

Hospitality in Crisis: Maybe Care is the Answer

by

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this research proposal. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my research thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

The hospitality industry is in crisis, and maybe care is the answer. As a 25-year veteran of the hospitality industry, I know firsthand what makes the sector undesirable, what makes it attractive, and what makes it worth saving. In 2019, the Covid pandemic brought the tourism sector to its knees, and hospitality came down with it. At this time, many scholars suggested Covid offered the perfect opportunity for us to rethink how we engage with the restoration and regeneration of the sector. During this time, an emphasis was placed on caring for one another. However, that did not trickle down to best business practices. Consequently, the labour shortage amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic continues today as hospitality organizations struggle to attract and retain a talented workforce. In this narrative inquiry, I explored the lived experiences of six frontline restaurant staff before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic by conducting semi-structured interviews. My findings revealed nothings changed in the industry, it is still as toxic and undesirable as it ever was. Guided by Critical Theory and a feminist ethic of care lens, I formulated the idea that perhaps care can interrupt the invasive neoliberal individualistic attitudes that have dominated hospitality narratives thus far. By incorporating relational care as the foundation for best business practices hospitality outlets will regain their ability to sustain the workforce that fuels hospitality encounters. Maybe then, we will have an opportunity to ensure decent work and economic growth for all.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this research to my father. May his memory be forever eternal.

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# 1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introducing the Problem

The hospitality staffing crisis in the tourism sector (exacerbated by Covid-19) is like no other crisis the tourism sector has faced. It is, indeed, a wicked problem, and wicked problems call for wicked solutions. Covid-19 was meant to offer the perfect opportunity to reset our ways of knowing and doing by shifting to a more sustainable tourism model environmentally, socially, economically, and culturally (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Gibson, 2019) and placed an emphasis on caring for one another. Unfortunately, that did not trickle down towards the many industries that support the tourism sector such as hospitality. Poulston (2009) identified the following characteristics to be embedded in the hospitality sector. They said,

The industry pays poorly, trains poorly, and demands long hours...customers buoyed by alcohol are separated from their inhibitions while away from home can add to the already volatile cocktail of over-worked staff and managers making unfair and inappropriate demands on service providers. (p. 924)

The hospitality industry has long been in crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic revealed how broken the system is. The Covid-19 pandemic stopped tourism in its tracks, and systems are still trying to recover as it continues to cause severe damage to the industry (Peterson, 2023; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021; Mitrofinova et al., 2022). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, n.d.) estimated international travel dropped 80% in 2020. Export revenues from tourism have lost an estimated \$1.2 trillion US, and 120 million jobs in the tourism sector are at risk (UNWTO, 2020). Not much changed in 2021 when losses in export revenues from international tourism fell between \$.9 and \$1 trillion US, with over 100 million tourism jobs still

at risk (UNWTO, 2022). These numbers recovered slightly in 2022, although we have not reached pre-pandemic levels in both tourism's associated revenues and labour shortages (UNWTO, 2022). The loss of tourism markets has also had a detrimental impact on the labour market and for those working in the hospitality industry. A 2021 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) indicated that a quarter of a million workers in Canada employed in food and accommodation industries found new work in alternative industries by February 2021.

Many of these employees were highly skilled and do not plan on returning (CCPA, 2021; Mitrofinova et al., 2022). A more recent report by Tourism HR Canada (2023) indicated that not only did this talented workforce leave the hospitality industry in 2021, but the industry continues to face staffing shortages due to the allure of remote work compared to poor pay, non-flexible work, and toxic organizational cultures, all contributing factors to the undesirability of the industry. In fact, it was recently estimated an additional 360 000 workers were needed to meet Canada's summer travel demands (Peterson, 2023). Although the hospitality workforce has rebounded slightly, it has yet to recover fully following the massive exodus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Tourism HR Canada, 2023).

Between pandemic-related precarities in job security and working conditions in the hospitality sector, it is not necessarily an attractive industry to enter. The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) stated that the industry-wide labour shortage means 1 in 4 Ontario tourism businesses cannot hire new staff, and 7 in 10 tourism businesses will not recover financially until 2024/2025 (TIAO, 2022). Although the fear of another Covid shutdown has somewhat subsided, these statistics are concerning as the tourism industry continues to face

uncertainty in the post-Covid world, with fear of a new variant shutting down businesses and borders again (TIAO, 2022, Tourism HR Canada, 2023).

Between March 17th, 2020, and January 31st, 2022, the hospitality sector was forced to severely limit its operations four times (Jabakhanji, 2022; Nielson, 2021). When Ontario's Ford government closed indoor dining for the first time, I remember being told that it would only be for two weeks. The first closure lasted for over two months. The Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) was introduced quickly by the Federal government to offer economic support to displaced workers in the form of \$2,000 per month before taxes (Morisette et al., 2021). The Ontario Living Wage Network (2021) indicated \$17.20 to be a living wage in Waterloo Region and \$18.10 to be a living wage in Guelph and Wellington. By doing some math, we see the CERB benefit equals \$12.50 an hour based on a 40-hour workweek. The CERB benefit offered less than minimum wage. The suggested living wages indicated above are not being met for many workers in the Waterloo Region (WR), nor will they be met with Premier Ford's minimum wage increase on October 1st, 2022, that raises the minimum wage to \$15.50 an hour (MDB Insights, 2022; Ministry of Labour, Training, & Skill Development, 2022). With \$17.59 being average wage per hour for food and beverage service workers in Canada, we have a long way to go (Tourism HR Canada, 2023).

The initial focus of federal and provincial government agencies was to help tourism businesses recover by providing grants for staffing, rents, site adaptations, etc. This funding trickled down to our local tourism agencies and was dispersed among successful businesses supporting tourism. One such grant was called the Tourism Adaptation and Recovery Program (TARP). Locally, businesses could apply for up to \$20,000 to enhance their Covid-19 safety

protocols. We cannot deny that recovery programs available through government funding had a positive impact on many businesses by allowing them to adapt to the Covid environment (Gardi, 2022). However, I know from personal experience that there are many small to medium business owners in the area who lacked the necessary skills and resources to complete these government forms, creating a barrier to accessing these funds. Subsidies for training, better working conditions, the Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB), raising the minimum wage, and other adjustments also did little to address the systemic change needed in the hospitality to attract a sustainable workforce.

The initiatives listed above along with others that are supported by provincial and federal agencies do nothing to address the root causes of the staffing shortages in the hospitality industry. A study by the University of Queensland with 400 Australian hospitality workers, led by Robinson (2022), identified the industry is rampant with “bullying, harassment, and exploitation” (para 1). One can argue there is a care-crisis in the industry. It is clear, systemic change is necessary if the hospitality sector is to become appealing to the available workforce as talented workers, displaced from the Covid-19 pandemic, have left in droves for white-collar jobs with better pay and working conditions and have no plan of returning (Lorinc, 2021; Mitrofinova et al., 2022; Mudhar, 2022). The pre-pandemic labour market was already tight, and the context of the pandemic revealed an industry in crisis.

By storying the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers in Southern Ontario (SO), I had the opportunity to honour their stories, as I aim to promote positive social change in the industry by mobilizing my research findings (Berbary, 2014; Glover, 2003; McCormack, 2004; Souto-Manning, 2014). SO was chose as a geographic location as it is currently my base,

and I hope to apply these research findings to address the hospitality crisis in our region. Perhaps, these stories will provide the fuel needed for reform in an industry long overdue for change, moving towards profitable futures for the individual, the environment, the economy, and society, centred on care.

## **1.2 Positionality & Purpose**

Important to recognize is although there are many layers to the care crisis in hospitality, from the environmental to the social, in this thesis I focused on the care crisis as it influenced the interpersonal experiences of frontline restaurant workers in a commercial hospitality setting. In trying to make sense of this crisis, as qualitative researchers we must recognize how our identity and experience informs our subjectivity and that looking at a phenomenon objectively is not possible (West, 2017). With over 25-years of experience in the field of hospitality and having worked in several tourism destinations across several roles, I am passionate about improving the well-being of those involved in the hospitality sector.

When I was a teenager, my family worked at my uncle's restaurant. My mother was a dishwasher during the day. At night, she would clean the restaurant with my father, who also worked a factory day job. I too worked in my uncle's restaurant in several roles over a five-year time period. As a successful manager, caring for my team was critical in maintaining a successful operation. As an employee, I have experienced the inequities that exist in the hospitality sector firsthand. Low wages, being shorted hours, poor treatment by management, no training opportunities, barriers to career advancement, carelessness, bad guests, accidents on the job, and privileging youth and attractiveness were all present long before the Covid-19 pandemic. I was a restaurant worker for three out of the four Covid closures that limited indoor

dining, and although I was able to scrape by with the CERB payments, I know many who were not. At the time, I was not a student, I had recently finished my undergraduate degree, and the world was in a weird place. In fact, Covid along with other circumstances, inspired me to pursue graduate studies.

Having worked in the hospitality sector for many years, in several roles, and as someone who feels passionate about the industry, this problem is and has been of great concern to me and my community. I do not want future hospitality workers to endure the same forms of abuse that myself, my family, and my friends have been exposed to and many continue to endure. After all, I do still hold dear all the beautiful memories I helped create for guests during the best and worst moments of their lives. This industry is indeed worth saving. As Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) argued “tourism is, without a doubt, one of the most important forces shaping our world” (p. 1192). By illuminating the lived experiences of hospitality workers, we have the opportunity to provide a more nuanced analysis of contributing factors to the current shortage organizations are facing when it comes to attracting talented staff to support food and beverage services in the tourism sector.

As will be shown throughout the thesis, this research has the potential to create change in an industry long overdue for change by incorporating an ethic of care framework into existing hospitality scholarship. Industry leaders will have the opportunity to translate this into care-centred organizational cultures, thus, navigating the neoliberal individualist modus operandi of the hospitality industry to date. To accomplish this, I engaged in social constructionism as my epistemological orientation. I worked through the findings by applying Critical Theory and a feminist ethic of care lens. As theory is entangled in the research process, it guided my initial

findings as I explored what care looks like from the perspective of frontline restaurant workers involved in this study. My chosen methodological approach was narrative inquiry, and my primary method was semi-structured interviews. Narrative analysis, and thematic analysis were utilized to determine initial codes. From there, the two broad themes of power and care emerged. Through this approach, I determined that an ethic of care framework may dismantle the neoliberal individualist paradigm that dominates hospitality encounters today.

### **1.2.1 The Purpose of this Study**

The aim of this research was to illuminate the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. By illuminating the care crisis that hospitality workers are experiencing and amplifying their voices, this research puts us in better position to understand and critique how power relations and a neoliberal marketplace have interrupted a care-centred focus in an organization's culture. To create systemic change and promote social justice in the hospitality sector, it is necessary to re-orient our care relationships. Only then, will hospitality work become safe, rewarding, and contribute to human flourishing.

### **1.2.2 Research Objectives**

This research study had the following three objectives:

1. To explore how the power differentials of power and privilege based on gender, race, and class shaped the lived experiences of the participants in this study.
2. To understand the care-related experiences of restaurant workers .
3. To illuminate how caring about, caring for, caregiving, care-receiving, and caring with are reflected in the lived experiences of SO's frontline restaurant workers.

As will be explained in more depth below, these objectives were informed by my onto-epistemology and the way I live my life. They aligned with the research purpose, the theoretical frameworks I applied, and the methodology I selected.

The remainder of the thesis unfolds as follows: I start with a series of vignettes that share some experiences I have had working in hospitality that span my career. Chapters two and three share the literature I engaged, the theoretical frameworks I deployed, and my methodology. I felt it was important to provide a certain level of detail in hopes it may serve as a guide for other graduate students or researchers looking to engage with narrative inquiry as a methodology or prepare for their thesis/proposal. Chapter two includes a literature review communicating the salient themes identified in hospitality scholarship that correspond with my findings and analysis. Additionally, it is coupled with a discussion on critical theory and an ethic of care as those are the theoretical frameworks with which I engaged. In the process of analyzing my findings, the two broad themes of power and care dominated the analysis and are explored further in chapters four and five respectively. I end with a concluding chapter suggesting the industry is as toxic as it ever was, a consequence due to the misuse of power. Furthermore, I recommend that a care-centred organizational culture may assist in creating more desirable workspaces, thus, alleviating the staffing crisis the industry currently faces.

## ***Sharing my Experiences working on the Frontlines***

*My first job at the age of 14 was as a toast technician in a breakfast place, there was always a line of people lined-up to come in. The owner was very flamboyant, and the customers liked that about him. The coffee was limitless, the food was good, and cheap. It was a busy Sunday morning, in the middle of the breakfast rush, and I ran out of white toast! The orders started to pile up in the window as I waited for the white toast to drop. The restaurant's owner (also my uncle) comes to the kitchen to see what the delay is. He asks, "Do you own a gun?" I reply, "No uncle. Why?" He says, "So you can shove it down your throat and blow your brains out!"*

*I remember wanting to see more of Europe. Naturally, I chose to start with Greece. I am 25-years old, and a friend tells me about this awesome party island, Ios. Getting a job was pretty easy. There was a website named iospartyisland.com with several job postings. I decided to work for a guy named Cookie in an Italian restaurant. Sending a photo of myself was critical to securing my employment, likely much more important than the experience I possessed. I remember thinking, I hope I look good enough. I had the summer of my life.*

*I remember arriving to work half an hour early for my 4 pm shift. It was a hot August afternoon. The general manager (GM) was eager to leave and halfway out the door as I walked in. She and I didn't get along so well. I was a big advocate for my team, and well, she not so much. I sat at the computer and wiggled the mouse to get the screen to turn on. My GM had forgotten to close a conversation with the director of operations. I couldn't resist; my name was the subject of the email. Right in front of my eyes, my manager is calling me a cancer on the business. Wow! I knew our relationship was troubled, but really? At this moment, I realized a lifelong career in hospitality was not for me.*

## 2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review & Theoretical Frameworks

### 2.1 Introduction

*Working in hospitality is not easy.* The toxic environments over saturated with power-laden managers ready to turn a profit at any cost with no care or regard for the staff that fuel this industry are partially to blame for an industry in crisis (Poulston, 2009). The focus of this research was to illuminate the lived experiences of those working frontline positions in the hospitality sector (restaurants specifically) before, during, and after Covid-19. By illuminating the lived experiences of these workers, I was in a better position to address the critical shortage of a talented workforce and promote a shift in organizational culture; ensuring a care-centred approach to negotiate the power differentials that make the industry undesirable. To gain a better understanding of hospitality scholarship and to gain context for my research study a deep dive into the hospitality literature was necessary.

To obtain clearer insights into the hospitality studies literature, I drew from several disciplines including tourism, sociology, business management, human resources, and hospitality management. A big part of my search criteria began by exploring articles published by Peter Lugosi and Paul Lynch along with other academics who have drawn on their work. As will be made clear below, Lugosi and Lynch are two critical hospitality scholars that have been key players in creating a space for hospitality studies separate from tourism scholarship and profit driven research models.

The literature review begins with a discussion of Covid-19, and the tourism industry followed by a brief history and background on hospitality in general. I then discuss salient themes in hospitality scholarship followed by dominant theoretical frameworks situated in the

field. I then share the theoretical frameworks with which I engaged, Critical Theory and a feminist ethic of care. As will be revealed in my thesis, the hospitality sector is in crisis. For far too long it has been more concerned with turning a profit than *caring with* the team members that perform the physical work associated with hospitality operations. Regrettably, hospitality stakeholders are unlikely to change these attitudes in an industry that prioritizes neoliberal individualist mindsets. The time has come to shift our gaze away from financial recovery towards considering and implementing the holistic reform necessary if we are going to create a sustainable hospitality workforce. Perhaps one way we can address these imbalances is through care.

## **2.2 Covid-19 & Hospitality Services in Tourism**

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic scholars suggested that this moment of uncertainty had the potential to be highly transformative creating a more sustainable industry with a regenerative mindset. Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) described the opportunity created by Covid as follows:

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-2020 has the potential to transform the tourism industry as well as the context in which it operates. This global crisis in which travel, tourism, hospitality, and events have been shut down in many parts of the world, provides an opportunity to uncover the possibilities in this historic transformative moment. A critical tourism analysis of these events briefly uncovers the ways in which tourism has supported neoliberal injustices and exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis may offer a rare and invaluable opportunity to rethink and reset tourism towards a better pathway for the future. (p. 610)

The Covid-19 pandemic served as a catalyst, exposing inequities in our community where essential workers are valued the least (Rose, 2021). It was also said to offer the perfect opportunity for us (as individuals and a society) to reset our ways of knowing, being, and doing, shifting to a more regenerative tourism model environmentally, socially, economically, and culturally (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Gibson, 2019). If tourism businesses are to thrive, changes must be made to the way people in the industry are treated and remunerated. Greater attention must be given to improving the team experience as thus far, excessive emphasis has been placed on delivering the perfect guest experience (Baltag et al., 2021; Lashley, 2022). One such way this may be accomplished is by creating a shift in organizational culture to one that prioritizes caring for one another over profits.

