future careers.

Nearly one third of interviewees either indicate that they are unsure about viewing restaurant work as their career, or simply did not answer the question directly. However, those who express that the restaurant industry is their chosen career, many workers feel a sense of identity and belonging within the industry. Luis exemplifies the workers who feel unsure about their future but have made an identity around restaurant work. He considers himself a "career server" as this is the only job that he has ever had. He says this:

> *I couldn't honestly tell you 100%, I see my career going left or right. I am focusing a little more on the catering service, we're still on the developing phases for setting up COVID-19 proof service for the coffee catering. I'm hoping that would be a lot more safe and steady opportunity of income in the future perhaps (Luis, 6.12.20).*

Although Luis likes working in restaurants, he is trying to plan for his future—and he does not know if he can be on the service side of things forever. Therefore, he is developing ideas that may eventually let him leave serving in favor of being an owner/operator of a small business.

Dane, too, is worried about his future. He has been a cook for many years but has recently begun to realize that his career is "safe, but very limited upward mobility" (Dane, 5.28.20). He feels this way in the industry in general and has, therefore, begun thinking about

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what he might do in the future. Both Dane and Luis strongly identify as restaurant workers—it

is the only career that they have both had to this point. When asked about what they might do,

Dane has no real idea what he might do if he quit cooking, and Luis sees himself taking on a

small food and beverage operation as an owner operator. They both cannot imagine their

futures without something industry-related but feel strongly that their current work was not

sustainable for them in the longterm.

Finally, a large percentage of interviewees (nearly 40%) indicate that restaurant work is

merely a means to an end. These interviewees while working full-time in the industry—

potentially for several years—do not necessarily feel as though this is their end-goal career.

Those who view restaurant work as a means to an end is largely made up of workers who are

currently pursuing or have previously pursued formal post-secondary education.

Erik, a longtime worker in the industry—as both a cook and server—is working at a food

hall in Detroit, Michigan when the pandemic started. When asked about his career aspirations,

he definitively states that he plans to leave the industry. Erik is going to school for

environmental sciences and when asked about staying or leaving the industry, our conversation

goes like this:

> Interviewer: Is your career goal in the restaurant industry or do you see it as outside of the restaurant industry?

> Erik: Absolutely outside the restaurant industry. I can't keep this up forever.

> Interviewer: Okay. Has the pandemic highlighted your need to get out or what has it done for you?

> Erik: It absolutely has. I guess, when you get out of it and you just kind of view it, you see how the culture can be a little toxic sometimes, or where you might be overcompensating by drinking too much (Erik, 5.28.20).

Similarly, Sam is also pursuing an education. While she is only halfway done with her bachelor's degree, she has made future plans to pursue a Master's degree in Public Health (Sam, 6.25.20). Like Erik, Sam has been relatively content working in the industry until the pandemic began. The time Sam had off due to the pandemic closures gave her time to think through her future. She ultimately decided to enroll in more classes and define a career path moving forward. She explains,

> I guess I've been thinking about it for so long. Now that I got the chance to pump the brakes and stop to think about it. I just know I'm not going to be able to keep doing this job forever. I like cooking, but I don't want to be working 80 plus hours or whatever a week just to run a restaurant. It's just taking away my passion for cooking, I guess. I have a passion for science. I dropped out of school when I was in environmental science. That was in 2014 when I started working at Johnny's. I guess I'd gave up on school too quick and I realized it's just important for me to go back and just learn, and not be stuck in the same place anymore. I don't feel like I'm learning anymore at my job (Sam, 6.25.20).

Here we see that Sam's identity as a restaurant worker has been strong—she had once considered this as a career. However, a common theme among workers is the realization that they "could not do this forever." This realization often means they knew they could not keep their current schedule, the work is too physically demanding, or the workplace is simply not conducive to a future life that they envisioned.

It becomes apparent through these interviews that regardless of their longterm career goals, inside or outside of the industry, many of the people I spoke to find that certain amount of their identity is derived from the industry. In fact, every interviewee was contacted for their participation through some restaurant worker forum or outlet—meaning that every person who participated in my study identified, enough, as a restaurant worker to belong to email lists, support groups, and other social media worker pages specifically for restaurant workers. These

pages are often places where workers can vent, share industry memes and funny content, or act as a support system when someone has an issue at work.

Indeed, while many people express there are definitely challenges associated with the work, most workers who I interviewed did not anticipate leaving the industry immediately—it was serving them well at the time. Indeed, the immediate loss of their work, and therefore income and some amount of identity, brought about its own set of challenges. In the following section, I discuss the financial, emotional, and social impacts that joblessness (and the overall pandemic) has had on research participants—and the ways that people cope with these problems.

4.5 Financial and Emotional Impacts of COVID

4.5.1 Financial Impacts

In the initial aftermath of the COVID-19-related shutdowns, financial distress was perhaps the most immediate effect that out-of-work survey respondents reported experiencing. Survey respondents indicated they were the sole breadwinner for their family before the pandemic started 11.6% of the time. In addition, 46.7% of respondents responded that there was equal or near equal share of income in their household.[38] Of those who were the sole breadwinner or had equal earnings amongst members in their household, 50% indicated that the role of "breadwinner" has shifted since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A full 25% of those households had a major shift of income responsibility as a direct result of restaurant shutdowns. While nearly 3 out of every 4 survey respondents worked full time (over

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[38] The question of household earnings was only asked to those who indicated that they lived with someone else with whom they shared household expenses.

30 hours/ week) in the restaurant industry before the pandemic, only 1 out of every 4 still have full time employment after the pandemic began.

To complicate matters, unemployment insurance benefits were often slow or difficult to get—due to the high volumes of applications. At the time the national survey was disseminated, only of workers have been able to receive unemployment benefits—meaning that 3 out of every 4 people are forced to live on greatly reduced income, their personal savings, or debt accrual, which helps us to understand how COVID created the context in which interviewees' scenarios played out.[39] Jennifer, a server at a casual restaurant in Detroit expresses her incredible financial-related stress this way:

> *In the beginning, I quite literally was having a breakdown every single night. I was freaking out because I didn't know how I was going to pay my bills. This was before unemployment. I didn't get paid for my employment for 30 whole days so it was a very tough 30 days, figuring out who's getting paid when, how far I could stretch the grace period before I would get charged for late fees, that kind of thing. It was very stressful in the beginning. Once I got the stimulus check and I'm getting unemployment, the paying my bills worry have been taken off the table. I've been doing much better (Jennifer, 5.14.20).*

Like Jennifer, many respondents worries about immediate financial worries give way to worries about future employment uncertainty. A majority of survey respondents have made the restaurant industry their chosen or default profession for a majority of their working lives, with 55% of respondents indicating they have worked in the industry between 5 and 20 years[40][41]. Therefore, to many workers, COVID brought a sudden end to the only career they had worked in. Because of closures, 26% of respondents indicated that they are currently jobless

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[39] All interviews were chosen as a subgroup of the surveys.
[40] Median age was 33 years old.
[41] The median response was between 5-10 years.

and looking for restaurant jobs, while a full 13% indicate that they are unemployed and pursuing work outside of the industry altogether. For many respondents, the COVID-19 pandemic shows the uncertainty of the hospitality industry for the first time. Although many people have come to rely on it as a "backup plan" or a way to earn fast/easy money, it is suddenly unavailable to them—causing respondents to rethink their work within the restaurant industry.

As the pandemic moved forward, state-by-state restrictions varied. Some people were only out of work for a few weeks and have returned when their state opened back up, while others are still unemployed at the time of their interview (between May 1 and June 30, 2020). By the time these interviews took place, half of all interviews have successfully received their unemployment benefits. For those who are able to collect unemployment, the immediate financial burden is greatly reduced. COVID-related relief packages had been distributed via one-time checks and also in the amount of weekly unemployment payments. After a few stressful weeks, many are now able to rely on these payments for consistent support and income. However, many people waited for several months to receive their first payment—while others are not able to collect on unemployment insurance at all.

Six interviewees have not been able to collect unemployment insurance benefits yet (at the time of the interviews); Sean is one of them. He had been recently hired to run a kitchen at a new restaurant concept. Their first day of training was set to be March 14th—a Saturday. However, when the 16th rolled around, everything had been immediately shut down. And because the restaurant has not been officially opened and the new hires were not all on payroll, they are ineligible for unemployment benefits. Sean describes a "holding pattern" that

he and other staff are in—unable to receive payment from their work but also unable to collect

unemployment and unlikely to find another job during the shutdown. He describes that he was

forced to go several months without pay—causing incredible financial strain (Sean, 6.15.20).

Other workers like Leslie were paid their restaurant wages under-the-table (an illegal,

yet common system of paying cash to workers to avoid taxes). Therefore, she is unable to file

for unemployment. At the time of our interview, Leslie was relying on small disability payments

she received as her only source of income and hoping that they would bring her back to work as

takeout service had resumed.

Some workers are ineligible for unemployment benefits because they did not have full-

time status. Heather only worked at her restaurant part-time before the pandemic began.

Because of how few shifts she works per week, Heather is not eligible for receiving

unemployment benefits (Heather, 5.19.20). Although her household benefited from her income

before the pandemic, she was able to get by without working. Heather also feels tremendous

guilt about taking other shifts from people who needed the money more. She says:

> *Obviously other girls there who are working, like single moms, people who came with the building who have been there for years and years and years, many more years than I have and that's their full-time only source of income. Again, I don't want to be greedy. If she [the owner] would have me back when they reopen, and I think they are planning on reopening, absolutely I would work, but I mean if it was between me and my friend who works there, who's a single mom, and I wouldn't want to take those hours away from her (Heather, 5.19.20).*

Financial strain is perhaps peoples' most immediate concern when the pandemic began.

When asked about their personal financial situations, 80% of survey respondents indicate that

they would NOT be able to cover an unexpected expense of $400. This response is not atypical

for the average American household (federalreserve.gov 2018). The pandemic has simply

highlighted the paycheck-to-paycheck existence that many people already live. However, as benefits began to roll in and federal stimulus checks began to arrive, the financial burden aspect of the pandemic began to give way to social and emotional impacts. The feelings of social isolation, loss of structure and personal identity, fear about an unknown disease, and the uncertainty about one's future become the most pressing issues that many out-of-work restaurant workers begin to experience.

4.5.2 Social and Emotional Impacts

The secondary "wave" of impacts that hit restaurant workers is the social and emotional impacts caused by a severe and immediate change to daily life of hundreds of millions of people. When asked about their emotional health and well-being, over 30% of survey respondents report their mood as either "terrible" or "poor," while a full 50% report their mood as "average." Furthermore 4 out of 5 survey respondents indicate that they feel socially isolated. And, while the use of technology is high to stay in contact with friends and loved ones (phone and internet), a majority of respondents indicate that this form of communication is not particularly helpful in improving their mood[42].

Overall, interviewees mirror what the survey respondents have replied. When asked about their overall mood and mood stability, most interviewees describe their overall mood is less stable than before. For example, Luis (6.12.20) describes his overall mood as an "emotional rollercoaster." Similarly, Leslie (5.15.20) and Tiffany (5.30.20) say they are experiencing more "mood swings" than before.

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[42] 51% of respondents indicated that using technology to stay connected usually did not or only sometimes helped improve their mood.

Moreover, Mike describes his complex and changing feelings this way:

Yes. Sometimes I just get depressed and I'm not sure why, but it's just because I like doing stuff. I get to the point where I'm not even sure if I even like doing anything anymore. You know what I mean?!... Sometimes I feel everything is awful, and then all of a sudden I'll get a day where I'm like, hey, I don't know what I'm so upset about. I'm in good shape, I'm almost 60. I'm 59. I work out in my house downstairs. That's probably what gets my mood better. Sometimes I can't figure out why I'm getting out of bed (Mike, 6.12.20).