In the last twenty years, we have seen a major shift in tourism studies whereby the focus on tourism growth is slowly shifting to highlight the importance of regenerative practices for the communities, people, and non-humans that are impacted by tourism encounters (Carnicelli & Boluk, 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Higgins & Bigby, 2022; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). The industry is shifting, it is evolving to challenge the growth driven paradigm and move to one which addresses oppression, injustice, and tyranny in the sector (Gibson, 2016; Haywood, 2020; Tomassini & Cavgnaro (2020). I am saddened to say that although interest is growing in the tourism sector to shift to regenerative practices, centred on relational care, it has yet to trickle down to the hospitality sector that fuels the tourism industry. This phenomenon was revealed in the findings of this study and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four. The next section of this literature review provides an overview of hospitality scholarship.

### 2.3 An Overview of Hospitality Studies

The origins of the word hospitality go back to the Latin language - where the root of the word *hospes* described a guest, stranger, visitor, or host. The act of hospitality belongs to ancient times in the Enlightenment era when the Greeks and Romans used it to describe the divine duty one has in looking after their guests and protecting any strangers that come to one's home (Lynch et al., 2011). Beyond ancient times, Lynch et al. (2011) argued that “hospitality remains a powerful term for describing social arrangements amongst strangers both within and beyond the commercial realm” (p. 6). It is critical to recognize the root of the word hospitality, as Lynch et al., (2011) shared, “The term ‘hospitality’ reminds us that hospitality always entails the opposite: hostility” (p. 15). Unsurprising to me, and as was revealed in the lived experiences of participants in this narrative inquiry, is that hostility did in fact dominate the work environments of participants involved in this narrative inquiry.

As we see from the work of Lugosi et al. (2009), definitions of hospitality range from the philosophical - to simply a commercial exchange. During my review of the literature, I discovered the most commonly used definition of hospitality (based on how often it came up in the journals I read) comes from Netto (2009), who defined hospitality as; “the provision of accommodation, food, and drink for tourists...it is essential” (p. 57). Netto’s (2009) definition does not veer far from my own. While working in hospitality, when people asked me what I did, my response was, *people, food, and booze*. Although effective, these definitions do not do justice to the multitude of layers that make up the complex relationships that exist within hospitality encounters, and scholars from several disciplines cannot agree as to what hospitality scholarship should include (Hemmington, 2007; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Lugosi, 2009; Lynch et al., 2011).

Hemmington (2007) stated the fragmented way in which hospitality is trying to be defined derails the impact on the industry, limiting its potential. Hemmington separated hospitality into three realms, “the social, the private, and the commercial environments” (p. 748), all with ethical, societal, and economic implications. According to Hemmington (2007), a commercial hospitality exchange includes: “the host-guest relationship; generosity; theatre and performance; lots of little surprises; and safety and security” (p. 754). Lynch et al. (2011) described hospitality as operating on a spectrum “with commercial hospitality at one end, ulterior motives hospitality (hospitality offered with a hidden agenda) a bit further along, reciprocal hospitality somewhere in the middle, and genuine altruistic hospitality at the opposite end” (p.11).

According to the results of my study and the scholarship upon which my work is situated the participants in my study were frontline restaurant servers who offered commercial hospitality services that were more than an economic exchange and were highly influenced by social, cultural, political, and economic implications in an affective labour market (Lugosi, 2009; Lynch et al., 2011; Threadgold et al., 2021). In this section I provided a background on the broad theme of hospitality along with working definitions identified within hospitality scholarship. The next section of this literature review attends to the salient themes in hospitality scholarship that overlapped with my findings and analysis.

#### **2.4 Salient Themes in Hospitality Scholarship**

In 2011, Lynch et al., introduced hospitality scholars to a new platform dedicated to exploring and sharing critical hospitality studies with other researchers. Until then, the scholarship remained divided and distant. In their first article, Lynch et al. (2011) reviewed the work of

several hospitality scholars and determined that “hospitality serves as a means of understanding society” (p. 14) and thus, must be explored through a “social lens” (p.14). They insisted that for hospitality scholarship to move forward, we must disentangle ourselves from the images of hospitality we have engrained in our memories and move towards more nuanced ways of understanding the industry where we challenge the status quo of hospitality encounters. Lynch et al. (2011) see hospitality as “both a condition and an effect of social relations, special configurations, and power structures” (p. 14). They challenged hospitality scholars to sit in the discomfort of the unknown and imagine hospitality scholarship in new and possibly threatening ways. Ways that do not prioritize maintaining a neoliberal marketplace - moving away from we are in it for ourselves, to we are all in this together.

In 2021, Lynch et al., decided to critically reflect on the journal they initiated (*Hospitality & Society*) and their aim to theorize hospitality. Upon reviewing the diverse articles submitted to the journal in the past ten years, they identified thirteen prevailing themes that included:

- conceptualizations of hospitality
- hospitality, consumption, global citizenship, and ethics
- hospitality management and neoliberalism
- space, design, and food
- hospitality, violence and exploitation
- image and identity
- migration and labour
- hospitality and technology
- hospitality careers and higher education

- lifestyle
- social hospitality
- historical studies
- addressing neglected areas of research (pp. 293-294)

To better situate my research, it was important to take the reader through the areas of inquiry most relevant to my findings. Hence, the next section identifies the themes salient to my findings and insights as first identified by Lynch et al. (2021). These themes included: *conceptualizations of hospitality; hospitality consumption, global citizenship, and ethics; hospitality management and neoliberalism; hospitality, violence, and exploitation; image and identity; hospitality careers and higher education* (pp. 293-294).

#### **2.4.1 Conceptualizations of Hospitality**

The theme *conceptualizations of hospitality* described the evolution of hospitality scholarship moving beyond the performative contexts of hospitality settings. This is accomplished by pushing boundaries and showing that hospitality in and of itself is society. Consideration is given to human and non-human hospitality encounters and the shared peripheral hospitality spaces these exchanges take place. Additionally, there is also a focus on ethically responsible hospitality research promoting justice-oriented political agendas (Lynch et al., 2021).

A key principle of responsible inquiry lies in the fact that regenerative research is to take place relationally with a focus on doing research with, rather than on the phenomenon of our inquiry, and with strong ethical considerations in mind. (Kuntz, 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). This conceptualization of responsible inquiry shaped my research design in the way I executed the interviews, communicated with the participants in the study, as well as determined the

importance of what was shared in my findings and discussion that you will learn more about in chapters four and five.

#### **2.4.2 Hospitality, Consumption, Global Citizenship, and Ethics**

Lynch et al. (2021) asked us to explore the role of hospitality on a global scale. The theme of *hospitality, consumption, global citizenship, and ethics* identified the need for a universal tourism sector with a globalized set of ethics, inclusive of all participants in the industry. Not too far removed from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal # 8, that everyone has the right to decent work and economic growth. Lynch et al. (2021) argued this theme was necessary to address: “inequitable power relations in policy decision-making, challenges of inclusion, access and mobilities in the industry often associated with exploitation and exclusion, and scenarios where colonialist perspectives rather than global citizenship pervade general attitudes and communication” (p. 302).

This perspective relied on the activation of the global citizen - a person who cares equally about people and the planet, similar to Tronto’s (2013) fifth dimension of care (described in more detail below) that asks the same of us. Importantly, it goes against the neoliberal individualist paradigm the hospitality sector currently operates in that primarily focuses on the guest experience as it is directly related to profit and humanities’ incessant need to partake in conspicuous consumption (Lynch et al., 2021). Several studies explored the ethical and unethical behaviours in hospitality production and consumption as will be revealed further in chapter four of this thesis (see Albashiti et al., 2021; Knani, 2014; MDB Insights, 2022; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Threadgold et al., 2021; Wijesinghe, 2013; Wong, 1998).

#### **2.4.3 Hospitality Management and Neoliberalism**

Lynch et al. (2021) identified *hospitality management and neoliberalism* as a dominating theme

in hospitality scholarship, I agree. Many restaurateurs have used the freedoms of a neoliberal marketplace to profit from others. Poulston (2009) argued that “Hospitality managers are challenged with the task of extracting the maximum value from employees to generate a profit. This process rewards supervisors and managers for securing labour for the minimal costs” (p. 24). Not too long ago, most hospitality management research was concerned with profitability and expanding the ‘bottom line.’ More recent research addresses the importance of understanding the hospitality encounter more holistically. This required considering the social and cultural forces that contribute to the emotional and psychological harms associated with the commodification of staff for profit (Benhadda, 2022; Lynch et al., 2021; Poulston, 2009).

Threadgold et al., (2021) argued:

...theories of affective labour may be brought into a dialogue with Bourdieusian class analysis to approach hip interactive service work as a practice that enacts forms of cultural distinction in the production of affects. This means that class distinctions are made through embodied, aesthetic, and sensuous labour that take place within the venues themselves. (p. 1018)

This quote resonated with my research as it was about more than the lived experiences of frontline service workers, but it also explored the implications of the social and cultural forces that have shaped these experiences. Many of the stories’ participants in this narrative inquiry shared involved themselves, the interactions that occurred within hospitality spaces, and how these encounters are influenced socially and culturally.

In the hospitality sector, the manager's primary responsibility is to get their employees to achieve maximum productivity, using them to offset costs and stretch profit in a sector that has

razor-thin profit margins (Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; Poulston, 2009). A neoliberal marketplace prioritizes making a profit by any means necessary and that often leads to the exploitation of the workforce. Poulston (2009) argued “staff were commodified in all manner of ways such as encouraging female staff to put up with sexual harassment from customers as it increases sales” (p. 35). Where then lies the opportunity to introduce ethics and equity into the mix when faced with practicing business in a neoliberal individualist marketplace that promotes conspicuous consumption by their customers for profit (Lynch et al., 2021)? As such, hospitality scholars have solidified the need for a paradigm shift (Lashley, 2022; Lynch et al., 2021). I am suggesting this shift prioritizes care-centred business practices where profit and satisfying the needs of society’s elite are no longer the priority. Let us restore and regenerate the hospitality sector with care.

Class and socio-economic status play a pivotal role in a restaurant setting. In many restaurants, the customer feels as though they have power over the staff serving them, further exposing inequities of those who have resources to dine out over those who rely on the generosity of said customers to make a living (Seuthuraman, 2022). Pre-determined notions of presumed class status between host and guest can also cause problems when trying to control guests behaving badly (Poulston, 2009; Seuthuraman, 2022). The neoliberal marketplace requires we exploit society’s most vulnerable groups to turn a profit (Lynch et al., 2011). Accepting the exploitation of societies most vulnerable for profit is problematic and my research aimed to address this gap.

#### **2.4.4 Hostipitality, Violence, and Exploitation**

Lynch et al. (2021) identified *hostipitality, violence, and exploitation* as a salient theme in

hospitality research and it was a dominating theme in my review of the literature. The term *hostipitality* is meant to illuminate the hostile nature of hospitality encounters (Lynch et al., 2021) This theme not only discussed the phenomenon of human trafficking to provide labourers for the hospitality sector but also provided alternative ways for organizations to operate considering human values. Thus, opposing the cultural norms of hospitality business operations that do not meet the needs of the hospitality worker and are often exploitive. Below, I break down this area of inquiry into three pieces to ensure they received the attention they deserve.

#### **2.4.4.1 The Exploitation of Hospitality Workers**

One of the principal characteristics of hospitality work is that it is exploitive in several and varying ways (Albashiti et al., 2021; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; Poulston, 2009; Robinson, 2022; Walmsley et al., 2019). One of the primary ways hospitality employees are exploited is through their pay. Managers are encouraged to cut employee hours short to meet projected labour costs and control overhead costs, a by-product of a neoliberal marketplace. These savings are then diverted to cover management bonuses (Poulston, 2009). The hospitality sector and restaurants specifically are plagued by challenging work conditions that include: no contracts, low wages, long hours, running short-staffed, challenging guests, unpaid breaks, poor scheduling, lack of job security, unfair dismissals, unsocial hours, no benefits, smoking workplaces, sexual harassment, seasonal work, racism, the customer is always right mentality, and the affective nature of the work being performed (Benhadda, 2022; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; Poulston, 2009; Walmsey et al., 2019).

#### **2.4.4.2 Toxic Managers & the Cost of Turnover**

Walmsey et al. (2019) argued in the hospitality sector, team members are pitted against each other by toxic managers who seek religious-like devotion from their staff if they are going to be successful. In a restaurant setting, managers may spread gossip to create a more competitive work environment for their team (Cheng et al., 2024). There are often instances of nepotism and favouritism by managers to certain team members, ensuring they receive the best serving sections and schedules (Poulston, 2009). In turn, these team members remain faithful to the managers and often go above and beyond the work expectations to secure their place in the hierarchy. I wish I could say my own experiences in restaurants was different, but it was not. One's ability to be successful is largely dependent on allowing yourself to be exploited. Whether it means not complaining about shorted hours of pay, feeding gossip back to your manager, ignoring challenging guests, dealing with toxic managers, or any of the characteristics discussed above, I have experienced it all.

Knowing that toxic leadership styles are harmful because they involved manipulating staff, unethical business practices, and directly contributed to turnover, Albashiti et al., (2021) wondered why more is not being done to manage the managers. Poulston went on to argue that “poorly managed labour also represents a serious threat to customer service standards, profitability, and tourism income generally” (p. 38). Albashiti et al. (2021) argued that toxic managers lead to staff reporting decreased levels of job satisfaction, that led to diminishing guest experiences, high turnover, and poor retention rates. As Armstrong (2019) noted, “Less-than-optimal leadership practices cost the typical organization an amount equal to as much as 7% of their total annual sales” (para 3). More needs to be done within the sector to weed out managers

that are only in it for themselves, if the hospitality sector and those embedded within it are going to survive and thrive.

#### **2.4.4.3 Combatting *Hostipitality, Violence, and Exploitation* in the Sector**

Poulston (2009) stressed the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in attracting and maintaining hospitality staff, “fair pay and fair leadership discourage turnover as do pleasant working conditions and stable hours” (p. 26). Poulston (2009) went on to argue that to maintain a sustainable workforce, staff needed:

Clear job responsibilities, consistent working hours, quality supervision, leader facilitation and support, professional and organizations esprit, low conflict and a ambiguity, work-group cooperation, friendliness, warmth, along with a team environment...flexible working hours, introductory training, and working with ‘nice people’...humane treatment of employees, nice coworkers, and hourly wages. (p. 27)

As research in this area makes clear, to avoid high turnover in a competitive market employers should pay more, create incentives for long shift work, assist with higher education, not ignore the power of inclusive onboarding, and provide existing team members with opportunities to advance in a company with a strong sense of culture (Robinson, 2022). Organizations must compensate staff accordingly and need to stop relying on the customers to boost hourly wages through our North American tipping culture. These changes are necessary as research has suggested and continues to suggest that the toxic nature of hospitality work will not entice people to stay (Armstrong, 2019; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010; Robinson, 2022).

### 2.4.5 Image & Identity

*Image and identity* are another theme recognized by Lynch et al. (2021). This theme related to how the hospitality sector is portrayed in the media and how those media representations inform others' opinions of what the industry looks like, including its workers. These media portrayals of hospitality work focus on the extreme character traits of those working in the frontlines of the industry. If you do not look the role, for example you are not thin enough, your skin is not the right colour, you identify as the wrong gender, or you do not come from the right place; you may in fact be denied certain forward-facing roles within the sector (Lashley, 2022).

A great example of how hospitality is presented in the media and has contributed to the *image and identity* of the hospitality sector is the show *Vanderpump Rules*. This series (with nine seasons under its belt) only shows the sexy allure of working in a high-end restaurant, in West Hollywood, California. The restaurant's name is SUR which stands for '*Sexy Unique Restaurant*,' and its owner is Lisa Vanderpump. The series started in 2013 and shared the lives of their front-of-house staff while trying to reach their California dreams of becoming actors, models, and musicians. The staff is unrealistically good-looking, tanned and toned, and always looking their best. The show amplified the sexualization of women working in the hospitality sector and reinforced sentiments of weight prejudice. Although the show follows the lives of their quixotic attractive team members, it does little to introduce the audience to the diversity that exists back of house as the cast is completely made up of front of house workers.

Shows like *Vanderpump Rules*, where the restaurant relies on affective labour to enhance guest experiences, only reinforce gender stereotypes of hospitality employees, and add to the sexualization of women in real-life hospitality scenarios. This is a dangerous social practice as it

contributes to the argument that sexual harassment and sexual violence are more likely to occur in affective labour economies as the majority of society sees it reflected as acceptable behaviour in pop culture (Threadgold et al., 2021). Not to mention, that the normalization of these sexual behaviours can lead to sexual violence against women (Phipps et al., 2018).