Whereas others do not express their overall emotional well-being in such dramatic and shifting ways, many do express how their moods and attitudes are overall worse than before the pandemic. Bin describes the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on his mood like this:

I would say the pandemic made all the feelings and thoughts and worries before the pandemic to intensify because I had more time to sit and think about them and feel them because they were not getting distracted by work (Bin, 6.1.20).

The feelings and stressors that were present before the pandemic began ultimately become more pronounce and lead to people turning to various coping mechanisms to alleviate these emotions and stress.

It is clear through both the national survey and interviews that people try to utilize whatever resources they have at their disposal. However, generally, research participants feel both socially isolated and physically unable to enjoy many of the activities they had enjoyed before. Very few people have access to taken-for-granted spaces, like parks and green spaces, greenways, mental health apps and providers, and home exercise equipment. Therefore, many people have to become creative in the ways that they managed their newfound unemployment and isolation.

For many interviewees, finding ways to keep busy is important to keep the stressful, fearful and anxious thoughts away. Jennifer (5.14.20), in speaking about her financial stressors

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in the section above, continues on by stating that the nice weather and being outside helps to temporarily calm her worries about money. Similarly, Mike, (6.12.20) in his statement above about his emotional well-being, recognizes how exercising helps to improve his mood.

Sarah also states that "If I'm keeping myself busy, then I'm not depressed or anxious, I'm doing something" (Sarah, 6.5.20). Simply the act of "staying busy" helps to improve her mood. While some like Sarah just try to stay busy to keep their minds off of their anxious, and depressive feelings, others look to purposeful activity to cope with the crisis brought on by the pandemic. People like Sarah, Jennifer, and Mike seek out purposeful positive behavioral changes to help reduce the variety of negative emotions they experience as a result of joblessness. Coping becomes an important tool for those experiencing the crisis of joblessness amidst a pandemic. In the following sections, I outline the various coping mechanisms that people employ to combat the social, emotional, and financial distress brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic—and link these coping mechanisms to dignity preservation.

CHAPTER 5: COPING MECHANISMS AND DIGNITY MAINTENANCE

The previous chapter has explored the background of the restaurant workers in my study—paying special attention to how a variety of structural constraints and personal decisions lead to an identity as a restaurant worker. I then explore how various people—with different identities and social locations were impacted by unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter builds on the previous one by showing how the restaurant workers I interviewed cope with this crisis of unemployment and aim to understand how various coping mechanisms lead to personal dignity maintenance.

5.1 Coping Mechanisms

People in crisis often resort to a variety of coping mechanisms to regulate emotions during periods of uncertainty, and chaos (Eastham et al 1970). Through my interviews with restaurant workers, I have come to identify three primary types of coping mechanisms that contributed to using this time for reflection, improvement, and change in one's own life and one's relationship with the restaurant industry.

The primary types of coping mechanisms I identify in this study are 1) formal educational endeavors, 2) organizing and philanthropic work, and 3) projects. As the following sections will explore, these three coping mechanisms are not uniform in their presentation. The three coping mechanisms I identify each have distinct focuses, intentions, and links to personal dignity preservation. These three "categories" of coping mechanisms are certainly not the only types of coping that people engage in—in fact there was a variety. Therefore, other types of coping mechanisms—while mentioned briefly in the following section to better understand the nuanced way that people deal with crisis—are not the primary focus of this research.

5.1.1 "Getting By"

While many interviewees do in fact participate in what might be considered intentional forms of coping, not everyone is able to focus energy or has the mental capacity of thinking about pursuing a new career, furthering education, or even cleaning their house during this crisis. Furthermore, even if a person does seek out what might be considered an intentional coping mechanism, there is often a period of trial and error where days or weeks during the lockdown may be spent engaging a variety of coping mechanisms before they are able to actively engage in more longterm-focused activities. Demanding resilience and constant "self-improvement" can oftentimes be a damaging narrative to portray when many people were simply coping in the best way they could manage. Therefore, in this section, I highlight the voices of those who "get by" by any means necessary. I highlight the different forms of mechanisms here to show that the ways that people deal with crisis is often dependent on a variety of factors—including (but not limited) to race, economic status, age, marital and parental status, and mental and physical health. This is not to say that some forms of coping are better or worse—people are doing the best they can. However, the different coping mechanisms people employed do have different implications for dignity maintenance.

One very common coping mechanism for the people I interview is the idea of breaking with COVID protocol to participate in activities that brings them joy. Breaking COVID protocol to see friends often gives people a sense of social connection that they have been missing. Gabrielle states that she broke protocol to go to places that were shut down—like the beach. Going places like the beach and the store help to maintain a sense of normalcy in her world (Gabrielle, 5.14.20). People like Arielle, Bin and Kensley—all younger people without any pre-

existing health conditions—find it impossible to adhere to stay-at-home guidelines strictly.

Arielle says,

> *I definitely go to the store when I need to with the mask, and equipped with all the hand sanitizer, and do all the essential things that I don't do really-- I don't grocery delivery, which is an option but I prefer to go to the store myself. I'll go to my boyfriend's house. We'll go to each other's houses, we've been quarantining together. However, I have seen friends, I have gone out to the park to sit out. My sister just had a baby, so I want to stay safe for her and her family because I want to see the baby… I've been doing It [stay-at-home-order] but also sneaking in some things that probably aren't allowed (Arielle, 6.2.20).*

Similarly, Kensley observes:

> *We still have happy hours or whatever at a friend's house or something. People I've been in contact with has been the same handful of people. Granted, that doesn't include all the random people that walk into my restaurant (Kensley, 5.12.20).*

Bin, like a few others who I interview, are less forthcoming when it comes to admitting a break from protocol. He says,

> *Yes, at the beginning I wasn't leaving the house…Except for walks and grocery stores, but I'm also observing other people's behavior around me and then adapting. I don't think anyone really took the governor's order verbatim, but they're all slowly adapting to it. When I noticed that people are more relaxed, people are meeting other people and walking around with people and going out and seeing friends I'm also interested and like, "Okay, maybe I could start doing that, wearing mask," and only with one person, keep a distance. Only slowly I integrated with people socially (Bin, 6.1.20).*

Many people do not want to disclose their "disobedience" to me at first or simply do not consider themselves as breaking the rules. When answering my question about adherence to lockdown protocol, a majority of people reply that they are strictly following guidelines—only going to the store for necessities and work (for those who are still employed). However, this behavior usually comes out through the course of discussing how people have been managing the stress—and as they begin to become more comfortable speaking to a researcher about

their personal lives. Hanging out with friends, especially for younger people who I have spoken

to, seems almost necessary for maintaining their personal and mental health. Even if it is "risky

behavior" many people prove willing to take the risk for the opportunity to see friends and

loved ones. This type of coping for young people is often viewed as irresponsible or short-sided.

However, many of the people who do regularly see friends feel as though they have weighed

the costs and benefits. And, since they are healthy young people, maintaining interpersonal

relationships outweighs any risk that might be associated with in-person meetings.

Another coping method in which interviewees partake is a sense of simply "letting one's

self go" or breaking from their normal routine. This experience is very common amongst all

interviewees—at least for a certain period of time. For many interviewees, the lack of

motivation comes in waves. It is not necessarily a constant throughout the entire lockdown

period, but may be experienced either at the beginning when they are just trying to get their

footing, or near the end of the lockdown when they simply feel burnt out by the crisis

happening outside their door.

As Bin (6.1.20) describes, although he knows working out would make him feel better,

he simply cannot work up the motivation to do so. Similarly, Cayla had been going to therapy

regularly at the beginning of lockdown—and it has drastically improved her mood. However,

she has stopped attending her virtual sessions and now cannot work up the motivation to start

again.

For some, it is simply allowing themselves to do things that they would not have done

before the pandemic started. Shannon, (5.15.20) usually very health conscious, has started

eating a lot more. Jennifer who has always done her makeup every day for work, has stopped

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wearing makeup altogether—something she did not expect. Some, like Ariel (5.14.20), have

been used to getting their hair and nails done regularly, but have simply let those things go

since the beginning of the pandemic.

Others have taken to substances to alleviate their worries and anxieties altogether.

Chefs like Mike (5.22.20) and Kevin (6.27.20) describe how they had leaned heavily on

marijuana and drinking at the beginning of the pandemic to cope, but that it had ultimately

made their problems more pronounced. Kevin explains his experience like this:

> *The third week I bought a quarter [ounce of weed] and went through it in about four days. I just got really high for four days. I ate some mushrooms one day. I hadn't done that in like six, seven years and it turns out not my favorite thing anymore, did not have a great time. I think isolation had me a little too stressed out, and that screwed that up… The first four hours were great, but then it wasn't so much anymore…It was like, 'God damn it. Six more hours, this needs to stop [the high from mushrooms].'… A lot of my friends were really starting to struggle to even get weed. For a while, all the dealers were all going dry because everyone's been buying so much during quarantine...But hitting a phase where you're sick of it doesn't mean you stop… I definitely did drink a fair amount to a point where I had to-- Where I'm like-- I'm going back and forth of drinking over the years, quarantine got me to a point where I was like, 'Okay, well you need to officially be a 100% sober again, because drinking a pint and six beers every other day is not a good thing'(6.27.20).*

Jose (5.18.20) also expresses that at the beginning of the pandemic he had found

himself drinking a lot more, but the hangovers and parental responsibilities he has made him

cut back drastically. Some, however, do not. They simply use drinking as a way to pass time,

relieve stress, or self soothe.

Mike realizes that his weed consumption was too much so cut back, but he explains it

like this:

> *Day drinking. I say that with laughing and also seriousness. It's completely true. Days off, I start drinking probably one o'clock in the afternoon. I've [00:16:00] smoked pot since I was 17. Smoked pot daily since I was 18. My pot usage definitely went up at first and*

now it's actually fallen. Which is interesting…I think I overkilled it. I got to the point where it wasn't doing what it needed to do and I needed to take a step back and take a break. I was smoking constantly the heaviest stuff I could find so obviously it's a tower that's still build up and that's that… I also do CBD gummies. Again, I was doing quite a few of those at the beginning and then tapered off quite a bit. [crosstalk] Drinking has definitely stayed about custom (Mike, 5.22.20).

To him, smoking weed has often made him more anxious and paranoid, but alcohol always makes him feel better.

SB explains his habit like this:

I'm a bartender, so I like to drink. When something goes wrong or when things start feeling hopeless, that's something that I turn to, and then the hangover is the next day. Then I realize that that's not a healthy way to deal with that, but it does happen… We've been stocking up on stuff we normally wouldn't drink at home, just turning the evening cocktail into a little bit more of an art form than I ever used to (SB, 4.28.20).

These experiences are varied and not universal—or linear. As the quotes show, there is often periods of abstinence from these substances and activities, however there are also periods of heavy usage. Substance use and similar forms of coping varies broadly, depending on peoples' personal situations. Waves of "motivation" might come and go and cause periods of relative productivity that give way to bouts of anxiety and depression for which substance use or "letting go" seem like the only possible outlet. I highlight these various coping strategies that people employed to show how people deal with crisis to fulfill immediate needs—like experiencing feelings of happiness and companionship, which is often done at the expense of future outcomes. Breaking COVID protocols may lead to infection with a virus or a fine and partaking in large amounts of mind-altering substance can ultimately lead to undesirable effects. This study shows that at various times, many people did engage in more immediately

gratifying forms of coping. However, for many interviewees, these periods of short-term fixes would give way to strategies that focused on more long-term, "positive," outcomes.