#### **2.4.6 Hospitality Careers & Higher Education**

Lynch et al. (2021) identified *hospitality careers and higher education* as a salient theme in hospitality studies. Generally speaking, hospitality work is not admired by society at large. This theme explored the employee at all stages of their careers. It also included students looking for a hospitality career and hospitality educators. Women are under-represented in prominent hospitality roles, both as educators and managers (Benhadda, 2022; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). Globally, 88% of men are CEOs, and 75% occupy senior management roles in hospitality, amplifying the visibility that male bodies are more capable of occupying these roles over female bodies. Furthermore, in academia, men hold 75% (US), 85% (EU), and 80% (UK) of professorships in the hospitality sector (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019).

As Morgan and Pritchard (2019) argued, in academia and corporate leadership positions, “The industry offers women limited training and career opportunities as they are disproportionately denied access to the mentoring opportunities available to their male counterparts and suffer stereotyping and discrimination in terms of promotion and salary awards” (p. 41). I have faced this dilemma many times when trying to move up in my hospitality career. Based on personal experience, often you are interviewed by a ‘boys club’ that has no intention to hire a female for a high-profile managerial role and at the same time, has no problems stealing her ideas.

## **2.5 Topics Worthy of Further Exploration in Hospitality Scholarship**

Lynch et al.'s (2021) analysis of hospitality scholarship in the last ten years solidified the importance of “addressing neglected areas of research” (p. 293) by “illuminating the blind spots” (p. 293) as the final theme in their review. One of those blind spots is the need for more critical inquiry in hospitality scholarship. I believe this to be partially attributed to the lack of qualitative studies that explored the lived experiences of those working in the hospitality sector. Based on my review of the scholarship, additional opportunities include: the need to not only address the power inequities in the industry, but also offer potential solutions, the absence of equity in gender representation and gendered experiences, the exploration of racism towards the workforce, the need for studies to focus specifically on restaurants in the hospitality sector, and the need for critical inquiry while deploying more nuanced theories and methodologies that will be discussed in greater detail below. This area of study may provide a potential solution to meet the workforce needs of the hospitality sector. For some time, we have seen fewer births year over year, slower population growth, adults living longer with more access to disposable income, and the need for a globalized workforce (Perlman & Schaffer, 2013).

### **2.5.1 The Need for More Qualitative Studies Focusing on Holistic Sustainability**

As Lynch et al., (2021) argued, although we have made great strides in critical hospitality studies the need still exists “to expand and develop the field of critical hospitality research (p. 294). This need can be filled by collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders invested in the hospitality industry, leading to more rigorous hospitality studies (Koseoglu, 2020; Lynch et al., 2011). Lynch et al. (2011) solidified the importance of an interdisciplinary approach:

To us, this absence of interdisciplinary conversation and collaboration within and beyond the academy represents a missed opportunity to infuse hospitality studies with critical

significance to and to bring the concept of hospitality to bear on some of the most pressing social, cultural, and political questions of our time. (p. 4)

Cross-disciplinary dialogue and teamwork will allow us to focus on a more comprehensive approach to hospitality studies.

A review by Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) identified no “key players” researching holistic sustainability - moving beyond ecological considerations in the restaurant sector. The modern-day consumer has a more nuanced understanding of sustainability that goes beyond green initiatives in restaurant operations. In 2019, Higgins-Desbiolles et al., completed a systematic review using content analysis to determine the gaps in hospitality research. They suggested, “we must move on from a narrow focus of green dining and explore more holistic models of sustainability envisioned by leading industry associations such as the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) and innovative restaurateurs” (p. 1552). The SRA defined sustainable restaurants as those “managing the social and environmental impacts of their operations” (SRA, n.d.), indicating a need for regenerative hospitality.

Furthermore, Higgins-Desbiolles et al., (2019) argued we must challenge “the elitism and privilege of eating in restaurants, especially the more upmarket ones that feature in the ethical, sustainable space” (p. 1573). Critical studies can pick apart the so-called sustainable restaurant spaces by illuminating the lived experiences of those occupying these spaces. In my experience, 25 years ago, when I had my first restaurant job, customers would not bat an eyelid if an employee was being berated in front of guests. Nowadays, customers often play ally roles when they see staff being treated unfairly by management or other guests. Our gaze must shift to making room for employee needs (considering the social and not just a focus on the

environmental) and what is missing from their work experiences that disrupts their ability to flourish (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

### **2.5.2 Equality of Gender Representation in the Hospitality Sector**

Equal gender representation in the hospitality sector is also a concern as male bodies are more likely to occupy advanced managerial roles (Benhadda, 2022; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010; Neil, 2020). Research exploring gender inequalities and even further, gender equity in the hospitality sector is critical and is not being addressed in current research studies as much as it should be (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Neil, 2020; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). This area of research was recognized in the mid-90s, when gender relationships were reviewed as they related to tourism studies (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). Morgan and Pritchard (2019) shared:

Hospitality has long been characterised as ‘women’s’ and ‘dirty work’ and is often demeaning, stressful, and physically exhausting. Hospitality and its allied sectors of tourism and transport is vertically and horizontally gender segregated, so that women are over-represented in low-skilled, low-paid, low-status occupations and under-represented in skilled and decision-making roles. (p. 41)

It is no surprise, then, that there is a lack of women in influential hospitality roles, such as senior managers and educators. Female talent is often overlooked in these cases, which feeds into the social construct of what it means to be feminine (i.e. less than) and contributes to the sexualization and oppression of women doing hospitality work (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019).

Morgan and Pritchard (2019) identified the need for more feminist and gender hospitality scholars, who can recognize “the multiple truths, and knowledges” (p. 39) needed to inform the hospitality sector. This would allow for more in-depth research by exploring “the roles,

experiences, and contributions of women within hospitality” (p. 40). Perhaps one reason for this is that women often work a *double shift* looking after families and/or parents, often not allowing them the time to remain competitive against their male counterparts (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). It is clear, women face many systemic challenges in the hospitality sector. Until we address the systemic changes needed to address the systems of oppression in our society, women will never reach equity in their work and beyond (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). Exploring gender relations in hospitality studies is critical as Morgan and Pritchard (2019) argued that “gendered societies shape gendered hospitality practices, which in turn reflect, endorse, and cement those gendered societies” (p. 38) and in doing so, sustain the way things are.

Based on my review of hospitality scholarship, I have identified a lack of critical inquiry and qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of those working in the hospitality sector and the need for holistic solutions. Additionally, gender representation in prominent hospitality roles is lacking, as is gender equity in hospitality work. Hospitality scholarship will benefit from the application of more nuanced theories and methodologies that will be discussed in greater detail below. My research aimed to address these gaps by adding to the existing scholarship on critical hospitality research by suggesting an ethic of care as an alternative framework which we may deploy to promote the systemic change necessary in the industry, if we are going to sustain, maintain, and grow the hospitality workforce. My thesis attended to these gaps by conducting a narrative inquiry that focused on the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers. To illuminate their experiences and potential for change I adopted critical lens to share the power differentials that make the industry unattractive. Additionally, I made that case that operationalizing a feminist ethic of care may serve as a solution for an industry in crisis. In the next section I discuss theoretical frameworks currently dominating hospitality scholarship as

well as explain the theoretical frameworks that I engaged with to make meaning of my research findings.

## **2.6 Popular Theoretical Frameworks Situated in Hospitality Scholarship**

In REC663, Berbary (2021) taught us, “Every theory is a practice, and every practice is a theory.” I like to think I practice theory every day. While digesting the news, the way I live my life, and theory guides how I interact with others. Berbary (2021) argued, “Some of the most radical acts that happen are constantly embedded within and redeployed among theories and theory. We can’t exist without being theorized.” Theories are the windows through which we see our inquiry. Theories are important to qualitative research as they assist in the organization and deployment of ideas. How we work with theory is influenced by our ontology, epistemology, and the methodologies we choose to engage with when practicing responsible inquiry. Theories may guide our methodological praxis and influence our findings. Accordingly, theory is entangled within the whole of the research process. We use it throughout: we think with theory, communicate data with theory, complete analysis with theory, and it orients the future actions of our research.

The remainder of this section shares popular theoretical frameworks within which hospitality scholarship is situated, followed by a discussion on critical theory and an ethic of care – the theoretical frameworks which guided my work. I start by sharing two quantitative theoretical frameworks that have dominated hospitality research, Herzberg’s (1959) two-factor theory and Organ’s (1997) organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) theory. I shared these theories because historically most of the hospitality scholarship has been concerned with the high cost of turnover and operational efficiencies. These theories are problematic as the onus is put on

the workers behaviour and they do not address how the organization's behaviour may influence these outcomes. I then move into critical hospitality management research. Here, a Venn diagram is used to illustrate the three types of research in hospitality studies and identify their points of intersection. I could have seen myself situating my work within Hospitality Studies Research or Critical Hospitality Management Research (Lugosi, 2009), however, as they rely on a mixed methods research design they felt out of the scope of this particular study and too broad for the scope of this research project. The theoretical frameworks that guided my research and resonated with me the most were Critical Theory as first formulated by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and an ethic of care (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 2013).

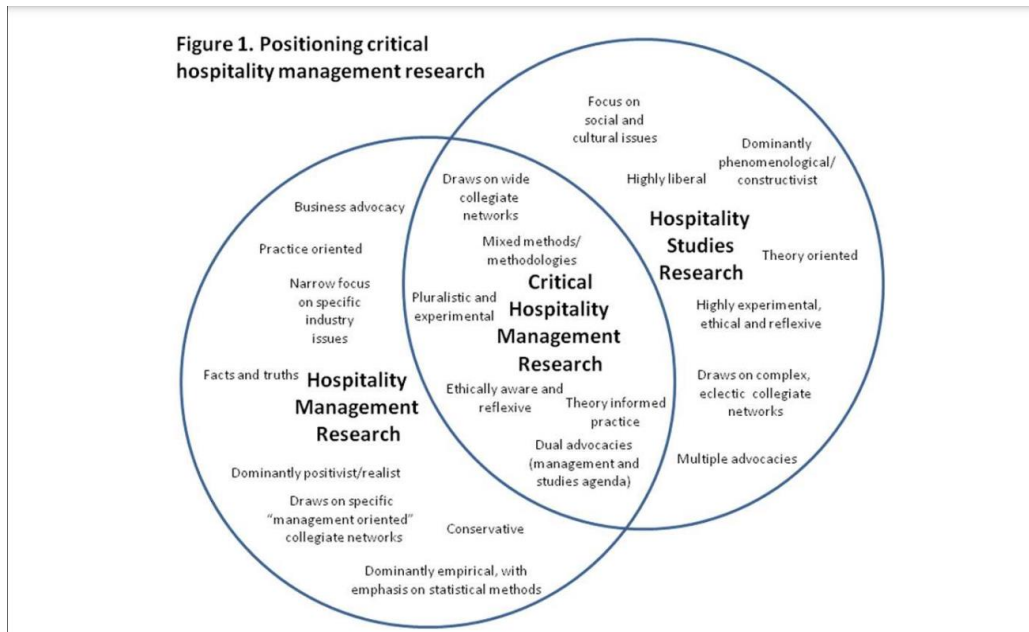
### **2.6.1 Popular Quantitative Theories in Hospitality Scholarship**

Lynch et al. (2011) argued that “there is neither a single definition of hospitality nor is there a unified theoretical framework within which hospitality studies are situated” (p. 11). Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory and Organ's (1997) OCB are two postpositivist theories applied to explain the cause of staff turnover in an organization. Postpositive research in hospitality studies often focuses on turnover as the dependant variable as most organizations are concerned with the cost of turnover (Express Employment Professionals, 2021; Nadri & Tanova, 2010). Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory stated that unless an employee's *hygiene factors* (pay and working conditions) are satisfied, motivating factors such as opportunities for advancement have no impact on an employee's intention to stay. Therefore, leaving the employee unmotivated and dissatisfied with their working conditions and more likely to seek employment elsewhere. Emami et al. (2012) summarized the definition of Organ's (1997) OCB “as work-related behaviours that are discretionary, not related to the formal organizational reward system, and in aggregate, promote the effective functioning of the organization” (p. 495). An employee who

exhibits OCB is willing to work beyond what is required of them in their job descriptions, with strong consideration for how their actions affect their team members and the organization alike (Emami et al., 2012). The five dimensions of Organ's (1997) OCB model include: civic virtue, sportsmanship, altruism, conscientiousness, and courtesy (Suddaby, 2010). Neither of these theories considers the more nuanced needs and experiences of employees. Rather, they focus on why employees leave an organization and how high turnover rates impact organizational profitability and diminish the guest experience. They both primarily seek to serve the financial success of an organization and put the burden on the employee to display these qualities to ensure organizational success, even if it comes as a loss to the employee.

### **2.6.2 Critical Hospitality Studies**

Lugosi et al. (2009) identified the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. They argued for hospitality scholarship to move forward, a more critical lens is necessary. Based on Critical Management Studies (CMS) that serve to critique management, organizations, and positions of power, Lugosi et al. (2009) posit hospitality research follow one of three directions: "hospitality management research, critical hospitality management research, and hospitality studies research" (pp. 1467-1468). Lugosi et al. (2009, p. 1468) created a Venn diagram to illustrate the three types of research in hospitality studies and identified their points of intersection (see below).



### 2.6.2.1 Hospitality Management Research & Hospitality Studies Research

Hospitality management research (HMR) uses grounded theory and quantitative methods to solve a specific problem (Lugosi et al., 2009). Very little consideration is given to relationality and promoting social justice in hospitality environments (Lugosi et al., 2009). The narrow focus of this research reinforced the neoliberal attitudes towards hospitality management research, where the primary focus is on organizational financial successes rather than labour relations (Lugosi et al., 2009). Alternatively, Lugosi et al. (2009) placed hospitality studies research (HSR) on the opposite end of HMR, stating that HSR is “broadly concerned with exploring the social, cultural, political and ethical dimensions of hospitality and is theory-oriented, seeking to build and interlink with wider theoretical arguments and propositions for the advancement of knowledge for its own sake” (p. 1469). HSR does not purposely operate in a justice-oriented framework but is care-oriented (Lugosi et al., 2009).

### **2.6.2.2 Critical Hospitality Management Research**

HMR and HSR provided the theoretical space for critical hospitality management research (CHMR). In CHMR, community needs drive research projects (Lugosi et al., 2009).

Characteristics that defined CHMR included: a self-reflexive practice where researchers must be open to self-criticism, and the researcher situated themselves within the study, it avoided simple truth claims, it sought to integrate new knowledge into managerial praxis, and learning opportunities, it exists in a pluriverse allowing for multiple methods and epistemologies to be deployed, diverse directions in the pursuit of inquiry are acceptable, it understands the inherent danger associated with such an entangled focus, it is critically aware of power relationships, the importance of knowledge sharing, and thinking relationally (Lugosi et al., 2009). Although the theoretical frameworks discussed thus far have a place in hospitality scholarship, my research study utilized Fisher and Tronto's (1990) and Tronto's (2013) feminist ethic of care through a critical lens. As will be made clear in the findings chapter, the lack of care in the industry is reflected in the labour crisis. In fact, the care crisis has led us to the labour crisis.

## **2.7 Critical Theory**

### **2.7.1 Overview of Critical Theory**

Critical Theory best aligns with a humanist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998). Critical Theory is best aligned with this grouping because, in social constructionism, the purpose is to elucidate how a social phenomenon is understood within a group of people (Berbary, 2014). In tourism discourse, working with a grand theory such as Critical Theory, as developed by the Frankfurt School, allows us to focus on relationships revolving around power, privilege, gender, race, class, and how they impact decision-making and influence relationships. Mair (2018) argued "...critical approaches to research are radical; they

are concerned with identifying power relationships, uncovering vested interests, and ultimately are concerned about the role of research in fostering social change” (p. 54). By engaging with Critical Theory within an ethic of care framework (described below), I had the ability to expose the power asymmetries that contribute to the negative lens from which society views hospitality work and have contributed to the undesirable environments within which this work takes place.

Based in Marxism, Critical Theory offers critiques of society, class, and economics by exposing power relationships. By exposing unequal power relationships, we can uncover the inequitable access and distribution of resources to groups with less power in a neoliberal society. These ideas are not far removed from Kuntz’s (2015) notions of inquiry promoting social justice and challenging the politics of operating under the established state. Critical Theory is present in macro theories such as: feminism(s), critical race theory, cultural theory, gender theory, and queer theory, to name a few (Crossman, 2019).