5.1.2 Projects

Interviewees who take on projects for the purpose of coping with joblessness often do so for reasons outside of identities as restaurant workers. In fact, when asked about what types of things they are doing during the lockdown, many people express restorative aspects to the shutdown—that this "break" from normal life, allows them to momentarily break from their role as a worker. Half of all interviewees indicate that they have used the COVID-related shutdowns as a way to "catch up" on things that they had wanted to do or study for a long time but had not had the time. Folks who seek out projects as a coping mechanism are the least homogeneous group of people—that is, there is not necessarily a certain demographic of people who undertake projects (e.g., socio-economic status, gender, race, age). However, the overwhelming sense of those who take on projects is a feeling of immediate loss of identity as a restaurant worker, and the need to fill the void of time and sense of purpose. While both education and philanthropy/organizing have perhaps outward (looking outside of one's self) and future-focused aims, projects are more inward and short-term focused—simply a way to fill the time and potentially push out feelings of loss and anxiety, even if the projects are inherently "productive."

5.1.2.1 Types of Projects

Some, like Sean, use the time to do enjoyable activities that they have not had the time for as a full-time worker. Sean describes his time staying home like this: "Honestly, in the two months of stay at home between the State shutting down and me going back to work, I read a

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lot. I caught up in a bunch of movies and tv shows that I ordinarily wouldn't watch. I took an

online course at Harvard about food" (Sean, 6.15.20). Because Sean was forced to take time off

work, he was able to catch up on activities that he was interested in but did not previously have

the time to engage.

Others also expressed the sentiment that being out of work gave them opportunities to

engage in activities that did not fit in their "normal" work schedule. SB trained to be an English

teacher but needed extra money after graduating college, so he turned to restaurant work.

Until the shutdown, he was working more than full-time as a restaurant manager in the Chicago

area. SB had this to say about taking on projects during the shutdown,

> *I've just been spending time on things that I didn't really have time for. Just being a 50 or 60 an hour a week worker. I planted dates for my garden that I'm going to put out here in the next month where normally I would just grab plants from the store to start that…I don't know. Just stuff like that. I've been reading. I have an English degree, and I definitely have not been reading as much as I personally need to read. I've got 10 books that I'm trying to get through throughout this furlough (SB, 4.28.20).*

Like SB, several other people identify that they have also been gardening, like Forest and her

fiancé John who started to grow food at home instead of being forced to go to the grocery

store for fresh produce (5.21.20, 5.26.20) or Mike who has been able to expand his home

garden since being off of work (5.22.20).

Other activities like leaning/organizing their house and taking up working

out/meditation are undertaken but jobless restaurant workers as a way to destress and take

care of themselves physically. People describe these activities as ways to manage anxiety,

stress, and uncertainty during the pandemic. As one person describes why she was working out,

"[I] mainly just try to stay active because otherwise I would go insane" (Sam, 6.25.20).

Jose is a Peruvian-born small restaurant and food-truck owner in Lansing, Michigan describes his running like this,

> *Yes. I've been running way more. I've been setting up goals for the week, distances, that's helping me blow-up some steam and stuff so anything that's piling up inside. Just for reference, I try to be as active as I can. That's one thing also is I usually play some soccer and that's a huge social outlet for me. So not having that is a huge bummer* because of the social outlet because of soccer so that's why I'm just running more (Jose, 5.18.20).

Others turn to cooking and baking as a way to deal with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic and cope with being out of work. Tiffany, a self-described "33-year-old black female" from Alabama who works as a server at a steakhouse, says that she started "stress baking" and that she has tried a lot of new recipes and was beginning to enjoy cooking (Tiffany, 5.30.20). For some, cooking and creating cocktails during the pandemic has reinvigorated their enjoyment of the industry again. A chef states that she was cooking more at home now that she was out of work and was really enjoying it (Lena 6.26.20). And, as one bartender puts it: "Previously I enjoyed making craft cocktails and that's one thing I do miss about being at work. Me and my fiancé have been having fun, making drinks at home, and just testing them and stuff" (Forest, 5.21.20). Similarly, Jose, a chef and small business owner says he is using this time to channel his "creative outlets" and business ideas by writing down and trying out new ideas and menu items (Jose 5.18.22).

Like Jose, reconnecting with creative interests becomes a way for several people to cope with the joblessness and fear about the pandemic by engaging in something that brings them joy and comfort. For some, this looks like creating food or drinks for themselves and their housemates. For others, it looks like doing their nails and makeup, or designing t-shirts as a

small online business (Johanna, 5.13.20). And, for Alex, a young energetic, self-described

"golden retriever" who tends bar at a small brewery in Tennessee, his creative outlet is on a

bigger "canvas":

> *One of my biggest hobbies is, there's this little chalk alleyway downtown that I work on a lot over the past few years. I decided to bring the chalk alleyway to my house, and I turned this whole wall in my living room into a chalk wall. I've been doing live streams of that of me just drawing and it's really definitely helped even me out, give me something to work on (Alex, 5.12.20).*

For many, the pandemic—while undeniably stressful and difficult—becomes an

opportunity to use the time to engage in activities they previously did not have the time for.

While before the pandemic, many people describe that they had a routine of work and home

life, their newfound unemployment has now allowed them the space to pursue other things

that may have been meaningful to them—but difficult to accomplish in the hectic mundanity of

normal life. Therefore, turning to projects allows many interviewees to separate themselves

from their identity as "worker" and take on other identities that may have been neglected.

5.1.2.2 Coping Outcomes for Projects

Taking on projects tends to be a very inward-focused coping mechanism—one that does

not involve others. I also found through talking with respondents that these projects were

undertaken as immediate responses to the crisis brought on by the pandemic, with little

thought or intention of significantly changing one's future circumstances. Of the three types of

coping mechanisms, the most people engaged in project-based coping and did so simply as a

way to fill time and to find inner-comfort during this difficult period as opposed to thinking

about longterm goals and outcomes and in a community-minded way.

5.1.3 Organizing and Philanthropic Work

One third of interviewees participated in some sort of organizing or volunteer work throughout the course of the pandemic-related shutdowns. Many interviewees who engage in organizing and philanthropic coping mechanisms started engaging in these activities to help restaurant workers navigate unemployment and other issues related to the pandemic. These workers tend to feel a strong sense of connection to other restaurant workers and recognize the importance of developing a stronger sense of community and comradery among their fellow workers to organize against unsafe working conditions, unrealistic demands to return to work, and loss of wages and increasing precarity surrounding their future employment . For interviewees who seek out organizing and philanthropic work, their sense of identity around being a restaurant worker is strong—that is, many of the folks who cope in this way identify strongly as a restaurant worker and envision their future also including restaurant work.

People who engage in organizing and philanthropic coping also tend to be, disproportionately, people of color, young, and in relatively precarious positions (because of unemployment and uncertainty around future employment). While it might seem counter-intuitive that people marginalized people would be the ones to become active in organizing activities, Historical Contingency Theory can help to explain how, in periods of socio-political and economic upheaval, individual-level actors will take change-making roles when state actors are not affecting the change that is perceived as necessary or desirable (Prechel 1990; 1991; 2003). Therefore, we can understand that the people who feel most oppressed and having less political voice will become most active in small-scale efforts for societal change. In this case multiple events simultaneously occurred to create dissatisfaction with the status quo. In

addition to domino effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic and social systems, during

the summer of 2020 racial protests broke out across the country following the death of George

Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota demanding racial justice and police

reform. While causal inferences about why people would engage in organizing activities to

serve their communities cannot be made during this period, Historical Contingency Theory

would suggest that the combination of a global pandemic and a system of racial injustices may

contribute to a sense of urgency about activism during this time.

5.1.3.1 Organizing as Resistance to Oppression

Particularly for historically marginalized people, becoming involved through protests

and activism is a way that they could provide support to their community—outside of their

work. People increasingly feel called to become involved in some way—whether it is through

joining protests, signing petitions, or joining organizing efforts through other means. Arielle is a

formally trained chef from Philadelphia and has been working in restaurants since she got a

summer job at 16. Arielle joins philanthropic and organizing efforts wherever possible since the

COVID shutdowns began. She describes volunteering at a church serving the homeless, as a way

"of breaking off the monotony of Netflix" (Arielle, 6.2.20) since she lost her job due to the

pandemic. However, she also feels compelled to act as a result of continuing injustices to her

community; Arielle feels as though it is her responsibility to model good citizenship to future

generations. It is also the personal, felt, experience of being black that propels her to act. In

addition to her volunteering at a homeless shelter, Arielle has joined millions of others in

protests to demand racial equity after the murder of George Floyd. For Arielle, as well as others

who I interviewed, the COVID did not happen in isolation, but simultaneous to other major

historical events. All of these events from the pandemic, to economic upheaval, and racial

unrest, must be seen as interconnected and each cause is important for building a more

equitable society.

For people like Bin and Jose, both brown immigrant men, the pandemic and subsequent

shutdowns of the restaurant industry highlight the need to organize laborers. Jose, an owner of

a small Peruvian restaurant became interested in labor organizing through joining a small

chapter of ROC (Restaurant Opportunities Centers). As the pandemic began to shed light on the

inequalities for service workers, he is taking a more active role in seeking out fair treatment for

all workers and specifically support for Latinx workers in the industry (Jose, 5.18.20). Similarly,

Bin began to recognize the health concerns and relative lack of protection for front-line service

workers as restaurants begin to open back up. He says:

> "This is the time to organize. One of my friends actually, he posted an angry, passionate
> post the other day based on the response that he heard from the governor because we
> need to-- This is the time to organize and talk about paid sick leave and maybe
> healthcare or whatever" (Bin, 6.1.20).

Although Bin does not identify as an organizer or "that kind of person," the realities of the

danger that service workers are being forced to face by restaurant owners and politicians who

do not have their best interest at heart, is forcing him to act (Bin, 6.1.20).

5.1.3.2 Philanthropy to Serve People in Need

Some interviewees, like Christina, a 31-year-old server from the Sacramento area, have

a sense of helplessness about their current situation but feel as though they have the tools to

make others feel better. Christina has been in the restaurant industry for 12 years and worked

at a small casual eatery when the COVID shutdown began. When I asked about her activities

during lockdown, she has this to say about her involvement in organizing or volunteering,

> *"I'm always eager to find a way to make the situation better. I realized that while the pandemic, it feels like a long time. While it feels super long-term, it's relatively short term and there are issues that come up at this time that if we continue to work on them or listen to other people get it off their chest, they're going to have a longer-term positive effect. I guess I watch unless I feel like I can contribute or help somebody and then I listen or I give my advice" (Christina, 5.12.20).*

Another server, Aimee, shares that she feels like she has insight to give to others

because of her experience in the industry. Aimee is a 29-year-old career server and bartender,

originally from Texas and now living in the Midwest. She started working when she was 16 and

never left. She shares,

> *I feel like I've been in the industry for a long time, and I have a lot of insight to a lot of different situations and stuff… I think that especially with the younger generations coming through-- I'm very honest. I feel if I have something to offer, I want to give it for sure. I do want to help whether it's within the restaurant industry or whether they want to get out of it or whether they're having a troubling situation. I think it's important to have somebody who is into it who's willing to sit there and have those hard-hitting conversations. I want to help (Aimee, 5.12.20).*

5.1.3.3 Comparing Philanthropy and Organizing as Coping Mechanisms

For some people like Christina and Aimee, philanthropic work has been a part of their

lives since before the pandemic began, however, the pandemic has given them more time to

give to others and a renewed sense of purpose in helping those in their communities. Christina

and Aimee are both young, white women who have been able to collect unemployment

benefits and have relatively few responsibilities now that there is no work, but their bills have

been taken care of. Many of the restaurant workers I spoke to who engage in specifically

philanthropic coping mechanisms do so to give back to their communities and to help people in

need. This type of coping is done as an immediate response to time and need but done at an interpersonal or community level. More so than project-based coping, philanthropic coping is outward looking and serves to fill an immediate need—albeit with longterm effects.