### **2.7.2 Critical Theory and The Frankfurt School**

The Critical Theory I engaged was first posed by a group of sociologists at the Frankfurt School of Germany. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, and Herbert Marcuse were all members of The Frankfurt School (Crossman, 2019). Mair (2018) argued:

...critical researchers concentrate on exposing or revealing the ways in which power inequalities are obscured and sustained by those that stand to benefit...critical researchers seek to find ways to help individuals become aware or conscious of these beliefs and values, and then to disrupt and ultimately change them. (p. 55)

Theorists working from a critical lens expose power relationships in society, to explain inequalities within society. Critical Theory should also offer resolutions to the problems identified for the greater good of those impacted negatively by the power structures and institutions at play (Crossman, 2019). Power intersects with economic pursuits as most individuals are unwilling to sacrifice their interests (mainly, but not exclusively, economic) to privilege the interests of the others, often with less power and privilege. Power is often political and as such it can be challenged and reconstructed (Mair, 2022).

### **2.7.3 Critiques of Critical Theory**

A common critique of Critical Theory is it reinforces binaries separating those who have power from those who do not (Berbary, 2014; Crotty, 1998). By reinforcing binaries, we perpetuate these relationships instead of interrupting them. This is problematic as members of society hailing from a low socio-economic status struggle to survive in a system that privileges the wealthy. Often members in society who do not benefit from this system will live their entire lives promoting capitalistic ideologies like economic determinism even when they lack the means to achieve these goals (West, 2019).

### **2.7.4 Why Critical Theory Aligns with my Research Study**

Critical Theory allowed me to think through the entanglement of power, economics, privilege, race, and gender as it shaped the lived experiences of participants in this study. As was anticipated in my proposal, the findings of my research revealed the power differentials of privilege, gender, and race, and how they shaped the lived experiences of study participants. Accordingly, that is why it was integral to also explore a feminist ethic of care theoretical framework within my findings (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 2013). In order to decide which

feminist framework best aligned with my research interests, I needed to gain a better understanding of the origins and types of feminist scholarship; the following section provides a brief overview of this inquiry to illustrate how I came to decide on an ethic of care as the feminist framework to address the purpose of my research.

## **2.8 Exploring Feminism(s)**

### **2.8.1 Overview of Feminism(s)**

Critical feminist thought is one lens that can be placed within critical theory, which aligned with the feminist perspectives formulated within my study's findings. Olesen (2018) stated, "Feminist qualitative researchers continue to explore topics that range from interpersonal issues, that is, domestic violence, body and health, health and illness, medical knowledge and social movements" (p. 152). Furthermore, feminism has long been recognized as an ally to traditional critical thought (DeVault, 2018). I start my discussion on feminism by addressing Simone de Beauvoir's book, *The Second Sex* (1952). De Beauvoir is considered a pioneer feminist, and many feminists look to her work; some even go as far as to call it the *bible of feminism* (Thurman, 2010). Before we can understand modern feminist thought such as a feminist ethic of care, we must first understand the origins that influenced the feminism(s) of today (Gilligan, 1993; Olesen, 2018).

### **2.8.2 Simone de Beauvoir**

Simone de Beauvoir, a feminist, among many other roles, lay the foundation for feminist work today. In Simone de Beauvoir's (1952) book, *The Second Sex*, she exposed the inequality that existed across genders due to socially constructed ideas of patriarchy, power, and justice, as they influenced women's daily lives (De Beauvoir, 1952). In De Beauvoir's writing, she characterized women as being *othered*, and as being victims of gender oppression since time immemorial. The

label of *Other* is an assault on women's rights and freedoms and can be fought with women resisting the stereotype society inflicts on them as being less than men (De Beauvoir, 1952). Furthermore, *Otherness* significantly contributes to the ongoing oppression of women.

For women to free themselves from the status of *Other*, they must consciously fight against the systems that subjugate them. De Beauvoir (1952) suggested women entangle themselves in intellectual circles, join the labour market, and be present in socialist movements - these are all ways to relieve women of their *Other* status and disrupt the systems of oppression imposed on them by men (Crotty, 1998). In De Beauvoir's (1952) chapter, *The Independent Woman*, she stated the following:

...working, today, is not liberty. Only in a socialist world would woman by the one attain the other. The majority of workers are exploited today. On the other hand, the social structure has not been much modified by the changes in woman's condition; this world, always belonging to men, still retains the form they have given it. (pp. 639-640)

In my opinion and based on the research findings, not much has changed since De Beauvoir's time and her opinions on the labour market. Moreover, hospitality scholarship has identified that hospitality environments are indeed gendered, and gender plays a role as it is woven in the lived experiences of hospitality workers (Lugosi, 2009; Lynch et al., 2021; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Threadgold et al., 2021).

### **2.8.3 Feminism(s) of Today**

Olesen (2018) described the breadth of feminist research and argued:

If there is a dominant theme in feminist qualitative research, it is the issue of knowledges. Whose knowledges? Where and how obtained, by whom, from whom, and for what purposes? It moved from feminist research from the lack of or flawed attention to

marginalized women, usually non-white, homosexual, or disabled, to recognition of differences among women and within the same groups of women and the recognition that multiple identities and subjectivities are constructed in particular historical and social contexts. (p. 152)

Feminists today must consider intersectionality as it relates to the lived experiences of women. They cannot ignore the influence of larger political, social, and economic systems as they intersect with gender inequities (Olesen, 2018). They must acknowledge the potential for multiple realities and allow themselves to sit in the discomfort of not knowing (Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Olesen, 2018). Borrowing from Olesen (2018) and Stewart (1994) Cresswell and Poth (2019) argued, “The goal of feminist research today is to “establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative” (p. 324). A feminist ethic of care accomplishes this goal, as is discussed below (Boluk & Panse, 2022; Fisher & Tronto, 1993; Higgins-Desbiolles & Monga, 2021; Tronto, 2013).

By operating under a feminist ethic of care lens, we have the power to dismantle the notion that the male experience is the only experience. Boluk and Panse (2022) argued, “Realising the tendency to naturally lean on the male experience, has recently encouraged us to pay attention to the silenced experiences of women and attend to the tension between responsibilities and rights” (p. 355). Of all the modern feminist approaches, Indigenized, decolonial, and endarkened feminism (Olesen, 2018), applying a feminist ethic of care to my research study aligned most with my onto-epistemological foundations, my chosen methodology, aspects of Critical Theory, and my desire to amplify the voices of silenced partners, responsibly,

and with care. Utilizing a feminist ethic of care as a theoretical framework ensured a relational, caring, approach throughout the course of this study (Boluk & Panse, 2022). However, we cannot ignore that we must also be aware of the male bias that is systemically entangled in all our systems (Gilligan, 1993).

Researchers have a responsibility to their participants to carefully listen and avoid prioritizing patriarchal ways of knowing and being (Boluk & Panse, 2022). A feminist ethic of care pushes us to think relationally, and that the reciprocity of care is central - as it seeks to address injustice (Boluk & Panse, 2022). Relatedly, Boluk et al. (2019) argued working under a feminist frame allowed “structures of power and oppression to be addressed in a more transformative approach than the efforts undertaken to incorporate gender analysis in development” (p. 852). Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga (2021) stated the relevance of operating under a feminist ethic of care for business leaders. They claimed: “building relationships of care and interdependence...serve as essential catalysts to building a more sustainable and fair future” (p. 1994). After all, “caring relationships are what allow us to survive and thrive” (Higgins-Desbiolles & Monga, 2021, p. 1993). To me, the principles associated with operating under a feminist ethic of care aligned nicely with my exploration of the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers and signalled a potential solution to combat the power inequities embedded in hospitality praxis with care.

#### **2.8.4 Challenges to Feminisms**

Just like in Critical Theory, categorizing or labelling types of feminism can be problematic as it reinforces the socially constructed binaries that led to gender inequity and the oppression of women in the first place (Crotty, 1998; Olesen, 2018). As Olesen (2018) stated, “All feminist

researchers worry about replicating oppression and privilege” (p. 160). Olesen (2018) recommended addressing “bias, validity, voice, text, and ethical conduct” (p. 160) to address these challenges. Important to recognize is, men too, are oppressed by patriarchy and sexism in society, when their form does not match society’s ideas of masculinity (Crotty, 1998).

### **2.8.5 Why a Feminist Framework aligned with my Research**

Morgan and Pritchard (2019) stated, “All social processes are gendered in their construction, presentation, and consumption in many multifaceted dimensions” (p. 38). They go on to say, “Feminists’ and gender researchers’ commitment to social critique and marginalized groups and their recognition of multiple realities, truths and knowledges have much to offer hospitality studies, yet they struggle to influence the mainstream” (p. 39). Additionally, intersectional analysis allowed for the consideration of a multiplicity of factors influencing research outcomes (Crenshaw, 2017). Olesen (2018) argued that “Intersectional research promises to address complex feminist issues” (p. 159). For both of these reasons, my research study explored the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers and addressed the need for more feminist research while aligning with feminist goals. By applying feminist thought with Critical Theory, I was able to deconstruct the systems supporting the neoliberal individualist attitudes that invade hospitality encounters. I do this in hopes of creating more equitable futures for those working in the industry. Next, I explain an ethic of care framework, its defining qualities, and characteristics.

### **2.9 Fisher and Tronto’s (1990) and Tronto’s (2013) Components of Care**

Carol Gilligan (1982), a pioneer in care studies, defined care as “an activity of relationships, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone” (p. 62). Fisher and Tronto (1990) built on Gilligan’s definition by

incorporating more nuanced responsibilities of care, thinking relationally, and exposing how patriarchal notions of care must change to free women of the oppression that traditionally comes with care responsibilities.

They argued:

...that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our *world* so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (p. 40)

This new definition of care required us to understand care needs are dynamic and change across space, time, and other contexts. The act of caring can be both exhausting and gratifying (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). We must move beyond society's insistence to model care after masculine interests towards a more equitable model of care that promotes justice, seeks to reduce inequalities, and limits discrepancies between those providing the care and those receiving the care (Fisher & Tronto, 1990).

To make sense of this new paradigm of care, Fisher and Tronto (1990) argued, "Caring can be seen as a process having four intertwining phases: caring about, taking care of, caregiving, and care receiving" (p. 40). *Caring about* is identified by attentiveness, *caring for* is identified by responsibility, *caregiving* is identified by competence, and *care-receiving* is identified by responsiveness. In 2013, Tronto added a fifth dimension of care, *caring with*, whose defining feature is solidarity. The *caring with* component was added to the framework to address critiques that an ethic of care does not integrate a justice-oriented lens. Tronto (2013) summarized the five care dimensions as follows:

1. Caring about. At this first phase of care, someone or some group notices unmet caring needs.
2. Caring for. Once needs are identified, someone or some group has to take responsibility to make certain that these needs are met.
3. Caregiving. The third phase of caring requires that the actual caregiving work be done.
4. Care-receiving. Once care work is done, there will be a response from the person, thing, group, animal, plant, or environment that has been cared for. Observing that response and making judgments about it is the fourth phase of care. Note that while the care receiver may be the one who responds, it need not be so. Sometimes the care receiver cannot respond. Others in any particular care setting will also be in a position, potentially, to assess the effectiveness of the caring act(s). And, in having met previous caring needs, new needs will undoubtedly arise. In order to think about democratic care, which is not on this level of generalization but a more particular kind of care, it now seems to me that there is a fifth phase of care:
  5. Caring with. This final phase of care requires that caring needs and the ways in which they are met need to be consistent with democratic commitments to justice, equality, and freedom for all. From this standpoint, the Fisher/Tronto definition is meant to provide a way to analyze when and how caring is done, and to be able to make assessments about care. It is not meant to be romantic or perfectionist. (pp. 22-23)

The components of care are not always sequential. Often, they are entangled, intertwined, and messy. Care can be provided by a single individual, or the responsibility may be shared across a group of individuals. The varying histories and lenses unique to each carer can be problematic

when engaging in modern care practices (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). The carer must occupy special knowledge and skills to fulfill their caring duties; this includes: “time, material resources, knowledge, and skill” (p.41), and just as the various components of care do not necessarily fit together nicely, these attributes can be complimentary or conflicting for the carer (Fisher & Tronto, 1990).

### **2.9.1 Caring About**

We start with a discussion on *caring about*. Fisher and Tronto (1990) stated, “*caring about* is the phase of the caring process in which we select out and attend to the features of our environment that bear on our survival and well-being” (p. 41). There are no temporal limits to *caring about*, although care time will be influenced by the time, resources, knowledge, and skills one has at their disposal. A sense of urgency to provide care may also influence when *caring about* takes place. Fisher & Tronto (1990) declared, “*Caring about* assumes a connection with others...it is an orientation rather than a motivation” (p. 42). Caring about social relations and our world is the responsibility of all; it is not gendered or racialized. Caring about is embodied by the philosophical intention to care and is highly influenced by our onto-epistemology.

### **2.9.2 Taking Care Of**

*Taking care of* is the second component to care. *Taking care of* is different from caring about, whereby caring about implied you are caring about something (human or non-human) but does not necessarily involve actionable motives (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). *Taking care of* requires action on behalf of the carer (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). In a restaurant setting, a manager may care about their team’s personal lives and does nothing to display that care, whereas a restaurant manager *taking care of* their staff meant they are willing to take action to meet the care needs of

team members. The main skill required in *taking care of* someone/something involves judgement. The carer must feel that their intervention will lead to predictable outcomes for those they are caring for, whether this is good or bad, and has access to the resources needed to provide the care, implicating power relations at play. Fisher & Tronto (1990) stated, “Without resources, one cannot take care of” (p. 43), highlighting the importance of having access to the right resources in order to provide the appropriate care. The contradiction associated with the need for resources obtained through privilege and power is especially taxing on women, where society’s predisposed labelling of women as carers forces them into the caring role regardless of access to resources. This often leaves women feeling disillusioned and leads to less caring (Fisher & Tronto, 1990).

### **2.9.3 Caregiving**

The third component that Fisher and Tronto (1990) discussed in relation to the components of care was, *caregiving*. “*Caregiving* is the concrete (sometimes called hands-on) work of maintaining and repairing our world” (p. 43). Caregiving is different then caring about/taking care of in the sense that more dedicated segments of time and accelerated knowledge in the giving of care are required by the carer. Not having the time, knowledge, skills, and resources to administer this level of care created stress for the caregiver and contributes to the ongoing oppression (primarily women) who are often in these care giving roles and do not always have the resources to execute adequate care (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Although similar, these components of care are different and complex. The carer’s ability to provide the care needed, at the time needed, often creates tension between the giver of care and those receiving care (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). This tension is then exasperated depending on how those receiving the care evaluate the care they have received. It is all very complicated and at the root of care provisions

are the ongoing oppression of women, who all too often fill these care roles, with or without resources, willingly or unwillingly (Fisher & Tronto, 1990).

#### **2.9.4 Care-Receiving**

Fisher and Tronto (1990) defined *care-receiving* “as the response to caregiving by those toward whom care is directed...the response may be intentional, conscious, or even human” (p. 44).

Tension exists between the carer and care-receiver, who have different notions of the time, knowledge, skills, and resources needed to offer adequate care (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). The *care-receiver* can also become a *caregiver*, and as such will need to invest the time necessary to develop caregiving skills. Tronto and Fisher (1990) identified this action as “self-help strategies” (p. 45) that may also include vibrant collaboration with other care-receivers. Worth noting, the conflict between caregivers and care-receivers is inevitable. Fisher and Tronto (1990) argued “...finding a definition of *needs* that satisfies both the care-receiver, and caregivers is no easy matter” (p. 45). If the care-receiver has power over the caregiver, the imbalance is heightened. Consequently, women are often at a disadvantage whether they play the role of the caregiver or care-receiver due to society’s preconceived notions that men know best (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Absent from Fisher and Tronto’s (1990) components of care was a justice-oriented lens and so in 2013, Tronto introduced a fifth component of care, *caring with*.

#### **2.9.5 Caring With**

The care component, *caring with*, as defined by Tronto (2013) indicated “what it means to be a citizen in a democracy is to care for citizens and to care for democracy itself” (p. xi). Tronto (2013) went on to say, “Citizenship, like caring, is both an expression of support... and a burden” (p. xi). The *caring with* component asks us to think deeply about moral obligations to

ourselves and others, human and non-human alike, supporting vibrant collective futurities (Tronto, 2013). According to Tronto (2013) the qualities that defined caring with include, “plurality, communication, trust and respect, solidarity” (p. 35). In order for *caring with* to be successful it requires effort from the top-down, solidifying ongoing participation from citizens in a democratic society (Tronto, 2013). Although the word solidarity is not traditionally used to discuss care relations, in the case of Tronto’s (2013) framework solidarity is viewed “as a social value, [that] creates the condition for caring among people and for greater responsiveness to democratic values” (p. 156). The thought process behind this is that citizens who feel a shared sense of purpose with others are more inclined to care for one another and develop a stronger commitment to fellow citizens through acts of care. In turn, this solidarity fosters a positive care cycle: as people become more aware of others' needs, they tend to become better at meeting them (Tronto, 2013). *Caring with* in the form of showing solidarity among team members was a key insight from my findings as often these cyclical relationships of care tended to negotiate the negative attributes associated with restaurant work.

### **2.9.6 Why a Care Framework Worked for this Research**

*Caring is a necessity of life.* Fisher & Tronto, 1990 stated, “To build a feminist future, we need to stretch our imaginations so that we can discover new visions of society in which caring is a central value and institutions truly facilitate caring” (p. 56). Carnicelli & Boluk (2021) argued that “caring should be deeply moving, touching, and mutually empowering to those engaged in tourism” (p. 59). Operating under a care framework for the restaurant industry means active players must hold themselves accountable for creating positive change in the labour market (Carnicelli & Boluk, 2021). In working with Fisher and Tronto’s (1990) and Tronto’s (2013) amended care framework, the findings of this research study indicated care may serve as a lens

into the solution for addressing the systemic changes needed to obtain and sustain the hospitality workforce. As Carnicelli and Boluk (2021) expressed, “The (re-)discovery of our capacity to care becomes the (re-discovery of our own humanity)” (p. 60).

## **2.10 Chapter Summary**

The chapter began with a literature review that included a discussion on the Covid-19 pandemic and how it presented in the tourism industry. I then provided an overview of hospitality studies and a discussion on the salient themes in hospitality scholarship that were also revealed in my research findings. Before sharing the theoretical frameworks, I engaged with in my research process, I shared dominant theoretical frameworks within the hospitality scholarship that influence the way hospitality research is approached, analyzed, and communicated. I then shared a discussion on Critical Theory as the findings of my study were interpreted using a critical lens. Before moving into a detailed discussion on an ethic of care framework, I provided a brief background on feminist studies. In discussing an ethic of care framework through the perspective of my research, I identified a potential solution to the workforce shortage the hospitality sector is facing may be one of care. Care-centred organizational cultures may eliminate the power differentials that make the industry undesirable, specifically noting the significance of Tronto’s (2013) fifth dimension of care, *caring with*. The next chapter shares the methodological details of this work.

### **3.0 Chapter Three: Methodology**

In this study, I aimed to illicit rich narratives from the participants sharing stories of their lived experiences as frontline hospitality workers in restaurants. Before I go into details about the study's findings, it is imperative that I share my onto-epistemological foundations and why my choice of narrative inquiry was a suitable methodology for this research study. As such, the following chapter starts with a conversation regarding my onto-epistemological foundations. I then discuss narrative inquiry, and the processes associated with this methodology. Following this discussion, I share how I recruited participants for this study and provide description of each participant. I go on to discuss researcher reflexivity, the semi-structure interviews I fulfilled, and details on how I analyzed the data by applying narrative analysis and thematic analysis to illuminate the research findings. I finish the section with a conversation about ethics as they related to my research design and end with my thoughts on how I achieved researcher trustworthiness in this study.

#### **3.1 Onto-Epistemological Perspective**

Positioning myself in regard to a specific onto-epistemological and theoretical foundation is a challenge. My ontological and epistemological foundations are fluid and can be open to changes spatially and temporally. For me, it made sense that as researchers, our onto-epistemologies may morph and that different theories will make more sense when placing ourselves in the present moment, within the communities with which we engage. Like Caton (2014), I believe being open and allowing our onto-epistemological foundations to remain fluid is beneficial, "as we attempt to wrap our heads around the sea of new concepts we are encountering" (p. 128). As I struggled with the entanglement that exists in trying to make sense of epistemological stances, Critical Theories, and feminism(s), I acknowledged the tension I felt from within as I try to gain my

balance and my affinity for risk-taking in research. My study was informed by a social constructionist foundation, embracing a critical lens while exploring the research findings through a feminist ethic of care theoretical framework (Crotty, 1998; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 2013).

Crotty (1998) stated, “Ontology is the study of being...It refers to how one views the world” (pp.10-11). It includes our worldviews and how we see and interact with the world. We assume and adopt ontological stances without our knowing and as we grow, we can become more aware of these perspectives and give them room to flourish. As Crotty (1998) argued, “Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (p. 8). Our epistemology determines the nature of knowledge and the different methods we deploy to retrieve said knowledge, learning and unlearning the entire time is a crucial. In qualitative inquiry our epistemological stance illuminates the many relationships between subject and object, truth claims, bias, and how we mobilize our research (Crotty, 1998).

The epistemological perspective that most aligns with my research is constructionism. Constructionism recognizes knowledge is relational and co-constructed, something to be discovered and not extracted (Kuntz, 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Unlike objectivism, constructionism has no unbiased truth(s) waiting to be realized (Crotty, 1998). Truth is not discovered, but rather is constructed through the meaning that is made by engaging with what we deem as reality in our world (Crotty, 1998). A constructionist stance respects that people construct meaning in different ways based on their placement in the universe. Constructionism allows for the understanding that a particular phenomenon is dynamic and changes temporally,

spatially, culturally, and individually. In the case of constructionism, subject and object work together to make meaning (Crotty, 1998).

Crotty (1998) defined constructionism as the view that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of an interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p.42). Crotty’s (1998) definition of constructionism and Kuntz’s (2015) definition of the new materialist have more in common than they have in difference, and illustrated how ideas that are nourished and can grow across researchers. Both approaches show the need for the researcher to be entangled within their research, both focus on the social, and both are relatable to a *parrhesiastic* approach where the researcher strives to speak to *everything* using a justice-oriented lens (Crotty, 1998; Kuntz, 2015). Crotty (1998) speaks to the intentionality of constructionism and that human beings cannot be separated from the world they live in. These guiding principles laid out by Crotty (1998) and Kuntz (2015) oriented all aspects of my inquiry.

As such, researchers should work to build rapport with participants and avoid extractive tendencies throughout the study’s duration and beyond (Kuntz, 2015). Caton (2014) suggested the critical function of rapport building in supporting the researcher’s desire “to understand how participants make meaning of events in their lives, notions of respect, reciprocity, and compassion” (p. 130). It is critical to recognize rapport building is not another tool in the researcher’s tool kit to collect data, but rather shows the moral and care obligations of the researcher to the community they seek to work with (Caton, 2014; Escobar, 2018; Kuntz, 2015; Tronto, 2013). Conducting research with, rather than on, participants (Kuntz, 2015).

Constructionism has two elements - constructivism and social constructionism (Crotty, 1998). Social constructionism dictates that culture can be both freeing and limiting, “Social constructionists ...emphasize the idea that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings, social worlds being interpretive nets woven by individuals or groups” (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). Social constructionism posits that social realities are constructed by those who inhabit them, and social realities are co-constructed and reconstructed in social groups to create and reinforce cultural meaning (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) stated that what separates social constructionism from other epistemologies is that “meaningful reality” (p. 55) is socially constructed. This means that in social constructionism, knowledge happens within the socio-cultural sphere where subjects and objects, humans and nonhumans, interact relationally and in meaningful ways (Crotty, 1998; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015).

Social constructionism does not divide the social world from the natural world. Both are viewed as being entangled in the meaning-making that takes place and how social realities are constructed by humans and nonhumans alike (Crotty, 1998). Understanding social constructionism before reading through my findings and analysis is important because it offers the reader insights as to from what spheres the knowledge I share was created. Although my participants are unique individuals with varying experiences while working in the restaurant industry, it is also important to recognize they are part of a larger community of restaurant workers whose lived experiences occurred in similar environments with comparable stakeholders influencing outcomes.

The way I pursued my research, aligned closely with that of Kuntz (2015) and the ideas in his book *The Responsible Methodologist*. As a responsible methodologist, I oriented my research

using a *parrhesiastic* approach. Kuntz (2015) described, "...*parrhesia* is not about prescribed methods or certain practices; it is about an orientation to truth-telling, a becoming-with the very truths one seeks to speak" (p. 16). By engaging in a *parrhesiastic* approach: I aimed to accurately and authentically share the participant's stories you are about to read below. Kuntz (2015) summarized Desjarlais's work on *parrhesia*, citing the importance of "relationality, risk, and citizenship" (p.16) in the work we do. By thinking relationally, acknowledging risks, and accepting our social responsibility we are less likely to be extractive in our processes and more likely to encourage transformative change (Kuntz, 2015). Throughout the course of this research study, I acted with care towards my participants and the knowledge they were willing to share with me to further this thesis. I hope to bring about positive change in the industry by publishing this work in the future and sharing my learnings with industry leaders in hopes of improving the lived experiences of those in the sector through care. Perhaps, one such opportunity will occur when I attend the Travel and Tourism Research Association's annual Canadian chapter conference on Prince Edward Island this October.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The aim of this research was to illuminate the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. By illuminating the care crisis that hospitality workers are experiencing and amplifying their voices, we are in a better position to understand and critique how power relations in a neoliberal marketplace interrupt care relations in an organization. To create systemic change and promote justice in the hospitality sector, it is necessary to re-orient our care relationships, only then will hospitality work become safe, rewarding, and potentially contribute to human flourishing while also solving the labour shortage the industry faces. My research study was guided by the following three objectives:

1. To explore how the power differentials of power and privilege based on gender, race, and class shaped the lived experiences of the participants in this study.
2. To understand the care-related experiences of restaurant workers .
3. To illuminate how caring about, caring for, caregiving, care-receiving, and caring with are reflected in the lived experiences of SO's frontline restaurant workers.

The next section focuses on providing an overview of narrative inquiry and how it related to my study's procedures and outcomes.

### **3.2.1 An Overview of Narrative Inquiry**

In 1990, Connelly and Clandinin wrote, *Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry*, introducing narrative inquiry as a responsible methodology when exploring the experiences from disadvantaged social groups in qualitative research. They are often referenced by other authors when discussing narrative inquiry, as was the case in Creswell and Poth's (2018) *Qualitative Methodologies*. Clandinin (2013) argued "narrative inquirers study experience" (p. 13). Narrative inquiry is best used when a researcher is looking to study the specific lived experiences of an individual or small group of individuals, in my case frontline restaurant workers. Narrative inquiry explores an experience and aims to understand that experience (Clandinin, 2013). In narrative inquiry, it is important to recognize that our individual narratives, like our experiences, are not isolated from the social narratives and contexts within which they exist; this further supported my choice in methodology. The data collected in narrative inquiry is co-constructed, involving both the researcher and the participant (Berbary, 2014). Narrative inquiry can support the meta-narrative and/or promote a counter-narrative. Exposing counter-narratives to capitalism or neoliberal attitudes offers the potential for ideological change to take place (Clandinin, 2013).

McCormack (2004) informed us that narrative inquiry “draws its principles from the broad areas of feminism, postmodernism, and qualitative research” (p. 220).

### **3.2.2 Types of Narratives**

Narrative inquiry is a useful methodology for constructing and illuminating counter-narratives to evoke social change (Berbary, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2014). Meta-narratives and counter-narratives influence individual stories, individual stories influence meta- and counter-narratives. It is important to recognize neither is devoid of each other but rather they are mutually contingent and intertwined.

The meta-narrative is the dominant narrative and constructs ways of being, thinking, and acting in our society. We use meta-narratives to explain our world, and they base themselves on the ideals of the dominant social class, often the white elite. Meta-narratives tend to silence the voices of marginalized community members and do not include the narratives of non-dominant groups such as 2SLGBTQ+, BIPOC individuals, and many more (Berbary, 2014). The meta-narrative of the hospitality workforce shortage makes us believe that people are the problem. There are not enough people willing to work in the sector and the focus of resolving this has been to acquire the right talent putting the onus that it is the worker that needs to change and not the industry. What my findings revealed were a series of counter-narratives.

Counter-narratives prioritize the voices of non-dominant groups that have either been ignored or silenced in meta-narratives. In the case of my research study, it was the workers that have been silenced in the past. Counter-narratives offer alternatives, new ways of thinking, and new understandings of experience based on the lives of those individuals who are silenced or left out of the dominant narrative (Berbary, 2014). In the case of this this narrative inquiry, the participants shared stories of the negative influence power differentials had in their work

experiences and how acts of caring were used to negotiate these imbalances. This in turn, opened a window to view operating with an ethic of care as potential driving force that may negotiate power imbalances and resolve the labour shortages the industry currently faces.

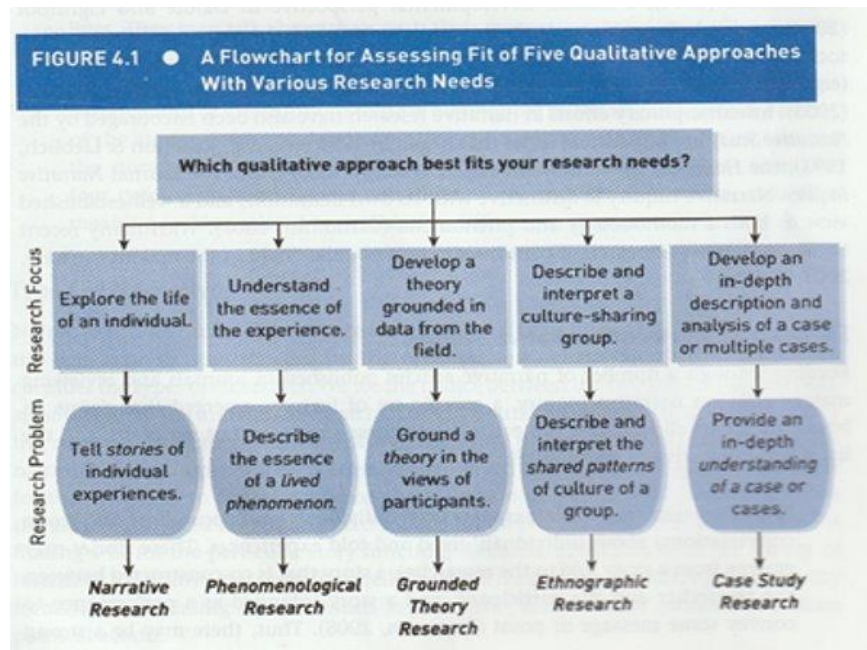
### **3.2.3 Applying Narrative Inquiry**

The main challenge to narrative inquiry is that researchers define narrative in multiple and varying ways. Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach used in several disciplines, which has led to the existence of many forms of narrative analysis. Narrative inquiry is applied in several ways depending on the epistemology and ontology of the researcher who utilizes it (Berbary, 2014; Glover, 2003). The researcher must gather extensive information about the participant to have a clear understanding of the context of the story as it applied to the individual's life. The multiple layers that make up an individual's life must be considered when analyzing their lived experiences. Continuous collaboration with the participant is a must (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Researchers need to be able to discuss the participants' stories while being reflective about their own personal and political beliefs that have the power to shape how they *re-story* the narrative (Caton, 2014). This is especially relevant in my case as it was impossible to separate my lived experiences as a hospitality worker from those my participants faced. Finally, we cannot neglect to acknowledge the power relations associated with doing this type of research in deciding whose stories are prioritized over others, and why. I remained in constant reflection while doing this narrative work to recognize any power disruptions that may occur as a consequence of my role as the researcher.

### 3.2.4 Why and How Narrative Inquiry Works for this Research

Creswell and Poth (2018) provided a flowchart that served as a useful guide when I was determining which qualitative approach best fit the needs of my research project (p. 67). See chart below:



In basing my decision to employ narrative inquiry on Creswell & Poth’s (2018) flowchart, I recognized the focus of my research was to illuminate the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers in the hospitality sector before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic in SO. By illuminating the lived experiences of hospitality workers, I was in a better position to critique and take apart power relations at play in the lived experiences of the participants in this study. To solve my research problem, I honoured these stories by sharing them as findings and suggested an alternative to operating in a neoliberal marketplace. I believe through this process, I was able to identify and communicate the needs of workers in this sector, prompting social

change, and a paradigm shift in the industry by implementing a care-centred organizational culture.

The primary method involved in narrative inquiry is interviews, which were the main source of data collection for my study (McCormack, 2004). The processes of narrative inquiry included *living, telling, and retelling* the participants stories (Clandinin, 2013). Throughout the study's duration. I used active listening skills when the interviews took place and then again when listening, and re-listening to the recorded interviews (McCormack, 2004). During the interview process: it was crucial that I understood the context of the participant's understandings, that I shed light on the nuances of life, exposed the dynamic nature of life, allowed for the numerous voices of the participants to be heard, and remained open to the potential of several explanations when storying their experiences (McCormack, 2004). I already possess the skills outlined above to conduct strong narrative research, which in turn provided a plethora of data worthy of exploration.

### **3.2.5 Procedures for Conducting Narrative Research**

To keep things simple, my research was informed by Creswell and Poth's (2018) seven steps for conducting narrative inquiry. These seven steps included:

- Determine if the research problem is best *examined* using a narrative approach.
- Select one or more individuals and gather their stories through *multiple types of information*.
- Consider how the data collection and *recording can take different shapes*.
- *Embed information about the context of the stories* into data collection, analysis, and writing.
- Analyse the participants' stories by using the process of *restorying*. Embed a *collaborative approach* in the collection and telling of stories. Present the

narrative in *written form* by adapting the general reporting structures as appropriate. (p.75)

Creswell and Poth's (2018) steps are dynamic and can be altered to meet the needs of the researchers and their participants; these steps guided me as I collected and worked through the data and research findings.