Compared to people engaged in philanthropic coping, however, people like Arielle, Bin, and Jose who engage in organizing do so because the pandemic has simply exacerbated inequalities for the marginalized groups to which they belong. Therefore, they feel compelled to act even if they have not done so before. Certainly, being out of work has given them, perhaps, more time to think about issues—and also—more time to act, however these nonwhite restaurant workers feel strongly about the threats to their community. In times when they feel as though the system is not working for them—and in some cases actively against them—they must enact change themselves. This type of coping is a reaction to oppression and differs from philanthropic work in that the community members who are most marginalized and affected by the pandemic are the ones who take action against the system.

5.1.4 Education

Of the three types of coping mechanisms, education is perhaps the most intentional and longterm-focused way that respondents cope with joblessness during the pandemic. About 20% of interviewees mention taking or registering for classes to further educational goals during the pandemic. This course of action is overwhelmingly taken to pursue a new career. While several people already had vague plans to leave the industry sometime in the future—the pandemic serves as a catalyst for many to leave the industry. Education as a means of coping is primarily undertaken by younger folks, with greater flexibility and fewer responsibilities to tend to at home. This makes sense, as someone who is older and has more established relationships and

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greater responsibility (house payments, children, care for an elder) is less likely to be able to spend both the money and time necessary to return to school. In previous sections of this analysis I have outlined how the restaurant worker identity becomes salient for individuals prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the immediate loss of work has stripped most of the individuals in this study of their identity as a restaurant worker—at least in the near future. Through the period of joblessness, many workers turn to various coping mechanisms to deal with this loss of identity. Education serves as a primary way for people in this study to shift focus from being unemployed and feeling scared and uncertain about the future to forging a new path forward; likely in a new career.

5.1.4.1 COVID as a Catalyst for Change

Sam is a mid-30's chef originally from Canada. She moved to Michigan with her family when she was 15 and got a job at Sonic soon after. After a brief stint as a server (a job she did not enjoy very much), she began to work in the kitchen. She has worked at a variety of restaurants since and has worked her way up. Sam now works as a pastry chef at a sushi restaurant and has been cut back to 25 hours a week as a result of COVID—but often has very high demands on her labor trying to produce the same amount of food on fewer hours. As a result, Sam has enrolled in school and feels differently about both her emotional health and her future in the industry:

> *"Well, I thought I wanted to do it [restaurant work] as a career, but now, I don't really think I do. I started going to school during the pandemic, since I was on furlough, and started going for public health because I'm just really interested in science and I just decided, I don't know if I can do the restaurants anymore, it's a lot of work…I guess it was weird to not be going to work and being stuck at home so much. It sucks to not have a steady schedule and school helped change that for me so I had a steady thing to be doing and not feeling like I wasn't getting anything done, I guess…*

...Interviewer: Do you feel like starting school helped to improve your outlook on life?

Sam: Yes, definitely" (Sam 5.25.20)

For many, like Sam, the idea of reevaluating one's career is a common occurrence amongst interviewees. Attending school during the period of joblessness has allowed people to take action during otherwise unpredictable and anxious periods of time. John and Forest are a perfect example of this. They are a couple living and working in San Diego during the shutdown have both enrolled in school during the COVID shutdown. John has been a manager in restaurants and bars/clubs for over 20 years and has always considered this a career. However, the uncertainty and new danger associated with working in the industry because of the pandemic has caused him to rethink his career trajectory. He is one of the only employees kept on fulltime at his once-busy bar and club in San Diego. When I speak to John on May 26, the San Diego area has just reopened for the Memorial Day weekend—with no warning and no real public health plans in place. This weekend—the crowds of maskless people and severely understaffed bar[43]—make him realize that he is not sure he could do this work forever (John, 5.26.20). John is ultimately responsible for a few dozen employees—not only their health and safety but also their livelihood. As a manager, if he calls a worker to come back to work for opening weekend and they decline—even for health reasons, or not being able to find childcare—he could be responsible for them losing their unemployment benefits. Therefore, he feels tremendous strain to not report people who do not feel comfortable coming back to work—or simply cannot return to work—and has, therefore, become responsible for working 16-hour days over the 3-day weekend with thousands of patrons at his bar.

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[43] Understaffing made enforcing mask or distance restriction difficult or even impossible in many cases.

Just a few days earlier, I talked to John's partner Forest, a bartender in her late 20's. She had been thinking about going back to school, prior to the shutdown, but had not yet followed through—but the pandemic shutdowns have now given her time. She says,

> "Pre-COVID I've been wanting to go back to school, wanting to look for another career it's just so hard to get out of the industry once you're in it because of the tips and just having cash on hand and if I start at minimum wage jobs. I got stuck because of that reason...As of now after COVID it's a very high-risk situation because of the potential of catching the virus. When we go back to work, we're going to be exposed to a high number of people so, I don't know if I really want to stay in the restaurant industry after this. I have already taken steps to rectify that. I enrolled in school, so I know that's just one little baby step but I have been rolled for summer classes and I'm going in to get my major in psychology that's what I'm working on" (Forest, 5.21.20).

5.1.4.2 Continuing Education and Re-Evaluating Restaurant Work

Rather than to begin school during the lockdown, others use this time off work to turn their attention more fully on their educational pursuits during lockdown—realizing that the restaurant industry may not be a place for them in the future. Michelle, for example, is a 28-year-old from a small town in central Michigan. She works as a server while she attends graduate school for social work (Michelle, 6.8.20). She has worked in restaurants since high school—and has even maintained serving jobs during stints of professional employment elsewhere. For people like Michelle, restaurant work has always been an easy fallback. While in school, or in periods of transition, she has always been able to rely on serving for steady income. Before the pandemic, she had every intention of maintaining a few shifts a week at her current restaurant even after graduating with a Masters Degree in Social Work in 2021. However, as a result of joblessness during the pandemic, she has reassessed her plan to continue working in restaurants even after she graduates. In our interview, Michelle says,

"Quite honestly, before COVID happened, thought that I would want to continue to serve one to two shifts a week like I did when I had a social work job, but when COVID happened and I had about six weeks off work, I realized that I was super burnt out of working in a restaurant and serving. I hope that when I graduate, I will be done working in a restaurant and will just stick with my social work jobs, but depending on my income and how much my bills are, I may have to still supplement with serving" (Michelle, 6.8.20).

Some, like Sarah, a self-described "army brat" who has lived all over the country and has had a variety of jobs, have moved in-and-out of the industry with various periods of re-entering college. She began her career in the financial aid department of a higher education institution. She explains that her sister, who is a bartender, got her first job as a hostess and she "climbed the totem pole" (Sarah, 4.28.20). She has left the industry several times but has come back most recently when she decided to go back to school full-time. The layoff, while unexpected, allows Sarah to focus on a new venture—her real estate broker's license. She had started it before the pandemic, but has never had a lot of time to study while working full time. During the shutdown, she is able to rely on family for support and study full time for the broker's license (Sarah, 4.28.20).

5.1.4.3 Outcomes for Education as a Coping Mechanism

Pursuing an education requires time, money, and other resources (often social capital). Therefore, those who use education as a way to cope with the pandemic are often in a more privileged position than others who I interviewed. They tend to be white and young, with strong social and family connections to help support them. While by the time I am conducting interviews, many unemployed workers are receiving generous unemployment benefits during their period of joblessness (thanks to the CARES ACT), and therefore do not have the same financial stressors as at the very beginning of shutdowns, being able to enroll in classes and

consider being out of the employment sector altogether, is a privileged position. This type of

coping is focused on longterm change at the individual level—and only available to a few. For

folks with lower educational attainment (below a high school diploma) and less social or for

those who are parents with children or older adults who are less likely to be employable in

other industries, pursuing education as a coping mechanism during this period is not an option.

5.2 Coping Mechanisms and Dignity Maintenance

Coping mechanisms are not a single strategy that that people employ, but a series of

strategies—some intentional and some not—to get through this particular moment of crisis.

Each person in this study employs a variety of coping mechanisms at various times to get

through a period of joblessness, increasing job precarity, and uncertainty about the future. No

matter the method(s) of coping, it is clear that people are simply looking for a way to feel

better, and in control of their situation. Often, people must try a variety of things before they

find something that help—but many also never find something that truly relieves any of their

fear, anxieties, or general disassociation during the pandemic. Therefore, I discuss ways that

people simply get by, take on projects, do organizing and philanthropic work, and pursue

education as ways of coping with the pandemic. Alongside each of these coping mechanisms, I

have made associations about how identities as a restaurant worker are thought of, what unit

of analysis is used in the deployment, and whether each coping mechanism should be

considered as a short or long-term "solution" to their problem. However, the question of

dignity, which is central to the human experience and to this dissertation, remains. How, if at

all, do any of these coping strategies lead to the preservation of dignity for restaurant workers

experiencing crisis?

For the purposes of this analysis, dignity maintenance uses Hodson's rubric. The four basic principles for dignity that he puts fourth are: resistance, citizenship, creation of independent meaning systems, and development of social relations (Hodson 2001). The goal of these four principles is a "sense of dignity, self-worth, value, self-respect, or esteem" (Keisu 2017; Hodson 2001; Lukas 2015). So, how does each coping mechanism "measure up" and what are the outcomes of dignity preservation?

5.2.2 Education

Education as a coping mechanism is very individual and focused on longterm goals. Because of this focus on longterm solutions, and the fulfillment of Hodson's dignity index (2001), education should be considered as achieving personal dignity maintenance at a moderate level. Education is perhaps the most intentional and forward-thinking mechanism and therefore lends itself to dignity preservation. However, education is generally done for individual reasons and does not (usually) involve a social component, meaning systems creation is very personalized. Education is, in this case, an act of resistance, because an individual is using the oppressive forces of the COVID-19 crisis to engage in change-making behaviors. The people in this study who choose educational avenues are using the time and space of being out of work to pursue new career avenues and as a result performing individual acts of resistance (Scott 1985).

5.2.3 Organizing and Philanthropy

Organizing and Philanthropy as a system of coping mechanisms has the closest association with personal dignity preservation. However, while organizing and philanthropy were coded together and look similar in their styles, philanthropic work and organizing work do not necessarily achieve similar dignity outcomes. For the people in my study, philanthropy tends to be a very-individual level activity meant to achieve short term goals. While volunteer work is inherently helping meet the needs of a particular community, the act itself tends to be rooted in the individual. That is, people who volunteer feel as though they have something to contribute to those in need—rather than a communal focus on more structural level change.

Conversely, organizing, while often done in response to current events (COVID, layoffs, racial injustices) it has longterm benefits and is done at the collective level. Therefore, citizenship (a sense of belonging) and social relations are built into this mechanism. Additionally, organizing for societal-level changes inherently has meaning creation imbedded within. Finally, resistance is central to the idea of organizing. At the collective level, organizing is an attempt to change the status quo through action. This is a form of resistance in its most outward-facing form. The folks who engage in organizing are also likely to be the most vulnerable group of those who I interviewed. This is an interesting dichotomy—that the people with the lowest relative social status are also the most likely to engage in activism. However, the literature on resistance supports the theory that those with higher social status do not have the impetus to act. Rather, it is those who face oppression who seek out resistance and organizing efforts to assert agency and dignity (Scott 1985).

5.2.4 Decisions to Stay or Leave: A Decision Rooted in Dignity Preservation

Regardless of the coping mechanisms employed, deciding to stay in or leave the industry is directly tied to the various coping mechanisms and has implications for dignity preservation. However, the decision to stay or leave is not equally available to everyone in my study, but as discussed in previous sections, is closely tied into personal privilege and marginalizations. Multiple factors play into peoples' decisions to stay in or leave. Bound by many personal and structural issues—things like financial resources, marital and parental status, but also things like relative limitations due to an ongoing pandemic—many workers have to struggle with the difficult decision to stay in the industry or find a job in a new sector.

For many people involved in this study, the totality of being unemployed (or under-employed), uncertainty about the future, and newfound identity outside of a hospitality worker, has caused them to re-evaluate their relationship with the restaurant industry altogether in order to preserve a sense of dignity. People like Kevin, a head chef at a modern eatery in Detroit Michigan explains that "In a perfect world, I would stay with this company" (Kevin, 6.27.20). However, the pandemic has caused him some uncertainty as to the longevity of the company. He feels as though getting out of the industry now, instead of waiting to see what happens in the future, is best for him. Similarly, others like Sean (6.15.20) and SB (4.28.20) have a changed perspective about the stability of restaurant work and are also looking into pursuing new avenues. Tiffany (5.30.20) was already in school before the pandemic started, however with her newfound unemployment, she is ready to focus more of her time and energy on her Psychology degree to pursue a new path. These workers have chosen to exit the industry at this point as a way of dignity maintenance. Rather than to wait for more difficult future

circumstances that may come to be, like the collapse of the industry or longterm

unemployment, they are opting to leave on their own terms. They currently have the security

of unemployment benefits and are able to use this time to explore new career avenues.

Therefore, their act of dignity preservation is to leave an industry that no longer serves their

needs.

While many see an opportunity to pursue a new career or education, others remain

focused on their careers in the industry as a means of dignity maintenance. Some skilled

workers, like chefs, have devoted time, energy, and money into their craft and do not want to

start a new career when they have spent many years honing their craft and creating an identity

around their work. Lena (6.26.20) has spent a decade and invested money, time, and energy in

her craft. She strongly identifies as a chef and maintaining this identity is a form of dignity

maintenance for her. Others like Mike and Jose also feel strongly connected to their work and

are committed to fighting for more equitable labor outcomes from within the industry. For

these workers, remaining a part of the industry and its community, and continuing to hone

their chosen craft is central for their identities and dignity maintenance.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the very diverse and nuanced ways that restaurant

workers have experienced the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. This "crisis" of mass

unemployment, economic instability, and uncertainty about one's future led to the discovery of

the various ways these people found coping mechanisms and strategies for self-preservation

and dignity. I have embedded the concept of identity throughout this entire analysis and

attempted to explain how it is that people who identified as restaurant workers before the

pandemic came to understand their evolving identities through joblessness. While no one

person has experienced the pandemic in exactly the same way, the various coping mechanisms

employed do seem to affect their personal identification as a restaurant worker or not. Those

who pursue formal education outside of the industry tend to strip their identity as a restaurant

worker throughout their unemployment. People who engage in activism and philanthropy seem

to maintain a strong sense of identity as a restaurant worker, while simultaneously attempting

to affect change in their given communities. Ultimately, it does not seem as though those who

participate in projects had any particular identity shift—except to say that they have simply

stripped off the role of worker for a time in order to fulfill projects that are personally

meaningful to them.

This analysis has shown how coping mechanisms are not completely linear nor a singular

strategy. Rather, they are a series of navigations that people make in the midst of crisis to make

sense of their current situation and, sometimes, to make a conscious decision about what the

behaviors are attempting to achieve (Ferguson and Cox, 1997). While it might be tempting, as a

reader to "rank" the coping mechanisms or assign value as to their overall benefit to individuals

or society, that type of judgment is not beneficial to the goal of this research.

I have made the attempt to link certain kinds of coping with attempts at personal dignity

preservation. This link can be established by a conscious attempt at future planning, as opposed

to other types of coping which is centered around an immediate need to deal with a particular

situation. Out of the three main types of coping I have identified here, education and

philanthropic and organizing can be identified as more consciously actionary with a specific aim

toward one's own future. Whereas taking on projects tends to be more reactionary based on

the current situation. Similarly, folks who engaged in other types of coping can be said to be reacting to the situation, with little focus or intent on the future. While more intentional action may indeed lead to a more pronounced sense of dignity preservation, it is important to note that simply existing while in a moment of crisis in enough. And, indeed, as we have seen, those people who were able to engage in forward-thinking activities were likely to have a more privileged social location relative to others. So regardless of the method of coping, and conscious or unconscious decisions to stay or leave the industry, it is clear that the people I interview use any means necessary to survive the pandemic. Through three primary ways, I identify how people not only survived—but attempted to thrive and reclaim a sense of identity that was lost.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Overview of Dissertation

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many taken-for-granted activities to an abrupt end. As consumers, we became unable to do things that we were accustomed to—like shop, dine, and even congregate in the public sphere. For workers, these closures had more far-reaching implications. People across several industries suddenly became unemployed as a result of COVID shutdowns. However, no sector was hit harder than the restaurant industry. By April 2020, the unemployment rate for the service industry rose to a high of 35.4% (bls.org 2021), meaning that more than one in every three restaurant workers was out of work. The immediate closures of several industries and subsequent rise in unemployment had obvious ripple effects across the entire economy—many of these effects are being still being felt. However, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are farther reaching than just the economic fallout. For many people, the crisis itself brought on increased fears of illness, social isolation, uncertainty about the future, and increased economic insecurity. Restaurant workers who became unemployed during this period experienced greater feelings of uncertainty and precarization.

This dissertation has captured the experiences of restaurant workers during the height of unemployment in the spring and summer of 2021. Rather than focus on the negative aspects of this crisis, however, I have attempted to create a better understanding of the various coping mechanisms that people in the restaurant industry utilized during the COVI-19 pandemic, and if and how those coping mechanisms lead to personal dignity maintenance. These findings are important because personal dignity is a fundamental human right. Therefore, understanding

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the pathways between coping mechanisms and dignity maintenance during crisis can affect change at the personal and structural level.

At the personal level, understanding how different coping mechanisms may or may not lead to personal dignity maintenance can affect personal choice. At the structural level, understanding how power, privilege, and marginalizations can impact an individual's ability to participate in certain types of coping should be a catalyst of more equitable resource distribution. This research serves as an example of how longterm policy shifts have created a more precarious workforce who are more easily impacted by crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic). Furthermore, this research continues a trend in sociology that highlights the gendered and racialized dynamics of restaurant work (Halpin 2015; Harris and Giuffre 2015; Hochschild 1983; Jayaraman 2013; Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 2014; Wilcoxson and Moore 2019).

6.1.1 Key Findings

This study has uncovered a few key findings that may be important for understanding coping during crisis and also, specifically, how labor organizing around restaurant work may create a safer, more stable, and more equitable industry. Specifically, chapter 5 explored the relationship between coping mechanisms and personal dignity maintenance. People employed a variety of coping mechanisms to make it through the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on interviews, I identified three primary ways that the restaurant workers in my study coped: education, projects, and organizing and philanthropy. I analyzed these coping mechanisms against a "rubric" created by combining the analysis efforts of Rowlands level of analysis for female empowerment (Rowlands 1995; 1997), Hodson's four principles for achieving dignity

(2001). This analysis uncovered a non-uniform and non-linear way that they three primary coping mechanisms led to personal dignity maintenance.

Of the main types of coping I have identified, education and philanthropic and organizing can be identified as being more closely linked to dignity maintenance, whereas taking on projects tends to be more reactionary based on the current situation. However, the analysis of these two coping mechanisms highlights a variety of interesting findings; 1) not all coping mechanisms were available to all people and privilege and social status played a big role in who had access to what coping mechanisms, and 2) even within one coping mechanism there are different dignity outcomes. Education as a coping mechanism was largely undertaken by younger, childless, and more privileged people. This makes sense that choosing to go back to school or simply investing more time, energy, and money into one's education requires more freedom and support from social structures. For people who were older and had more responsibilities (like childcare, eldercare, etc) education can be considered as achieving personal dignity maintenance at a moderate level. Education is perhaps the most intentional and forward-thinking mechanism and therefore lends itself to dignity preservation.

Organizing and Philanthropy demands a more nuanced discussion. While these two actions were coded together because of their relative similarity in behavior, upon analysis it became clear that they were undertaken by different groups and for different reasons. For the people in my study, philanthropy tended to be undertaken by more privileged white women who felt as though they had something to contribute to those in need—rather than a communal focus on more structural level change. Whereas, organizing was very focused on community-oriented solutions. As opposed to mostly white and privilege people who engge in

philanthropy, the folks who engaged in organizing were also likely to be the most vulnerable group of those who I interviewed. This is an interesting dichotomy—that the people with the lowest relative social status are also the most likely to engage in activism. However, the literature on resistance supports the theory that those who face oppression who seek out resistance and organizing efforts to assert agency and dignity (Scott 1985).

These findings, in some ways were not surprising. Projects as a coping mechanism was very focused on short-term fixes at the individual level with little concern for how the various projects undertaken might affect future change. However, education and philanthropy and organizing are very intentional actions that lend themselves to personal and structural change, and therefore can easily lead to dignity preservation. Analysis of the other coping mechanisms labeled as getting by did reveal some interesting and unexpected findings that may have implications for future work on dignity maintenance.

6.1.1.1 Unexpected Results for "Getting By"

This research study was focused on three primary forms of coping, however, analysis uncovered different ways that people cope, and indeed supported the idea that there are a variety of ways that dignity can be preserved. Getting by was a "throw away" category that was meant to show the nuanced ways that people cope during crisis. However, there was one method of "getting by" that did meet the criteria for achieving a high level of dignity maintenance: breaking COVID protocol to engage in social activities. While this action may be deemed as unwise or unsafe, engaging in "forbidden activities" is an act of resistance and relies heavily on creating meaningful connections and social relations, and asserting independent meaning systems. By resisting authority (policy implementations and group activity restrictions,

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re-establishing social networks (meeting with friends and family), and determining what was valuable to an individual (social connections are more valuable than the risk of contracting the virus), individuals who I interviewed were able to maintain a sense of self-worth and value through this act of rebellion. However, while this strategy does meet the criteria for dignity maintenance, it is a short-term solution and one that may have had negative future implications for those who engaged in the behavior (e.g., fines, sickness, etc). Therefore, while breaking COVID protocol to engage in social activities did meet the criteria and offers an interesting counterpoint to an intuitive understanding of dignity, it was not proposed as a key way to meaningfully understand the links between coping mechanisms and dignity maintenance. It does, however, offer interesting insight into the resistance literature that explains how acts of non-compliance are often undertaken by groups who feel oppressed to assert personal and group-level agency (Scott 1985). In contrast to organizing as a resistance mechanism which is perceived as a "positive" form of coping and happens at the community level, breaking COVID protocol is a very individualized behavior that is seen as "negative" or harmful. These two coping mechanisms show how, under duress and with increasing preciousness, different people engage in various coping strategies simply as a way to "get by." It may be tempting to praise one action while demonizing another, however it is important to understand how simply surviving this global pandemic the rippling crises that ensued is, int itself, enough.

6.2 Contributions to the Field and Future Directions

    6.2.1 Contributions

        The purpose of this study has been about understanding how those most impacted by layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic cope with unemployment and uncertainty and if—and how—various coping mechanisms lead to personal dignity preservation. This research can be explained by a larger body of literature that understands the human response to difficult circumstances as not simply oppressive and all-consuming (Massey and Denton 1993), but rather there is a human need to attempt resistance (Scott 1985), assert personal identity and agency (Waters 1999), seek out empowerment (Rowlands 1995;1997), and in fact reclaim or maintain dignity (Hodson 2001). This research has been undergirded by Historical Contingency Theory (Prechel 1991) alongside a social constructionist framework to understand how attempts at resistance, identity reclamation, and change happen at the individual level (Cerulo 1997; Lamont 2002; Sharpe 2016; Waters 1999). This research has combined unique fields of study and fills gaps in the current literature. While several authors have focused on, for instance, the ways that people cope with potentially exploitative situations at work (Hodson 2001; Hennigan and Purser 2021; Wilcoxson and Moore 2019), the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a new set of circumstances that necessitate different types of coping mechanisms—ones that rely less on the physical/emotional/mental impacts of being at work, and simultaneously deal with feelings of being out of work and how that intersects with one's own identity. Therefore, I have filled this gap in the literature by providing a new outlook at the nexus of crisis, personal and workplace identity, and dignity. By analyzing both coping and dignity together, I have attempted to better understand how some coping mechanisms may lead to

different outcomes than others—and how positionality can play a large role in one's ability to both cope and find a personal sense of dignity. This has implications, not only for understanding what happened to out-of-work people during COVID, but also for much broader audiences. Additionally, this research provides insight into the world of restaurant work and the continuing—often hidden—problems that persist within it.