### **3.3 Methods**

All the knowledge I acquired in the proposal development guided my actions when I conducted my research, analyzed my findings, and reported my results. The next few paragraphs share the methods I deployed to conduct this research.

#### **3.3.1 Recruiting the Participants**

Frontline hospitality workers in restaurant businesses in SO were the sampling frame for this study. I chose SO as the geographical area for my study as I have an invested interest to understand the lived experiences of frontline hospitality workers in this area so close to my degree completion. I wanted to understand the current climate for the hospitality workforce so that I may address it in my future work.

The participants were recruited using a purposive snowball technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Patton, 2002). As an industry insider, I called on my networks through the Facebook Messenger chat and via email to recruit participants working in frontline service roles. Two of the original participants I recruited introduced me to three additional participants within their networks, six participants were recruited in total. Originally, I anticipated recruiting eight participants for this research study, and I was unsuccessful. Following a conversation with my supervisor and a discussion on the data that had been collected thus far, it was determined that six participants were sufficient for the purpose of this study. Three of the six participants were

interviewed more than once. This allowed for rich data collection, offering deep insights on the broad themes of power and care.

In order to participate in this study participants had to meet the following criteria: (1) must have worked a frontline service role in a restaurant during the Covid-19 pandemic, (2) lived in and around the Waterloo Region, and (3) were 18 and over. Participants were not excluded based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, religion, and/or disability. An ethics application was initiated and approved to conduct this research, protocol Humans: 44627 (more on this below).

### **3.3.2 Meet the Participants**

As mentioned above six participants total were recruited for the study: Amber, Marcy, Lina, Sam, Niko, and Chris. Pseudonyms were used in place of real names to assure anonymity. All the details included in the participant descriptions were collected organically throughout the course of the interview and are based on researcher observations. Participants were not asked for specific demographic details. Please note, my aim in providing detailed descriptions of each participant is because I would like the reader to be able to visualize with whom I was speaking to as they shared their stories about working frontline service roles in the hospitality sector.

Amber was the first participant I recruited for this study. She identifies as female, is in her 30s, and recently graduated from a Canadian university achieving an undergraduate degree in the field of microbiology. With just over 10 years in the hospitality industry, Amber has worked at a variety of food and beverage establishments as a server ranging from pubs to casual dining services. Amber recently married her partner and would often bring him up when sharing when she felt really cared for in life. At the time of data collection Amber was planning to work as a

server over the summer before looking for a job related to her field of study. Amber appears to be of European descent, she has bright blue eyes, is well groomed, and has her blond hair tied up in a ponytail. She is sitting in her dining room that is adorned in black and gold décor. Amber introduced me to Sam and Niko who were also participants in this study.

Sam was 21 years old at the time of the interview and identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. They are the General Manager of a burger restaurant, and their role requires them to serve guests five days a week. Sam started in the industry at the young age of 16 as a host. Sam conducted the interview with their partner in the room as they both work for the same organization. Sam appeared tired, had a buzz hair cut that was long on top, and wore a baseball cap during the interview. I believe Sam is also part of the BIPOC community.

Niko was a 21-year-old white male at the time of the interview. He shared he has been working in restaurants since he was a *kid* (indicating he was likely working in restaurants before being legally allowed to do so). Niko's primary roles tend to be back of house (BOH roles are generally non-guest facing and include those working kitchen positions) although he has also worked many front of house (FOH roles are guest facing positions) roles as well. At the time of the interview Niko was working fulltime in a burger restaurant where he floated between BOH and FOH roles. During the interview, Niko sat in a red and black gaming chair wearing a baseball cap with his dirty blond ginger hair revealed just a little. Out of all the participants, Niko was the least talkative.

Marcy was a 26-year-old female at the time of the interviews and identified as being of Korean descent. She is well groomed, fashionable, and has a modern hairstyle with short to medium length black hair. Currently, Marcy is in her third year of a PhD program at a Canadian

university and her research explores the intersection of gender, race, and family. Marcy works at an upscale wedding venue in the greater Toronto area. She has worked there for three years and started in 2019. After a year of being a banquet server she was promoted to the role of bartender. It was revealed organically in one of Marcy's interviews that she is in a romantic relationship with the manager/owner of the wedding venue she is employed with. I cannot help but wonder how this relationship may have biased her responses to the interview questions.

Lina was a 24-year-old female at the time of the interview. She was working on her master's degree at a Canadian university and has been working as a server for the last two-three years ranging from budget friendly establishments and moving to fine dining restaurants as she gained more experience in the sector. Lina has been playing for the varsity women's hockey team of the institution she attended since her undergraduate years. Lina has dreams of becoming a professional hockey player one day. During the first interview Lina had her hair tied up and was in a dorm room with the map of the world behind her. I believe Lina is of mixed ancestry. Lina introduced me to Chris who also participated in this study.

Chris was a 21-year-old white male at the time of this study. Chris has worked in the industry for one and a half years as a server and host of a popular Mexican restaurant at a tourism destination in Southern Ontario. Chris left the industry and enrolled in a Canadian university in the field of psychology after losing a co-worker (whom he worked closely with) to a tragic car accident. Chris was in his kitchen at the time of the interview. He has light brown hair that is of medium length and is flowy. He is also well groomed.

All of the participants in this study worked front of house roles before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Although all participants agreed to be contacted for a second interview

to verify my interpretations of the stories they shared, only three participants engaged with the second interview. The participants who did not respond for a request to a second interview were followed-up via the email contacts I had for them three times before the second interviews were abandoned.

### **3.3.3 Remaining Reflexive and applying Narrative Inquiry**

Before each interview, I reminded myself to be reflexive and recall the work of McCormack (2004), noting the reflexive prompts suggested. Raising awareness of characters in the story and identifying the main events - are two ways I maintained reflexivity (McCormack, 2004). To elicit narratives from the participants' responses to interview questions, I used phrases like, *tell me a story about* to get the interview started. This method turned out to be a great way to get the conversation going and ensured I maintained the narrative design of the study. When the stories provided by the participants were incomplete, I was prepared with strong follow-up questions like, "why did this come about?" or "how did this happen?" to prompt rich insights. Glover (2003) suggested using the questions indicated above encourages the participant to explain the social phenomenon you are exploring. Furthermore, during the interview and in reflection afterwards, I contemplated silences, contradictions, and metaphors that I encountered during the interview process and followed up with the participants accordingly (Mura & Sharif, 2017).

### **3.3.4 Operating with Care, Being Responsible, and Thinking Relationally**

Throughout the research process, I incorporated an ethic of care lens by showing that I cared about the well-being of my participants more than the success of my research (Boluk & Panse, 2022; Gilligan, 1993; Higgins-Desbiolles & Monga, 2021). This was reflected in the following ways: I was ready to end interviews early if the participants identified this need, I accommodated

personal requests by providing full flexibility on the dates/times the interviews were conducted, I ensured I was always actively listening, and I would repeat what I heard to ensure I was capturing their stories as they lived them and not as I interpreted them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kuntz, 2015).

While analyzing the data, I remained in connection with three participants of the study. Follow-up interviews were scheduled to ensure the accuracy of my findings, as defined by them, to avoid exploitation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I made sure to think relationally. I operated responsibly and thoughtfully throughout the process ensuring I was doing research with, not on, the participants involved in this study (Kuntz, 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015).

### **3.3.5 The Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used as a guide to explore the broad themes of power, care, and Covid as they influenced the lived experiences of participants in this study (see appendix A). As mentioned earlier, three out of the six participants agreed to follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews were used as an opportunity to ensure I was capturing the stories shared with me authentically and to explore metaphors, silences, etc., that stood out in the first round of interviews (see appendix B, C, D). They also offered the opportunity to circle back on insights gained from the first round of interviews as they related to the purpose and objectives of my study. A total of nine interviews were conducted across six participants from May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The interviews were mainly conducted over the MS Teams platform except for two interviews that were done in-person in a private meeting room at a Canadian University. The interviews lasted for about an hour, the second interviews were slightly less, lasting approximately 45 minutes.

### **3.4 Methods of Analysis**

Narrative inquiry involves the co-construction of data between the researcher and the participant. It also consists of the re-storying of said narratives by the researcher. Narrative inquiry lends itself well to coding or contextualizing analytic processes. Thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and/or narrative analysis can all be applied to make meaning. For the purpose of this research, I considered Mura and Sharif's (2017) narrative analysis methods, while I also applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis. Important to recognize here as well is, the critical lens with which I constantly engaged while reviewing the research findings.

#### **3.4.1 Narrative Analysis**

Mura and Sharif (2017) conducted a critical review of how narrative analysis is applied in tourism discourse. In total, forty-four papers were analyzed, and their findings indicated, "thematic analysis is the method privileged by tourism scholars to conduct narrative analysis...the majority of the papers tend to categorise and report tourists' stories according to major themes" (p.203). While engaging in narrative analysis I incorporated the deconstruction techniques identified by Mura and Sharif (2017) to identify hidden meanings and ideologies within the data. Mura and Sharif's (2017) deconstruction techniques include:

1. Dismantling a dichotomy, exposing it as a false distinction (e.g., public/private, nature/culture, etc.).
2. Exploring silences – what is not said (e.g., noting who or what is excluded by the use of pronouns such as "we").
3. Attending to disruptions and contradictions; places where a text fails to make sense or does not continue.

4. Focusing on the element that is most alien or peculiar in the text – to find the limits of what is conceivable or permissible.
5. Interpreting metaphors as a rich source of multiple meanings.
6. Analyzing double entendres that may point to an unconscious subtext, often sexual in context.
7. Separating group-specific and more general sources of bias by “reconstructing” the text with substitution of its main elements. (p.197)

### **3.4.2 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis requires researchers to identify themes and patterns within the data collected during the study. Braun and Clarkes (2006) six steps of thematic analysis include:

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. (p. 87)

These steps served as a guideline when analyzing my results. Below you will find a detailed list of steps I took during the analysis process.

### **3.4.3 Applying the Procedural and Analytic Methods Described Above to my Research**

Below is a list of the steps taken during the research process to ensure rigour and maintain the integrity of this narrative inquiry. Photos of my research process can be found in appendices E – I.

Step One: Carefully listen to the informant during the interview and make note of words/phrases of interest to assist in creating codes (see researcher notes, Appendix E).

Step Two: Listen to the interview and complete a rough transcription using Otter AI transcription services.

Step Three: Create a cheat sheet for theoretical frameworks and noteworthy aspects of narrative inquiry to serve as a reminder during the interview process and analysis.

Step Four: Re-listen to the interview and highlight codes according to colour. Initial codes determined include caring about, taking care of, caregiving, care-receiving, caring with, carelessness, results of not caring, tension in care relations, importance of care, industry opportunities, care manipulation, mitigating care needs, power dynamics, racism, sexism, care during Covid, and quotes worth further exploration (see researcher notes, Appendix F).

Step Five: Print interview transcriptions that have been analyzed – review initial analysis and make note of any silences, binary thinking, double-entendres, emerging themes, etc., by writing in the margins.

Step Six: Develop a unique follow up interview guide for each informant. Secondary interviews are designed to confirm the stories and meanings with participants, explore nuances in the interview discussion, and address any gaps from the first discussion (see Appendices B, C, and D).

Step Seven: Conduct secondary interviews with three participants. The three follow-up interviews that were conducted served as an opportunity for me to follow up on nuances within the conversation, double entendres, hidden meanings, and to delve deeper into the dominant themes that were emerging from the first analysis.

Step Eight: Based on my experience as a research assistant and following the analysis of the first round of interviews, I realized a word for word full transcription of the entire interview was not necessary. I opted instead to carefully re-listen to the interview making notes and ensuring perfect transcription for quotes that were to be used in the findings section.

Step Nine: I printed all sets of interview transcriptions, separated the data according to codes, and started a mind map to keep track of emerging themes (see researcher notes Appendix G).

Step Ten: I created a findings summary based on the codes identified above. Since I was employing narrative inquiry, I felt getting an understanding of each participant's story as they related to the interviews offered greater insights into each participant's lived experiences and led the ultimate creation of the two broad themes of power and care (see researchers notes Appendix H).

Step Eleven: I completed the findings and analysis sections of the manuscript you read today.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

#### **3.5.1 Ethics Overview**

The University of Waterloo's office of research requires ethics approval before any study can begin. This study was reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo's Research Ethics Board (REB #44627). Once the ethics process was approved, I was able to start recruiting participants for this study – see Appendix I. Participants received an information letter and were asked to provide their consent – see Appendix J. The information letter informed participants of; the nature of the study, how their information was used, and they were notified of any potential risks associated with their participation. The information letter is meant to provide the participant with confidence of confidentiality by confirming the use of pseudonyms during the interview and again in the research write-up. No participants chose to end their participation in the study. However, had they chosen to end their participation in the study, all data regarding said participant(s) would have been destroyed and removed from the final analysis. As the researcher conducting this study, being linked within the hospitality sector, I remained mindful to keep my opinions outside the interview interactions. To ensure this, whenever possible the information provided by participants was repeated to ensure accuracy in interpretation.

#### **3.5.2 Risks to Participation**

The Tri-Council Policy Statement Two (2018), also known as TCPS2, identified three guiding principles when conducting research with human participants to mitigate the harms they may face as a consequence of participating in a study. The guiding principles include “respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice” (Government of Canada, 2018). To ensure guiding

principles adhere to the TCPS2 guidelines, they identified potential harms participants may face that included “social, behavioural, psychological, physical or economic” harms (Government of Canada, 2018).

Covid-19 was and still is among us (although not as invasive in our daily routines as it was during the time of this study.) I identified a potential physical harm for participants and myself if we were to contract Covid-19 as a consequence of participating in person during interviews. To mitigate this risk: the first round of interviews were virtual and only two follow-up interviews were conducted in person. All government safety protocols regarding Covid-19 were followed. When sharing stories of experiences, the participants have encountered in the hospitality sector, there existed a risk that psychological harm may occur when recounting stories that caused unfavourable outcomes and/or emotional distress to the participant. If, during the interview, the participant’s reflection on their experiences led to any emotional upset, I would have provided the participant with contact information for community mental health services – see Appendix K.

Confidentiality guidelines were adhered to as described above; however, should the participant’s employer disagree with their participation in this study, the participant risked financial loss. The researcher had no control over the employers’ actions should they choose to terminate or alter the working conditions of the participant as a consequence of participating in this study. We mediated this risk by meeting virtually and using pseudonyms throughout the research process. To my knowledge, no participants were negatively impacted through their participation in this study. As the primary researcher, I did everything possible to mitigate and eliminate any risks associated with participation by adhering to the ethical considerations as

outlined in the TCPS2. As a thank you for participating in the research study, participants were gifted a \$25 e-transfer to their bank accounts to use as they desired – see Appendix L.

### **3.6 Researcher Trustworthiness**

When in the process of conducting my narrative research, I remained reflexive throughout. At the end of each interview, I thought back to what I heard from the participants and made notes to follow up on certain information provided. I engaged in deep thought over what they were sharing with me and how that might have affected my future analysis. To accomplish this, I remained aware of McCormack's (2004) reflexive techniques by asking myself the following questions:

- Who are the characters in this conversation?
- What are the main events?
- Where/When do they occur? As a researcher how am I positioned in relation to the participant?
- As a researcher, how am I positioned during this conversation?
- How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant? (p. 223)

These questions allowed me to remain reflexive throughout the study's duration. These questions guided me as I identified key players, relationships, and findings. I then took the stories back to three of the participants and shared my interpretations of what they had said. I guided my actions based on McCormack's (2004) recommendations for follow-up interviews.

- Does what I have written make sense to you?
- How does this account compare to with your experience?

- Have any aspects of your experience been omitted? Please include these where you feel it is appropriate.
- Do you wish to remove any aspect(s) of your experience from this text?
- Please feel free to make any other comments. (p. 224)

I did not use this exact verbiage; but rather, matched the language of the participants unique to their lived experiences.

When engaging in narrative inquiry, it is important to recognize the deconstruction techniques that can be applied to identify hidden meanings and ideologies. By engaging in deconstruction techniques in my research study I was better able to explore the dualism of the broad themes of power and care as they intersected with the lived experiences of participants in this study. Furthermore, it allowed me to have a conversation with the literature as it related to my findings. Guided by Mura and Sharif's (2017) recommendations for deconstruction techniques in narrative analysis I was able to break down binaries, I explored silences as often what is not being said speaks volumes, I acknowledged when the story did not make sense or contradicted itself, I explored metaphors, double entendres, and identified any biases that existed in the narrative. By engaging in the procedures and techniques discussed above, I felt confident my research study was ethical, rigorous, relational, responsible, and promoted social justice work.