6.2.2 Future Directions

6.2.2.1 Pervasiveness of Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment in the Industry

Through discussing coping during the COVID crisis with respondents, I also found a variety of issues that restaurant workers repeatedly spoke about—and something that I have personally experienced. As a former female chef in the industry for about a decade, I was able to empathize with the feelings and experiences of discrimination and harassment of many women in this study, because I also experienced many of the same feelings of implicit and explicit discrimination and bias as the female interviewees. In their book, *Taking the Heat*, Harris and Giuffre (2015) explore the gendered culture of the gastronomic field. This book explores the challenges for women who cook professionally. By showing how women must navigate this world, the authors show just how difficult it is for women to rise to the top of the gastronomic field—and stay there. As some of my interviewees, Sam, Lena, and Arielle, discuss—and as I too experienced—the ways in which women are "indoctrinated" into the kitchen is through a series of hazing processes to "prove" that they can make it in the kitchen alongside their male counterparts. For many women, this experience of gender-based discrimination, coupled with a disproportionate share of household responsibilities (childcare,

cleaning, laundry, etc), means that very few women will in fact rise through the ranks in the kitchen to become head chefs. This very experience forced me out of the restaurant industry at 24 years old. Although I had talent and drive, I recognized that there were very few possibilities for me to prove myself. And, when I was given opportunities, there was constant surveillance, waiting for me to "mess up" or have a breakdown. Male chefs expect women to fail and therefore constantly watch for this behavior. For many women, this expectation of failure and the inability to prove one's worth forces many women to leave the industry altogether. For women who stay, many are relegated to more "feminine" positions such as a pastry chef or prep cook—positions that are often less valued, require lower skill, and less stress. Lena and Arielle both found themselves in this position.

Although this problem of rampant sexism, discrimination, and harassment is increasingly being recognized—the problem persists. My interviews I conducted have shown that since I quite restaurant work in 2014, the same problems remain prescient. Organizations like ROC (Restaurant Opportunities Centers) and One Fair Wage have helped to shed light on many of the issues and attempted to create policy change. However, restaurant culture has remained largely unchanged, but more work is needed to bring about a more equitable workplace for women and other marginalized identities.

6.2.2.2 Other Future Directions

In addition to highlighting the need for reform around harassment and discrimination in the industry, this research also highlights a need for future research on how a wider group of workers—in various industries—cope with being out of work. This study was able to capitalize on a particular moment of crisis around the world and use it as a case study, however, future

directions may focus more broadly on how unemployment can lead to personal crisis and how those in crisis cope. Further work is needed to strengthen the relationship between various types of coping mechanisms and dignity maintenance. This study was bound by particular methodological constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and more in-depth ethnographic work may yield better results with a greater diversity of participants.

It is clear through my research that there is a strong relationship between social status and coping mechanisms. Further work can be done to engage this research and make it more generalizable. However, this research does have implications for policy implementation. It is clear that not everyone experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in the same ways personal privileges and marginalizations led to different coping—and ultimately different levels of dignity maintenance. Policy around the findings of this research should focus on more regulations for the restaurant industry to ensure more equitable treatment and pay. The better distribution of resources within the industry and throughout society might ultimately create equal opportunities for coping—which can lead to higher levels of personal dignity maintenance.

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APPENDIX A: SITE APPROVAL LETTER

Figure 2: Site Approval Letter

September 9, 2019

Anna Wilcoxson, PhD Candidate
Sociology Department, Michigan State University
509 Circle Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48824
574.453.7918

Dear Ms. Wilcoxson:

Per our previous discussions, you have our (Restaurant Opportunities Center) to conduct research for your dissertation (title not yet determined) at our centers and among participants in our meetings and programs throughout Michigan. We are happy to hear that you are interested in learning about the experiences of immigrant workers in the food industry.

We understand that you plan to conduct interviews with participants in ROC. These interviews are confidential, voluntary, and participants will sign a separate consent forms prior to starting the interview. These consent forms will be provided in the interviewees preferred language.

We understand you will introduce yourself as a researcher when you first begin observing and you will provide people with a flyer with relevant information about your study. We welcome you to observe interactions and take notes and record at trainings, meetings, and other events as prudent. Additionally, we understand that you will be acting as a "participant," and may actively engage in training and work activities, in so far as it does not distract other participants. You are welcome to review available documents published by and about ROC that may benefit your research.

We understand that your participation in ROC is meant to be a starting point for your research. Separate and individual research relationships may be made through this process—with ROC employees or members.

As discussed, although you may describe ROC, it may not be mentioned in name. Furthermore, the identity of all participants in your study will not be disclosed in any publication. Pseudonyms will be used to safeguard individuals'' confidentiality and anonymity.

We look forward to your research findings. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns, and we will do the same.

Sincerely,

Pete Vargas
Michigan Organizing Director
Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) of Michigan

Figure 3: Consent Forms

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: ROC WORKER JUSTICE INITIATIVE
Researcher(s): Anna Wilcoxson, Ph.D. Candidate, ROC Fellow
Faculty Sponsor: Isabel Ayala, Ph.D.

Survey Participant:
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Anna Wilcoxson for a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Isabel Ayala, Ph.D., in the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University. This work is being done in conjunction with ROC (Restaurant Opportunities Centers), who aiming to better understand the issues affecting workers in the restaurant industry in order

During the survey we will ask you questions about your current and past work experience in the restaurant industry, as well as some background information about you. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are of interest to organizations (like ROC) who are fighting for more rights and better working conditions for restaurant workers. I will be asking you questions concerning your involvement with the program, and the way in which your participation has influenced your life. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in this study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to learn more about labor relations within the food industry, and especially for immigrants working within . Specifically, I am interested in how it is that authority is expressed and interpreted in a worker training setting through interactions in social settings that make conflicting demands, asking participants to be both creative and to strictly adhere to rules. Inspiration Kitchens is selected as a site in this study because it is a job-training program that has successfully trained individuals for the food industry workforce.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, the following are the procedures.
- You are agreeing to participate in an interview. Interviews may be audio-recorded.
- Interviews will last around one hour, but may take more or less time depending on the amount of information that you are willing to provide.
- Interviews will be conducted in a private office at Inspiration Kitchens, unless you would prefer to conduct interview at a location of your choosing.

Risks/Benefits:
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Figure 3 (cont'd)

There are no direct benefits to you from participation. However, the potential benefits to society may include a better understanding of the importance of labor-related social justice issues.

Compensation:
There is a $10 compensation for participating in an in-person interview and survey. Even if you decide to not complete the interview, or that you would rather the interview not be used in the published study, the gift card will be given to you.

Confidentiality:
- Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.
- Audio files will be transcribed and then destroyed. Transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer. To protect your confidentiality each participant will be assigned a pseudonym of your choosing and this name will be used during the interview and in transcripts. Participants' real names will not be connected to their responses in any way.
- The primary researcher will transcribe the interview audio and at the end of the research study audio files and transcripts will remain stored in a password protected computer for possible further analysis by the researcher.
- When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Your decision to participate in this study, or to withdraw from this study, will not impact your employment nor will it impact your future options for employment.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact:
Anna Wilcoxson, Researcher
PhD Candidate
Department of Sociology
Michigan State University
509 E Circle Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48824
(574) 453-7918
Wilcox44@msu.edu

Figure 3 (cont'd)

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided in this consent form, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

☐ Yes, I agree to be audio-recorded

Participant's Signature   **Date**

_____   _____

Printed Name of Participant   **Contact phone number**

_____   _____

                                                            Email

                                                            _____

Witness Signature   **Date**

_____   _____

Printed Name of Witness

_____

Figure 4: Survey 1 Questions

COVID RESPONSE SURVEY FOR RESTAURANT WORKERS

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Before taking the survey: This survey is part of a research project to better understand the issues affecting workers in the restaurant industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is being done by Anna Wilcoxson, who is PhD candidate at Michigan State University as part of her dissertation research.

During the survey we will ask you questions about your current and past work experience in the restaurant industry, as well as some background information about you. The background information is to get a better idea of who works in the restaurant industry and how to better help those people! The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete.   Before starting, you should know that:

·   The survey is voluntary –you can choose not to participate, or you can stop at any time. You can skip any question you do not want to answer.   ·   The survey data is anonymous– only the project researchers will have access to the specific information provided – your answers will be used only for the purposes of the research project described above, but will not be shared with any other institutions, organizations, or individuals. Your contact information WILL NOT be connected to your survey data and cannot be traced to you as an individual.

Thank you for participating in this survey. If selected, would you be willing to participate in a 1 hour paid interview?

◯ Yes, here is my email address

_____

◯ No

◯ Need more information

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q1 What is your five-digit zip/postal code?

_____

Q2 How would you identify your racial/ ethnic background? Please select the racial/ethnic classification which best identifies you:

○ Caucasian or White

○ Black or African American

○ Non-white Hispanic

○ White Hispanic

○ Jewish

○ Middle Eastern

○ Indigenous (including Native Hawaiian and/ or Pacific Islander)

○ Multi-racial

○ prefer not to say

X→ X→

137
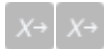
Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q3 What is your preferred gender identification?

     ○ Male

     ○ Female

     ○ Transgender Male

     ○ Transgender Female

     ○ Gender Fluid/ Neutral/Androgynous

     ○ Queer

     ○ Questioning

     ○ Other

     ○ Prefer not to say

Q4 What is your current age?

_____

X→

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q5 What is your current relationship status?

○ Single

○ Dating/ in a relationship

○ Long-term partnership

○ Married

○ Divorced

○ Widowed

○ Prefer not to say


Q6 What is your highest level of education?

○ Some high school

○ GED or high school Diploma

○ Post-secondary trade school

○ Some college (includes Associate's degree)

○ Bachelor's Degree

○ Graduate School

X→

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q7 What is your current citizenship status?

○ U.S. born citizen

○ Naturalized citizen

○ Legal permanent resident

○ Temporary resident status (student, worker, tourist, protected status)

○ Undocumented

○ Prefer not to say

X→ X→
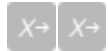
Q8 Do you live alone?

○ Yes, I live alone

○ Yes, I live with a roommate/(s) and do not share costs (other than rent/utilities).

○ No, I live with a roommate/(s) and we share household costs equally.

○ No, I live with a significant other/family/children

Q9 How many people, **over the age of 18** do you have currently living in your household, including yourself (relatives and non-relatives)?

_____

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q10 How many **children under the age of 18** do you have currently living in your household   (relatives and non-relatives)?

_____

X→ X→
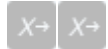
Q11 Are you, under normal circumstances, the primary breadwinner for your household?

○ Yes, no one else works in my household beside me.

○ Yes, but others contribute to the total income.

○ No, a significant other is the primary breadwinner for the household. I contribute to the total income.

○ No, we contribute equally

X→ X→

Q12 Has the "breadwinner" situation changed in your household since the COVID-19 outbreak?

○ Yes

○ No

End of Block: Personal Information. Please choose the options that best represent you.

Start of Block: Now that you have answered some background information about yourself, we would

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q13 Please identify the type of food establishment where you are currently or most recently employed:

○ Fine dining

○ Casual dining

○ Quick Service/Fast food

○ Cafe/Bakery

○ Deli/Sandwich shop

○ Other

Q14 What is the ownership structure of that restaurant?