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a detailed explanation of my methodology including an in-depth discussion regarding my onto-epistemological stance. I then discussed narrative inquiry, and the procedures associated with this methodology in great detail. I then relayed my methods that included a discussion on recruitment practices, participant descriptions, researcher reflexivity,

the interviews, my methods of analysis, a conversation on ethics, and wrapped up with my thoughts on how I achieved researcher trustworthiness. Ultimately, this was a research study that I can be proud of, and I hope my attention to detail in the areas above will help other students looking to engage with narrative inquiry for the first time. The next chapter shares my findings on the broad theme of the power differentials of power and privilege based on gender, race, and class as they shaped the lived experiences of participants in this study and hospitality scholarship.

## 4.0 Chapter Four: Exploring Power Dynamics

If you or someone close to you has ever worked in a restaurant, I am sure you remember that time well. It is not for the faint hearted. Personally, I'll never forget the sticker that was on the staff washroom mirror of the last place I worked as a server.

*It is 5pm and it is my first shift working at this restaurant. The female change room (a glorified closet) is packed with team members changing into their staff uniforms preparing for the busy shift ahead. I choose to get ready in the washroom. As a look in the mirror, ensuring my makeup and hair are perfect, I notice a sticker reminding us to dry our tears before heading to the dining room. Wow, I thought, that is pretty forward! I think back to all the times I have been brought to tears on the job. I wonder how many staff have cried in this washroom. Hard to believe, but the ownership found this funny. Unfortunately, I would soon find out that myself, and many of my colleagues, have spent plenty of time crying in that washroom over the way we were treated by management, guests, and at times each other. I cannot believe the ownership finds this funny.*

The fast-paced environment combined with the precarious nature of hospitality work creates a powder keg ready to burst at any moment. Despite the calls for change, the supposed Covid-19 reset did little or even arguably nothing to shift the systemic power imbalances within the industry that make it undesirable to the workforce. Illuminated in the findings below, the hospitality sector is as toxic as it ever was. Nothing's changed.

In this chapter, I take you through my findings on how power (broadly speaking) is reflected in the lived working experiences of study participants. As introduced in the literature review, the findings suggested the themes of *hospitality consumption, global citizenship, and*

*ethics, hospitality management and neoliberalism, hostipitality, violence, and exploitation, and image and identity* were salient in the lived experiences of the participants in this study (Lynch et al., 2021) I then share findings related to the power differentials of gender and race, as they dominated much of the dialogue with participants. The chapter ends with a conversation addressing how my findings are reflected in hospitality scholarship at large. By illuminating the problematic power asymmetries that existed in the hospitality sector long before Covid-19 we have the opportunity to consider a different lens (perhaps one of care) as a solution to the workforce crisis the industry faces, an idea that will be further explored in chapter five.

#### **4.1 Exploring Power Dynamics in the Industry**

Power is inextricably entangled within all hospitality encounters (Lynch et al., 2021). Customers demean servers for errors during service delivery and control the server with a dependence on the gratuity they leave to maintain their financial security. In turn, hospitality workers tolerate these behaviours and at times promote them for chance to maximize their earnings with each guest (Baltag et al., 2021). Managers show power over servers by engaging in nepotism, prioritizing business needs over the needs of their staff, and engaging in inappropriate behaviour that includes but is not limited to racism, sexism, and inflicting patriarchal ways of being into hospitality encounters (see Hight et al., 2019; Lashley, 2022; Lugosi, 2019; Lynch et al., 2021; Morgan & Pritchard, 2018; Szymanski & Mikorski, 2016). In this chapter, I begin by setting the stage for the reader, offering insights from the participants in this study on how power differentials influenced their lived experiences. I then share experiences attributed to the power differentials of race and sex.

### 4.1.1 Exploring Customer's Power Entitlement

To better understand why customers, feel power over their servers, Chris explained the following:

*I don't know if it's an entitlement. Maybe a little bit of hunger just takes over. But there is definitely a feeling of they feel like they are better than us so they can talk down to you in a sense. I don't know if that is driven by a sense of entitlement or just maybe the way that people view restaurant workers as a whole maybe that's the problem that needs to be changed.*

Chris' comment about guests showing power over their servers as a consequence of entitlement and the societal stereotype that hospitality work is undesirable, echoed the findings of a Threadgold et al., 2021 study discussing the impact of class distinction in the nighttime economy. Amber was called a *two-bit dictator* by a customer for applying an automatic gratuity when serving a large group (this practice is standard in most restaurants and bars when serving groups of eight or more). Amber shared,

*This man threw a fit and called me a two-bit dictator. Then he started yelling at me saying that it's my loss, he would have tipped more. My perspective was, why was it a big deal that the tip was already added if you wanted tip more, you could have tipped more. It's been an issue before and also, it's not my policy.*

Amber went on to say,

*I've had people be really rude with me over things that I don't think you should be rude to another human over like, I forgot your sauce. Or my favourite one is when my arms are full of plates and they're like, well, where's the other thing I ordered. Like, I only*

*have two arms! You should be able to recognize that as a human, I'm only capable of so much.*

Amber's experiences illustrated the different ways guests can show power over their server, exerting their privilege over the staff in ways that would not be acceptable in any other industry. Yet, the behaviour is tolerated, and nothing is done by the organization to eliminate these toxic exchanges in an industry where the customer is always right (Baltag et al., 2021). Frontline restaurant staff do not only need to negotiate power imbalances between themselves and their customers, often the worst abuse of power comes from management and ownership of the organizations with which they are employed (Lynch et al., 2021). The next section shares how managers and owners exert their power over their team members.

#### **4.1.2 Exploring Power Relations between Management and Staff**

Toxic management styles, not treating staff with respect and dignity, withholding money earned, and turning team members against each other were all described by participants in this study as forms of the misuse of power and the privilege that comes with it, by management. Many of the participant experiences reflected notions of neoliberal capitalistic attitudes, prioritizing profit over people, as was also made relevant in the literature review. Of all the participants in this research study, Sam likely had the most jarring experiences when it came to being the victim of power misuse by management.

At Sam's workplace they shared the gratuities collected each day. The servers do not operate with their own individual floats (a float is a term servers use to describe the money they carry on their person to make change for guests who pay by cash), so everything comes from one till. As most people make their purchases with credit or debit cards, the gratuities servers earned

each shift were directly deposited to the organizational account, leaving the employees waiting to be reimbursed the money they were owed. Although Sam's manager promised on several occasions they would receive their gratuities, they were often delayed by months at a time. He enforced his position of power and abused his privilege over the team members causing precarity in their financial stability. Sam shared their hesitance to bring new team members onboard even though the organization was facing a staffing shortage. Sam said,

*I don't necessarily want to bring somebody into the team and promise them like hey, you're gonna get your tips on a biweekly basis. Right now, I've waited, me and the staff have waited over a month and a half for our tips. We are all owed over a grand in tips, still.*

Sam went on to share more about the withholding of staff gratuities, indicating that power trumps money owed and access to information. They said,

*I've tried communicating to corporate and the district manager to see what's going on. I never really got a definite answer on why. Me and the staff are kind of thinking maybe it's just because they took a hit during COVID, and it's taken a little while longer than expected for them to get back up and run. So, you know, maybe they're using that money to pay invoices, or maybe it's for whatever. Yeah, we're not too sure.*

When I asked Sam how this impacted them and their team members, they shared the following:

*It makes me feel annoyed, stressed out, mad! Just because, you know, as servers, it's something that we rely on. Even with only three servers that are working full capacity for 40 hours a week, our paychecks can barely pay our rent because we're working minimum wage. It's not fair that we have to move our finances around and our future and stuff that*

*we want to do around because of the lack of our money. Even though we damn well know we made over \$100 that day, but we're not going to see it for over a month.*

Sam's manager not only exerted his power and influence to withhold earnings and information from the employees, but his management style was also abrasive and rude, giving little thought to Sam's needs as an employee and an individual by treating them with very little respect. Sam recalled,

*Going back to our district manager, he's also the owner of the restaurant. He has a very bad temper. So, he likes to yell. I'll give you an example, I went on vacation. My first vacation since working there. For three days I went to Montreal and during my trip I was getting constant phone calls and text messages from this guy yelling at me because I was on vacation. He wanted me to be at work because it was the May 2-4 long weekend. He texted my partner asking where I was. He texted me constantly asking me where I was. I tried explaining to him that I didn't have service going up there. When I got my service back, I tried texting him and telling him my little situation and that made him even more angry. He proceeded to come in the next day and yell in my face.*

Sam's vacation was a 3-day trip to Montreal, meaning they needed to be granted one vacation day on top of the two days they would normally get off to make this break happen. In the end Sam told me no one ended up going to work that weekend because of the owner's poor attitude. Amber has had similar experiences with toxic management as well. Amber shared,

*If she [the manager] knew you were messing up or doing something she would sit there and scream at you and make you feel like an idiot in front of the whole restaurant. I've watched her make the 14/15-year-old host's [Hosts are often responsible for seating*

guests, managing takeout orders, and clearing tables. This is an entry role in the restaurant industry and as such most who occupy the position tend to be quite young with little experience.] *cry. I've watched her sit there and make these girls cry over an Uber order.*

Working at a different restaurant Amber shared a story of how she was expected to work long shifts with no hygiene breaks when other staff called off sick. In addition, this same restaurant denied her requested time off to visit her dying grandmother and even to attend the funeral. Amber shared,

*Some days I would work 14-hours shifts without a break, or lunch, or anything. I was doing frequent back to backs [back to backs is server jargon for working open and close shifts consecutively], and they couldn't even give me a single day off to go see my grandmother before she died.*

Adding to the precarity of hospitality work, there never seems to be a balance in server scheduling. Either the organization is very busy and puts the onus on the staff to meet the business demands or, on the other hand, if the weather is not cooperating restaurants will cancel staff shifts with little or no notice impacting the staff's financial security and adding to the precarious nature of this work (Lynch et al., 2021). Furthermore, labour laws require that you provide staff with three hours notice before a shift start time if you are to cancel their shift. If you do not cancel a shift and staff arrive but are sent home early, they must be paid for three hours. This law is often avoided by asking volunteers to leave early or quite simply the staff are not aware of the laws that dictate proper handling of such a scenario. Lina shared,

*If the weather's terrible and there's no customers, you just get cut. It's kind of like standard across the industry which is hard. Not having stable hours is hard.*

Some managers will even go as far as to disrupt team member relations by spreading falsehoods about the staff. Amber recalled,

*We had one manager that used to make up stories about people and try and get them fired, because he thought it was funny to the owner. He would say people are sleeping together, when they have spouses or like this person is doing drugs in the bathroom, just shady stuff like that.*

Lina summed up brilliantly the impact that misusing one's power can have over staff.

*Serving is a stressful job and has the potential to make people very upset at certain times. Personally, I haven't had any breakdowns, but I've seen people who need a three-minute cry or need to step out. And so, that's kind of normal or normalized in the industry which is daunting in a way.*

In Lina's case as was the case in the lived experiences of other participants in this study these toxic behaviours are not only tolerated but normalized; behaviours that would not be acceptable in any other industry outside of hospitality.

#### **4.1.3 Normalizing or Rationalizing Poor Behaviours**

What I found particularly interesting in the findings of this study, is that often the team members that are victims of these various forms of abuse tend to excuse the poor behaviours of their managers. Rather than identifying it as a fault in one's character or an inappropriate way to run an organization, they were quick to normalize the behaviours, suggesting that stress from volatile

market conditions and lack of industry experience were partially to blame, as was hinted to above. When asking Sam why they feel their manager behaves the way he does, Sam said,

*This is how he talks to his construction workers and from him being in construction and moving straight into hospitality with no prior experience he's kind of bringing that mentality and bringing the behaviour [construction sites] into the workplace.*

Similarly, other participants in this study were quick to normalize or rationalize the poor behaviours of management and owners towards staff regardless of the negative impact these exchanges had. Chris shared,

*The restaurant itself never had a whole lot of money flowing through it; it was always stressful for the family. So, one thing that I would say happened more often than not, was sometimes manners were forgotten [manners being forgotten indicated that the owners/managers would speak abrasively to the staff during times of stress] for just getting shit done. Sometimes just forgetting that there was another person on the other end that you were talking to instead of just a worker or something like that. It goes back to that empathy thing, sometimes it's there and sometimes it's not.*

When Lina was asked why managers berate their staff, she echoed Chris' sentiments.

*Sometimes managers are stressed out and so they don't even probably care how they speak to people. They're just saying it to get stuff done. To be productive and get the food out. So, even if they are visible to the public, sometimes I think they're just trying to be the most efficient they can, and that's by being hard on people.*

Lina went on to explain,

*In the serving industry, there is not your A+ managers that know how to control or present in all ways, that show strong leaderships styles, lots of mediocre and bad in the serving industry.*

A little further along you will hear a disheartening story that Amber shared regarding a team member who quit the new restaurant they had moved to due to racist remarks and that she herself had been the victim of fat shaming at said restaurant. When asking Amber why she thought the management team felt confident engaging in behaviours that would be considered taboo for the workplace by society at large; she suggested the following:

*They don't do it to people until they're comfortable with them [the staff members]. I don't think they would make inappropriate comments to new people, they have to get to know their personality. It's almost like they're treading water a bit to see what they can get away with. I also think it comes with the ownership, like owning a business and you being their employees. There's a sense of almost dominance over their staff. I've also worked at a restaurant where there was a female owner, and she was probably the worst of them all. I feel like it's a power dynamic.*

Marcy, who worked at a wedding venue in the prestigious position of bartender, thought there was no problem that the service charge collected from each event was not shared with those who served the guests. Marcy said,

*We get paid \$18.00 per hour instead of \$15.50, that's how they compensate for it. And then the longer you work it starts going up. They do this so they don't have people coming in for two months and then taking off. The next year you come back they'll raise it by \$2. Also, everyone gets fed and their like \$100 meals.*

Based on Marcy's statement above that meals cost \$100 per guest, if you had 100 guests at the venue the cost would be \$10 000 for food alone. Service charges vary, to be conservative let's say Marcy's place of employment only charges a 10% service fee, that works out to \$1 000 in service fees collected on the food portion of the bill alone. If you have ten service staff working that would mean an extra \$100 per shift without considering the service charge that is collected from other products sold to cater the event, much more than hourly earnings alone, even with a slight raise year over year. It is clear that in the case of this wedding venue, the company is profiting from the service charge they collect from the guests. As Marcy worked the position of bartender, she had the opportunity to earn cash tips on top of her hourly wage. Other staff, that did not have the same opportunities as Marcy, may feel this policy is unjust, if they are even aware of the service charge the wedding venue is collecting.

The above section illustrated how power dynamics between customers, management, and the participants in this study had a negative impact on their lived experiences shaping their financial success as well as their ability to thrive in their work environment. Furthermore, this section illuminated how these behaviours, which would not be tolerated in any other industry, are normalized in the hospitality sector. These findings should not surprise us as the hospitality sector has always been rife with power abuse. The next section focuses specifically on the power differential of gender, how it was experienced by participants in this study, and how the participant experiences overlapped with scholarship regarding the sexualization of the hospitality workforce.

#### **4.2 Sexism in Hospitality – Me Too, Who?**

In 2017, the #Me Too movement exploded on social media as a way of to educate and protest

about sexual violence against women. One would have thought (hoped) things would have changed since then. Unfortunately, my analysis revealed that the sexualization of female frontline staff by guests, managers, owners, and team members in the hospitality sector is embedded in the work environment. This finding is not surprising as hospitality scholars have explored and identified that the sexualization of female staff and their work environments have been normalized (Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Lynch et al., 2021; Morgan & Prichard, 2019). The section below provides insights from the participants in this study of how the sexualization of the hospitality workforce was reflected in their lived experiences.

Lina shared her experience with sexual harassment and how it made her feel at one of the restaurants she worked at. Lina said,

*There were a lot of people that make you feel like a piece of meat. The way they look at you and interact with you. If you're a female you understand that, if you're a male I don't know if you get that or not. It's just a feeling that you get that makes you feel uncomfortable, it makes you not want to be in that moment. I would rather just walk away but I still need to do my job. And, you know when you're walking away, you're getting looked at. You know you're being talked about. They're making jokes about you. I try to tune that stuff out; I try not to hear it.*

Lina said above, she would rather not be in that moment and makes clear the tension she felt within trying to balance feeling uncomfortable and objectified with the need to earn a living. This indicated that a certain level sexual objectification is accepted and even expected when you are working in the service industry. As indicated in Lina's first experience above, being a victim of sexual harassment can lead to major discomfort, impact one's wellbeing, and disrupt their

ability to do their work. Niko's comments aligned with the sentiment above as he shared the experiences of his female colleagues who had to deal with a sexist manager. Niko recounted,

*We had a manager who was extremely sexist and would do things a workplace does not accept from when it comes to a boss to a coworker. Nobody likes it. We actually had nine women quit because of him... the girls were very traumatized and didn't want to deal with it. There were some of them who didn't even want to speak up about it, but who were a little pressed by their female peers to go on and please say something.*

In the end, Niko said the manager was fired. However, not before they had the opportunity to *traumatize* staff and guests in the eight years they worked there. Interesting to note here as well, is Niko's use of the word *girls* to describe his female co-workers, infantilizing and liberating them in the same story. The term *girls* were used by other participants in this study to describe their coworkers, in fact no one used the word women and females was only used once. Participants in this study used the word *girls* not considering as a sexual trope, reinforcing the dominant narrative in society regarding gender dynamics. This is yet another indicator of the normalization of misogynistic behaviours in the hospitality sector.