○ Individual/family-owned

○ Restaurant group-owned

○ National chain

○ Local or Regional chain

○ Other

X→ X→

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q15 What is your current, or most recent, job title?

○ FOH manager

○ FOH assistant manager or shift manager

○ Host

○ Waiter

○ Bartender

○ Barback/busser/dishwasher

○ BOH manager/chef

○ Prep cook or line cook

○ Other

Q16 Approximately how long have/had you been with your most current employer? (Please specify with YEARS or MONTHS)

_____

Q17   Approximately how long have/had you been in the restaurant industry? (Please specify with YEARS or MONTHS)

_____

Q18 What is your most recent pay rate?

_____

Figure 4 (cont'd)

X→ X→

Q19 BEFORE the COVID-19 outbreak, what was employment status?

○ Full-time (over 30 hours a week)

○ Part-time (fewer than 30 hours a week)

○ Contract or intermittent employment

○ Unemployed and looking for restaurant work

○ Unemployed and looking for non-restaurant work

End of Block: Now that you have answered some background information about yourself, we would

Start of Block: Block 5

Q20 What is your CURRENT employment status?

○ Full-time (over 30 hours a week)

○ Part-time (fewer than 30 hours a week)

○ Contract or intermittent employment

○ Unemployed and looking for restaurant work

○ Unemployed and looking for non-restaurant work

X→

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q21 If you answered that you are now UNEMPLOYED, did your employer close the restaurant forever (meaning that they have no intentions of reopening, even once the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted)?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

X→

Q22 If you answered NO to question 21, have you been given any indication as to when you might be able to go back to work, even on a part-time basis?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

X→

Q23 Has your employer offered any sort of assistance during your period of unemployment. Please explain your answer.

○ Yes _____

○ No _____

X→ X→

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q24 Please identify which resources to which you have been able to gain access as a result of wages lost, as a result of COVID-19? (Please check all that apply)

☐   Unemployment Insurance Benefits

☐   Healthcare assistance

☐   Food and Nutrition assistance

☐   Housing Assistance

☐   Local assistance initiatives (not government sponsored)

☐   I have not been able to gain access to resources yet. (Please go to https://www.benefits.gov/help/faq/Coronavirus-resources to learn more about your eligibility for government programs. Or go to, https://rocunited.org/relief/ to learn more about relief efforts in your area.)

☐   I am not eligible for benefits because of my employment status

☐   I am not eligible for benefits because of my documentation status.

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q25 What is (are) the primary reason(s) you work in the restaurant industry? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Enjoyment of the service industry

- ☐ Money-making opportunities

- ☐ Only work opportunity/very few alternatives

- ☐ Working with friends

- ☐ Family Obligations

X→

Q26 Overall, do you enjoy your work in the restaurant industry?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Sometimes

○ Not sure

X→

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q27 Have you been observing "shelter-in-place" and "self-isolation" as often as possible (excepting work obligations and necessary trips for groceries and medications)?

○ Yes

○ No

X→

Q28 Overall, since the "shelter-in-place" order took effect, how would you express your overall mood?

○ Excellent

○ Good

○ Average

○ Poor

○ Terrible

X→

Q29 Overall, since the "shelter-in-place" order took effect, do you feel isolated from friends and loved ones?

○ Yes, very isolated

○ Yes, fairly isolated

○ No, fairly connected

○ No, very connected

○ Overall no change or Not sure

Figure 4 (cont'd)

`X→`

Q30 Do you have WIFI in your house to help you stay remotely connected to friends and loved ones?

○ Yes

○ No

`X→`

Q31 Do you have a computer or tablet in your house to help you stay remotely connected to friends and loved ones?

○ Yes

○ No

`X→`

Q32 Do you have a reliable phone (cellphone or landline with consistent service) in your house to help you stay remotely connected to friends and loved ones?

○ Yes

○ No

`X→`

Q33 Have you been using the technology to stay connected?

○ Yes

○ No

Figure 4 (cont'd)

X→

Q34 Do you feel as though this improves your mood overall?

○ Yes, it always helps

○ Yes, it mostly helps

○ It sometimes helps

○ No, it usually does not help

○ No, it never helps

Q35 Do you have access to any of the following health resources during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Please check all that apply)

☐   Mental health care providers (licensed therapists or equivalent)

☐   An established relationship with a primary care physician

---

Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q36 Do you have access to any of the following wellness resources during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Please check all that apply)

☐ A park or greenway

☐ A bicycle

☐ A yard

☐ Home exercise equipment

☐ Online exercise/yoga videos or apps

☐ Mental health apps

☐ Other, please specify

_____

X→

Q37 Have you been utilizing these resources since the COVID-19 outbreak?

○ Yes

○ No

X→

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Figure 4 (cont'd)

Q38 Do you feel as though it improves your overall mood?

○ Yes, it always helps

○ Yes, It mostly helps

○ It sometimes helps

○ No, it usually doesn't help

○ No, it never helps

X→

Q39 Do you feel as though there is anything you can do to change your current circumstances?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

X→

Q40 If the opportunity presented itself, would you get involved in changing policy for service industry workers?

○ Yes, at the local level only

○ Yes, at the national level only

○ Yes, at the local and national level

○ No

○ Not sure, need more information

Figure 5: Survey 2 Questions

Cooking and Community Restaurant Workers Survey

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1 CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY ON WORK IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY   You are being asked to participate in a **Michigan State University** research study. The purpose of the study is *to understand the working conditions of current or former food and beverage industry workers (broadly defined) in the Lansing/ East Lansing area*. **There are some questions that may be of a sensitive nature for people who have experienced discrimination and harassment in the workplace.** You will be asked to answer some questions. Your participation is voluntary. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer or withdraw at any time. You must be 18 or older to participate. If you have any questions please contact **Anna Wilcoxson** at **wilcox44@msu.edu** or *Maite Tapia*, at *tapiam@msu.edu*. You indicate that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study by submitting the survey.   The first 100 respondents who complete the survey will receive a $5 gift card. Additionally, all respondents who complete the survey will be entered into a randomized drawing to win one of five gift cards worth up to $50. Your entry into this drawing serves as consent to be contacted for the possibility of future in-depth interviews about your experiences. This future participation is completely voluntary.

`X→` `X→`

2 Is the food or beverage establishment where you work, or most recently worked, in the greater Lansing/ East Lansing area (Ingham, Eaton, or Clinton county)?

○ Yes, it is (was) in the greater Lansing area.

○ No, but it is (was) in the state of Michigan

○ No, and it is (was) outside of the state of Michigan

Figure 5 (cont'd)

3 What is your **CURRENT** five-digit zip/postal code (if you are a student, where you live during the school year)?

_____

----

4 What is your current age?

_____

X→ X→

5 Do you identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/x?

○ Yes

○ No

X→ X→

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Figure 5 (cont'd)

6 How would you identify your racial/ ethnic background? Please check all that apply:

☐   Caucasian or White

☐   Black or African American/Caribbean

☐   Asian

☐   Middle Eastern

☐   Indigenous (including Native Hawaiian and/ or Pacific Islander)

☐   Other, please specify
_____

☐   Prefer not to say

Figure 5 (cont'd)

7 What is your preferred gender identity/expression?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender Male

○ Transgender Female

○ Gender Fluid/ Neutral/Androgynous

○ Queer

○ Non-binary

○ Other

○ Prefer not to say

X→ X→

8 What is your current relationship status?

○ Single

○ Dating/ in a relationship

○ Long-term partnership

○ Married

○ Divorced

○ Widowed

○ Prefer not to say

Figure 5 (cont'd)

X→ X→

9 Do you live alone?

○ Yes, I live alone

○ Yes, I live with a roommate/(s) BUT do not share costs (other than rent/utilities).

○ No, I live with a roommate/(s) and we share household costs equally.

○ No, I live with a significant other/family/children

X→

9a How many people, **over the age of 18** do you have currently living in your household, including yourself (relatives and non-relatives)?

○ 1 person

○ 2 people

○ 3 people

○ 4 people

○ 5 or more people

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

9b How many **children under the age of 18** do you have currently living in your household   (relatives and non-relatives)?

○ 0 Children

○ 1 child

○ 2 children

○ 3 children

○ 4 children

○ 5 or more children

X→ X→

10 Are you currently enrolled in school (either part-time or full-time)?

○ Yes

○ No

Figure 5 (cont'd)

11 What is your highest level of education completed so far?

○ Some high school

○ GED or high school Diploma

○ Post-secondary trade school

○ Some college (includes Associate's degree)

○ Bachelor's Degree

○ Graduate School

Q182 **BEFORE COVID-19** shutdown orders (March 2020), what was your employment status? If you had multiple jobs, please choose the category that best describes your work situation.

○ Full-time (over 30 hours a week)

○ Part-time (fewer than 30 hours a week)

○ Contract or intermittent employment

○ Unemployed and looking for restaurant work

○ Unemployed and looking for non-restaurant work

○ Other, Please specify _____

Figure 5 (cont'd)

12 What is your **CURRENT** employment status? If you have multiple jobs, please choose the category that best describes your work situation.

○ Full-time (over 30 hours a week)

○ Part-time (fewer than 30 hours a week)

○ Contract or intermittent employment

○ Unemployed and looking for restaurant work

○ Unemployed and looking for non-restaurant work

○ Other, Please specify _____

X→ X→

13 Please choose the **BEST** option to explain how your job has changed **SINCE MARCH 2020**:

○ I lost my job

○ I was temporarily laid off or furloughed

○ I took unpaid leave

○ My hours were reduced

○ My hours increased or I worked overtime

○ I voluntarily quit or changed jobs

○ Nothing has changed

○ Other, please specify _____

End of Block: Background Information

Start of Block: Employment Questions

Figure 5 (cont'd)

Q178 **Now we will ask you some specific questions about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry. (If you have multiple jobs, think about the workplace where you work most hours)**

X→ X→
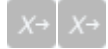
14 Do you **currently** work in the food and beverage industry (broadly defined)?

○ Yes

○ No

Q191 Since March 2020, on average, how many **hours per week** do you work at your restaurant job?

_____

Q191 What is your current/ most recent pay rate (at the restaurant where you work or most recently worked)? Please use an hourly rate. If you are not sure of the exact hourly rate, please use your best estimate.

_____

Q189 Approximately how long have/had you worked continuously (please exclude any work gaps) in the restaurant industry? (**Please specify with weeks, months, or years**)

_____

Figure 5 (cont'd)

15 Please identify the type of food or beverage establishment where you are currently or most recently employed:

○ Fine dining

○ Casual dining

○ Quick Service/Fast food

○ Cafe/Bakery/Deli/ Sandwich shop

○ Food industry outside a restaurant (e.g, residential home/hall dining, healthcare facility dining)

○ Other, please specify _____

Q185 What is the ownership structure of that restaurant?

○ Individual/family-owned

○ Restaurant group-owned

○ National chain

○ Local or Regional franchise

○ Other

Figure 5 (cont'd)

Q196 Approximately how many employees work at your current or most recent place of employment? (If a chain, please specify how many employees are at the location at which you work/ worked).
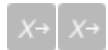
○ 1-5 employees

○ 6-10 employees

○ 11-20 employees

○ 21-30 employees

○ Over 30 employees

Q187 Approximately how long have/ had you been with your current/ most recent employer? (**Please specify with week, months, or years**)

_____

Figure 5 (cont'd)

16 What is your current, or most recent, job title?

○ FOH (Front of House) manager

○ FOH (Front of House) assistant manager or shift manager

○ Host

○ Waiter

○ Bartender

○ Barback/busser/dishwasher

○ BOH (Back of House) manager/chef

○ Prep cook or line cook

○ Other, Please specify _____

X→ X→

17 In your current or most recent, job in the food and beverage industry, are/were you considered a tipped worker?

○ Yes

○ No

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

18 What is (are) the primary reason(s) you work in the food and beverage industry? Please check all that apply:

☐   Enjoyment of the service industry

☐   Money-making opportunities

☐   Few work alternatives

☐   Working with friends

☐   Family business obligations

☐   Flexible Schedule/Hours

☐   Other, Please specify

_____

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

19 Please identify which employer benefits you are **ELIGIBLE** for at your current (or most recent) employer within the food and beverage industry? Please check all that apply:

☐   Paid sick days

☐   Paid vacation days

☐   Overtime Pay

☐   Holiday Pay

☐   Healthcare coverage

☐   Worker Compensation

☐   Paid maternity leave

☐   401k/retirement contributons

☐   No employer benefits

X→

19a Have you taken advantage of paid days off (either vacation days or sick days)?

○ Yes

○ No

X→

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Figure 5 (cont'd)

19b Do you feel comfortable taking advantage of paid time off?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Sometimes, please explain _____

X→

19c Have you taken advantage of your employer-offered healthcare?

○ Yes

○ No, I did not need this medical coverage (I get it from somewhere else)

○ No, my employer-offered healthcare plan is too expensive

○ No, I have another reason for not taking advantage of employer-offered healthcare.
Please explain your answer _____

X→

19d Have you ever had to take advantage of worker compensation while on the job (because of an injury and/or accident)?

○ Yes

○ No

X→ X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

19e Did your employer make it easy or difficult for you to take advantage of worker compensation after your injury and/or accident?

○ Yes, they made it very easy

○ No, they made it difficult, Please explain

_____

○ It was neither easy nor difficult

- -

X→

19f Overall, did/do you enjoy your work in the food and beverage industry?

○ All of the time

○ Most of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Seldom

○ Never

- -

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

20 Overall, did/ do you feel satisfied with your job in the food and beverage industry?

○ Very Satisfied

○ Slightly Satisfied

○ Neutral

○ Slightly Dissatisfied

○ Very Dissatisfied

X→

21 Do you feel as though you know and understand your employment/ labor rights as a worker?

○ All of the time

○ Most of the time

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

X→ X→

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Figure 5 (cont'd)

22 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: if you have a problem or concern, do you feel comfortable discussing it with your manager?

○ All of the time

○ Most of the time

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

○ Not sure

X→ X→

23 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: if you have a problem or concern, do you feel comfortable discussing it with your co-workers?

○ All of the time

○ Most of the time

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

○ Not sure

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

24 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever been asked to do tasks that seem unreasonable for your job description?

○ Every shift or almost every shift

○ Very frequently

○ Somewhat frequently

○ Somewhat infrequently

○ Very infrequently

○ Never

X→

25 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever felt forced to work while you and/or your children were sick?

○ Very frequently

○ Somewhat frequently

○ Somewhat infrequently

○ Very infrequently

○ Never

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

26 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever been required or felt pressure to work without clocking-in, or being required to clock-out while working?

○ Very frequently

○ Somewhat frequently

○ Somewhat infrequently

○ Very infrequently

○ Never

X→

27 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever been required to work overtime without receiving over-time pay?

○ Very frequently

○ Somewhat frequently

○ Somewhat infrequently

○ Very infrequently

○ Never

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

28 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: Has your employer ever failed to pay you on time?

○ Very frequently

○ Somewhat frequently

○ Somewhat infrequently

○ Very infrequently

○ Never

X→

29 Thinking about your current or most recent job in the food and beverage industry: Has your employer ever paid you the incorrect amount?

○ Very frequenty

○ Somewhat frequently

○ Somewhat infrequently

○ Very infrequently

○ Never

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

30 Suppose you had an unexpected emergency expense of $400. Based on your current financial situation, how would you pay for this expense:

○ With the money currently in my checking/savings account or with cash

○ Put it on my credit card and pay it off in full at the next statement

○ Put it on my credit card and pay it off over time

○ Using money from a bank loan or line of credit

○ By borrowing from a friend or family member

○ Using a payday loan, deposit advance or overdraft

○ By selling something

○ I wouldn't be able to pay for this expense right now

X→

31 Currently, are you and your family experiencing hardships around:

	Not at all	Very Little	A fair amount	A great amount	An extreme amount
Housing (rent, mortgage)	○	○	○	○	○
Food	○	○	○	○	○
Medical Attention	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Employment Questions

Start of Block: Discrimination and Harassment Questions

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Figure 5 (cont'd)

Q179 **The final questions will ask about discrimination and harassment at your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry.**

X→ X→

32 Thinking about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever experienced mistreatment at work—**by co-workers**—because of:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Your Gender	○	○	○
Your Sexual Orientation	○	○	○
Your Age	○	○	○
Your racial or ethnic background	○	○	○
Immigration status (real or perceived)	○	○	○
Physical Appearance (weight, pregnancy, piercings, tattoos, etc)	○	○	○
Other, Please Explain	○	○	○

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

32a Did you report this? Please check all that apply:

☐　　　I did not report this to anyone

☐　　　I reported this to someone in HR or an authority figure at work

☐　　　I reported this/talked to my manager

☐　　　I reported this/talked to my union or a worker organization

☐　　　I sought advice from co-workers

X→

32b Did reporting this instance/ these instances change anything at your workplace?

○ Yes, Things got better as a result of reporting

○ No, things stayed the same

○ Things got worse as a result of reporting

X→

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Figure 5 (cont'd)

33 Thinking about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry: have you ever experienced mistreatment at work—**by management**—because of:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Your Gender	○	○	○
Your Sexual Orientation	○	○	○
Your Age	○	○	○
Your racial or ethnic background	○	○	○
Immigration status (real or perceived)	○	○	○
Physical Appearance (weight, pregnancy, piercings, tattoos, etc)	○	○	○
Other, Please Explain	○	○	○

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

33a Did you report this? Please check all that apply:

☐   I did not report this to anyone

☐   I reported this to someone in HR or an authority figure at work

☐   I reported this/talked to my manager

☐   I reported this/talked to my union or a worker organization

☐   I sought advice from co-workers

X→

33b Did reporting this instance/ these instances change anything at your workplace?

○ Yes, Things got better as a result of reporting

○ No, things stayed the same

○ Things got worse as a result of reporting

X→ X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

34 Thinking about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry: have you ever experienced mistreatment at work—**by customers**—because of:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Your Gender	○	○	○
Your Sexual Orientation	○	○	○
Your Age	○	○	○
Your racial or ethnic background	○	○	○
Immigration status (real or perceived)	○	○	○
Physical Appearance (weight, pregnancy, piercings, tattoos, etc)	○	○	○
Other, Please explain	○	○	○

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

34a Did you report this? Please check all that apply:

☐   I did not report this to anyone

☐   I reported this to someone in HR or an authority figure at work

☐   I reported this/talked to my manager

☐   I reported this/talked to my union or a worker organization

☐   I sought advice from co-workers

X→

34b Did reporting this instance/ these instances change anything at your workplace?

○ Yes, Things got better as a result of reporting

○ No, things stayed the same

○ Things got worse as a result of reporting

X→   X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

35 Thinking about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever experienced any of the following—**from co-workers**—at work?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Unwanted sexual advances	○	○	○
Inappropriate touching	○	○	○
Inappropriate comments	○	○	○

X→

35a Did you report this? Please check all that apply:

☐ I did not report this to anyone

☐ I reported this to someone in HR or an authority figure at work

☐ I reported this/talked to my manager

☐ I reported this/talked to my union or a worker organization

☐ I sought advice from co-workers

X→

181

Figure 5 (cont'd)

35b Did reporting this instance/ these instances change anything at your workplace?

○ Yes, Things got better as a result of reporting

○ No, things stayed the same

○ Things got worse as a result of reporting

- -

X→

36 Thinking about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever experienced any of the following—**by management**—at work?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Unwanted sexual advances	○	○	○
Inappropriate touching	○	○	○
Inappropriate comments	○	○	○

- -

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

36a Did you report this? Please check all that apply:

☐   I did not report this to anyone

☐   I reported this to someone in HR or an authority figure at work

☐   I reported this/talked to my manager

☐   I reported this/talked to my union or a worker organization

☐   I sought advice from co-workers

X→

36b Did reporting this instance/ these instances change anything at your workplace?

○ Yes, Things got better as a result of reporting

○ No, things stayed the same

○ Things got worse as a result of reporting

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

37 Thinking about your current (or most recent) job in the food and beverage industry: Have you ever experienced any of the following—**from customers**—at work?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Unwanted sexual advances	○	○	○
Inappropriate touching	○	○	○
Inappropriate comments	○	○	○

X→

37a Did you report this? Please check all that apply:

☐   I did not report this to anyone

☐   I reported this to someone in HR or an authority figure at work

☐   I reported this/talked to my manager

☐   I reported this/talked to my union or a worker organization

☐   I sought advice from co-workers

X→

Figure 5 (cont'd)

37b Did reporting this instance/ these instances change anything at your workplace?

○ Yes, Things got better as a result of reporting

○ No, things stayed the same

○ Things got worse as a result of reporting

Q181 Would you like to be entered into a drawing in order to receive one of five gift cards worth up to $50?

○ Yes

○ No

Figure 6: Interview Prompts

Interview Prompts

Interview Start

- Do you consent to being recorded during this interview? Do you understand what this means?

Background information

- Tell me about how you got to work in the restaurants?
- Where are you from? (If emigrated, how long have you lived in the United States?)
- How many years have you been working in the restaurant industry? How old were you when you started?
- Is it your primary form of income?
- What is one of the biggest struggles that you have with working in the restaurant industry?
- What is your goal for your career overall? Once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, would you like to return to restaurant work? Why or why not? In an ideal world, what would you do for work?
- What is your current employment status (since the onset of COVID-19 policies)?

Coping Strategies
- How do you interpret the shelter in place order? Can you explain in your own words what that means?
- Have you been observing the order to "shelter-in-place" and "self-isolate" as often as possible (excepting work obligations and necessary trips for groceries and medications)?
- Do you stay up to date with current events? How does this help to inform your current opinion about what is happening?

Mood
- Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert?
- How would you describe your overall mood before the pandemic?
- Do you feel as though covid-19 has had an overall impact on your mood? Is it better, worse, same?
- Do you feel emotionally stable or do you feel as though you have more/less mood swings from day to day than you did before?
- Do you feel more isolated than you did before COVID-19? Can you please explain this?

Internal
- What are some ways that you have been dealing with this to try to maintain your emotional and mental stability on an individual level? (ask about: exercise, counseling, meditation, personal faith, artistic outlets, routines, sleep, drinking, drugs, smoking, sex, other ways)

Figure 6 (cont'd)

> Do you feel as though engaging in these activities helps to improve your overall mood and mental health? How or how not?

- Are you finding ways to do things that make you happy? Are you maintaining some part of your personal identity through this? (signature look, makeup, nails, clothes, other ways).

External
- Have you been trying to stay connected with friends, family, loved ones, faith communities during this time? Please explain how you have been doing this.
  - o Do you feel as though engaging in these activities helps to improve your overall mood and mental health? How or how not?
- Have you been engaging in any group activities that help you feel connected? Are you part of restaurant groups online?
  - o Do you participate in the group discussions or do you just monitor?
  - o Do you feel as though engaging in these activities helps to improve your overall mood and mental health? How or how not?

External Collective
- Are you involved in any formal or informal organizing efforts for restaurant workers?
  - o If not, are you interested in getting involved?
- Are you involved in any political efforts for restaurant workers?
  - o If not, are you interested in getting involved?

Final thoughts
- Are you more or less motivated to change the situation of restaurant workers than before? What are some things that you would like to change about the restaurant industry?
- Do you think the work that you do is important? How have you reacted to people talking about restaurant workers during this?
- Do you feel hopeful about the future?
- Is there anything else you think I should know?