The sexualization of the hospitality workforce does not only present itself in the harassment the participants experienced in their work environments, but it also encompassed fat shaming. Whereby, if a female team member did not meet the societal stereotype of femininity and beauty, they were objectified in regard to that as well. Amber shared what it was like for her working in a restaurant where the majority of team members were young, thin, females. Amber shared.

*There's been two times that I can recall, where they [the managers] made comments about my weight. I'm not like super skinny, like most of the young girls there.*

I asked Amber to talk about the two times that her weight was brought up at work. She recalled a time when she was paired with an underweight server to serve a large party during a busy dinner service.

*I was paired with Judy, and they crammed a party, I can't remember how many people it was, and they put a partition up. So, you have to kind of go like this [over MS Teams Amber showed how she manipulated her body to get around the table, chairs, guests, and the room. This consisted of sucking in her stomach and contorting her body to move sideways versus facing forward.] So, [the manager] specifically told me that I had to take a specific side of the table, because he knew I wouldn't be able to fit behind the chairs and Judy would. I thought it was interesting and at first it didn't click. But then I was like, wait, I think that was like a fat comment. I think that was almost like backhanded.*

When I asked Amber if she had experienced this phenomenon more than once and she shared a second experience working at the same venue but with a different manager during a busy brunch service. Amber shared:

*The other time was at brunch. Where they cut the prime rib is really tight. [There are two walkways that servers can access the kitchen from on either side of the service bar for the restaurant. These walkways take you to the back service area where the point-of-sale (POS) technology is located and where items are stored to serve guests such as coffee, tea, water jugs, etc. These walkways also provide access to the kitchen. The prime rib carving station nearly blocks one of the walkways and this area is always congested with*

guests accessing the buffet stations and servers trying to make their way to the kitchen to drop off dirty tableware.] *So, there's a customer that's kind of in the way and then [the manager] was like, 'excuse me we have to get through, I've got a wide load behind me.'* *And I was just like, okay, like it didn't really bother me. But like, honestly, you shouldn't be making those comments as the boss. If that were in an office anywhere, that person would be sent to HR [human resources] so friggin' fast.*

Amber's use of the word backhanded is interesting in this scenario as it implied that the comment made by her manager was internalized as malicious and sarcastic. Malicious encounters are not acceptable in most work environments, why is hospitality any different? Amber further brings this notion home in her second quote, which shared how comments regarding a team member's weight would not be accepted in other workspaces, yet they are tolerated by female hospitality staff. Amber's experiences with fat shaming are common in the hospitality industry, especially if you do not fit the societal stereotypes of what it means to be feminine. The next section discusses sexism and sexual harassment and its presence in the hospitality scholarship.

As discussed in the literature review and illustrated in the findings above, individuals in this industry find themselves maintaining unrealistic beauty and grooming standards influenced by societal notions of femininity and what it means to be attractive (Lynch et al., 2021). Lashley (2022) summed up the sexualization of frontline workers brilliantly.

Frontline workers in hotels, restaurants, and bars share much with cabin crew on airlines... In both cases, staff appearance is idealised to create a pleasing look to encourage positive customer emotions. Staff must be attractive and there is

something of a tyranny of thinness. Overweight and obese frontline workers are deemed inconsistent with the brand image, reflecting prejudices about body shapes and discrimination against those who don't fit the paragon model (p. 49).

Critically, if they do not meet these expectations, they are susceptible to fat shaming as was experienced in Amber's case. Spratt (2023) defined 'fat shaming' as a 'performative practice that encourages open disdain for those living in larger bodies. It operates as a moralizing tool to regulate and manage those who are viewed as bad citizens' (p. 88).

Working in a restaurant is tough enough without having to tolerate sexist attitudes from guests, managers, and team members alike. A study by Reedy (2019) indicated that 90% of female restaurant workers reported they had experienced some form of sexual harassment. It is no surprise then, that more claims of sexual harassment are filed in the restaurant industry than any other sector (Morgan & Pritchard, 2018; Reedy, 2019). With a customer's always right attitude and restaurant servers' reliance on guest gratuities, behaviours such as sexist attitudes, sexist banter, and sexist performances are tolerated. Baltag et al., (2021) defined these behaviours to include "compliments about the server's appearance, sexual remarks, looks or gestures, touching parts of the body, and inappropriate requests" (p. 86). Admittedly, these behaviours have a negative impact on the server's ability to flourish in their work environment, often leaving staff with feelings of burnout, a waning interest in their work, and heightening intentions to leave the restaurant sector altogether (Baltag et al., 2021; Szymanski & Mikorski, 2016). Furthermore, as these behaviours have been normalized and tolerated for so long, team members become confused between what is right and what is wrong.

Anderson (2011) stated:

Those in power have more influence over their own lives and the lives of those immediately around them but they also have influence over cultural messages about who is valued and who is not, and who is considered normal and who is considered deviant. (p.12).

Consequently, because the sexual culture is normalized, the female staff who are exposed to these behaviours become confused as to how to best handle each encounter and often will manage the occurrences themselves (Baltag et al., 2021). They receive little (if any) support from management teams who lack the knowledge of how to address sexism in a guest-focused, service-oriented industry. Morgan and Pritchard (2018) highlighted that the entire hospitality industry is part of the problem, and that the focus cannot simply be placed on the need for more well-mannered guests. The problem is systemic and with that accepting these behaviours has become part of the job (McDonald, 2020). Baltag et al., 2021 recommended that:

Awareness about sexual harassment should be raised, and people should know that sexual harassment is happening almost on a daily basis. Since the media plays an influential role in shaping opinions in society nowadays, it can be used to raise awareness about this topic. There should also be more education about this topic, starting with children... To minimise sexual harassment from happening, there should be a policy in restaurants (and all hospitality-related workplaces) about sexual harassment not being tolerated. Employees should be informed about this policy and know that sexual harassment is not accepted. Employees should also be provided with procedures to make a formal charge or complaint (p.91).

Many of the recommendations Baltag et al., (2021) and other scholars have suggested to alleviate the sexualization of the hospitality workforce are already in place. So, why then does this behaviour still dominate the industry? I can explain why. Because male bodies and the knowledge they produce, have historically been privileged while the silenced experiences of women are ongoing (Boluk & Panse, 2022). Gender oppression is nothing new and has been ever present in the lives of females since the beginning of time due to their *Other* status (de Beauvoir, 1952). Furthermore, things are unlikely to change as long as male bodies are unwilling to relinquish their privilege and power over others. Care may challenge this dominant framework.

The aim of this section was to illuminate how hospitality workers experience and tolerate the misuse of power and sexism, and the toxic behaviours that unfold as a consequence. Behaviours, that would not be tolerated in other industries. As the purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of hospitality workers before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic, and explore how the broad themes of power and care are reflected in their experiences, a conversation on the power differential of gender was necessary. Furthermore, despite calls for an industry reset following the Covid-19 pandemic, nothing has changed as was revealed by the participants in this study and has been verified in the hospitality scholarship. In addition to sexual objectification, waitstaff from minority ethnic backgrounds who participated in this study were also objectified based on their race.

#### **4.3 Racist Encounters on the Frontlines**

Marcy described the wedding venue she works at as *a modern farmhouse, Boho kind of vibe* and indicated the guests usually came from a higher socio-economic class and as such they were primarily white. She went on to say,

*I was one of the only ethnic workers and so I'd get comments when I was serving appetizers on a platter. They had some Asian fusion things, like spring rolls, and the people would make comments and ask me if I made them and like silly things like that. I'm just like, this is really awkward...what do you want me to say to that...I'd say something snappy back, and then I run back and, you know, tell the servers about it. And they're like, okay, just go take the other one [another area/group of guests requiring service], that's so silly.*

The way Marcy chose to address this racist encounter with one of the guests allowed her to save face while tolerating the comment, yet she made sure she did not have to experience it again. These antagonistic comments followed Marcy when she was promoted to the more elite role (the only role at the wedding venue that allowed for cash tips on top of your hourly wage) of bartender.

*When I worked at the bar, people asked what my ethnicity was, and when I'd say I was Korean, they would joke around about North Korea. If I'm coming from North Korea, I wouldn't be here right now. I don't know if you know, the state of North Korea, like just silly things like that. Or sometimes, I'd say I'm from East Korea and they would look really confused and scratch their heads.*

Marcy used her sense of humour to address racial slurs made by the guests she was serving; this does not mean they did not offend her. When asking Marcy how she navigated these uncomfortable circumstances, she shared the following:

*How do you respond to that? I don't know. If you respond in a way that's not very professional or if you overreact, they're gonna think well, what's wrong with you? Like,*

*calm down. It's just a joke. But if you under react, it makes you seem, it makes you feel small. I have pretty thick skin, but I am thinking of people who perhaps would be more affected by it.*

Marcy's comment goes back to what I said in the earlier section that in the hospitality industry these behaviours are just tolerated, and staff expectations are low regarding what they are willing to put up with. In Marcy's reflection above she recognized that no matter how she responded, it still diminished her in the end. Ultimately, if the racism becomes too much to bear, racialized team members will move on, and moving on does not necessarily mean that they will be in a more positive work environment void of racism and other undesirable traits the hospitality industry has to offer. Amber shared a story about a friend of hers. Both started working at her current place of employment at the same time after cutting ties with their previous place of work that was dysfunctional. For Amber's friend, the blatant racism shown towards her by ownership became too much to navigate, which caused her to quit. Amber shared,

*Linda left [name of restaurant] because they would make backhanded almost racist comments that they thought were funny. She went back to [the restaurant they both previously worked at] which she said she'd never do. I don't know what they said to her or whatever, but I know they've made comments to me about her. They're like, oh, you're partnered with Linda unless you're racist.*

A 2023 report by Tourism HR Canada identified that 28% of tourism and hospitality workers in Canada are landed immigrants, a further 5% are people on student visas or citizens from outside of Canada, and 67% identified as Canadian, although we cannot be sure what percentage of these people are coming from racialized communities. These findings are not

surprising as many hospitality roles do not require formal education to participate, are often filled by migrant communities, and tend to come from a lower socio-economic background (Lynch et al., 2021; Tourism HR Canada, 2023). As a consequence, people of colour (POC) face a higher level of discrimination in the hospitality sector than their White counterparts which leads to less satisfaction in their careers and a hindered ability to achieve success in the industry (Benhadda, 2022; Shum et al., 2020). Furthermore, Benhadda (2022) stated that in five-star hospitality industries this type of discrimination does not only mean that POC have fewer opportunities than their White counterparts, but it also has a major impact on society as a whole as these actions serve to “reinforce inequality and superiority of a certain race or group” (p. 64).

As mentioned above, these racialized encounters that are detrimental to the success of a racialized workforce occur at the organizational level. They are also ever present in the daily work experiences of racialized individuals working frontline positions in the hospitality sector, with some guests going as far as refusing service from POC (Benhadda, 2022). Benhadda (2022) stated that racial discrimination causes POC to work harder. This internalized racism to work harder may lead to terminating one’s employment, suffering from depression, acquiring a mental disorder, or internalizing the racist acts. In 2000, Williams & Williams-Morris defined internalized racism as,

The acceptance, by marginalized racial populations, of the negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about themselves. It is premised on the assumption that in a color-conscious racially stratified society, one response of populations defined as inferior would be to accept as true the dominant society’s ideology of their inferiority. (p. 255)

In turn, this leaves POC to have feelings of worthlessness and feeling powerless to overcome these stereotypes dictated by society about themselves. Lashley, 2022 identified a solution to eliminate discrimination in hospitality encounters. He said,

The reduction of prejudice and discrimination in all forms can only happen within a social setting where there is a strong sense of the collective good, where there is a low level of economic inequality, and where the political culture recognizes all citizens as equal in status and importance. (p. 171).

Again, maybe care is the answer.

Although much research exists regarding racism faced by guests of colour at the hands of their white servers giving them an unfair reputation of being ill-mannered guests that do not tip well (see Brewster & Nowak, 2019; Brewster & Rusche, 2012), more research is needed exploring the impacts of encountering racism at work for racialized individuals who occupy frontline roles in the hospitality sector as was revealed by Marcy's experiences working at the upscale wedding venue. This section illuminated how the power differential of race was reflected in Marcy's experience, corresponding with a discussion on racism in the hospitality sector at large. The section ends with a call for more research exploring the lived experiences of racialized individuals who work frontline hospitality roles.

#### **4.4 Discussing Power, Sexism, & Racism in the Industry**

The sticker I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter pasted to the staff washroom mirror was meant to be a joke. Given what we have just heard from participants about how they experienced power, privilege, gender, and racism in their work environments, it is important to ask: at whose expense? Without a doubt, writing this last section was the most difficult for me. It brought back

painful memories of when I was *bullied, harassed, and exploited* over the 25 years I worked in the industry. During our interviews, the participants in this study identified hundreds of experiences where power was abused to the detriment of their social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. It was a difficult task to decide what to include in this section as I wanted to share all their stories and make sure all their voices were heard.

The dominant narrative from the participants in this study that is mirrored in hospitality scholarship is that nothings changed, the industry is as toxic as ever. The supposed Covid reset did nothing to improve the lives of those working in the sector, one may argue it made things worse. The industry continues to pay poorly, mistreat the workforce, and is unwilling to invest in the resources necessary to make the sector more attractive to the labour force. The onus continues to be on the hospitality workforce to achieve operational excellence at any cost. Poor behaviours continue to be tolerated and normalized, stuff that would not fly in any other industry. No matter how much money the federal and provincial governments invest in the training of hospitality workers (TIAO programs, etc.) and regardless of policies and procedures meant to deter said behaviours and protect the workforce, the sector will continue to struggle if there is not an intentional shift away from neoliberal individualist attitudes to one of relational care, moving beyond corporate social responsibility. The next chapter explores the findings from this study through an ethic of care lens. Perhaps operating with an ethic of care may dismantle the power imbalances the industry is facing, thereby creating a more sustainable and caring workforce.

## 5.0 Chapter Five: Exploring an Ethic of Care Framework

The previous chapter explored how the power differentials of power and privilege based on gender, race, and class shaped the lived experiences of the participants in this study and how these negative experiences have impacted them. Some left their place of employment while others left the industry all together. In this chapter I suggest, operationalizing an ethic of care framework to identify and address the inherent power inequalities in the hospitality sector may serve as a valuable tool in creating a more sustainable workforce and industry. By adopting a care-centred organizational culture, we may have an opportunity to manifest a regenerative work environment and in doing so, strengthen the hospitality workforce. This is especially poignant as an ethic of care has yet to be explored in hospitality scholarship thus far.

To gauge each participant's definition of care, one of the first things we spoke about involved sharing stories of when they felt very cared for in their lives and when they felt they were denied care and what each of those scenarios looked like. You will discover these stories in the *caregiving/care receiving* section below. The remaining section explores how Fisher and Tronto's (1990) and Tronto's (2013) feminist ethic of care framework intersected with the lived experiences of the frontline hospitality staff included in this narrative inquiry (you may remember this framework was introduced at length in Chapter Two). I then share the benefits associated with adopting a care-centred approach, and the chapter ends with a discussion about the importance of embedding an ethic of care to guide all hospitality encounters.

### 5.1 *Caring About the Hospitality Workforce*

*Caring about* an organization's workforce requires management teams and ownership to have the philosophical intention to care (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). What this looks like in the lived

experiences of hospitality workers means considerate recruitment, onboarding, and training, so employees have the resources to do the job, before they start the work. Below are some findings that illustrate how *caring about* was reflected in the lived experiences of participants in this study.

Lina likened restaurants needing to pass a standard of care to kitchens having to pass inspections. Lina shared,

*A kitchen needs to pass all these inspections. It should be the same to create a good positive working environment. With standards for how we treat our workers. How do we lead them? How do we train them? How do we guide them? Like, who is there for them?*

Lina's suggestion indicated protocols could be put in place to promote a culture of care in an organization, before new staff are recruited and trained. Niko shared that training new staff should be taken up by the ownership themselves. Niko recounted,

*I believe it [the training] should be done by whoever actually owns the place because typically it's done by managers, even people under that, just coworkers in general. And they're [the staff] are not gonna care, it's not my job, I'm not being paid for it. Why would I have to do that?*

Chris provided a different angle from what Niko shared above. He identified that creating a shift in organizational culture to a more care-centred approach needed to come from the top down.

Chris shared,

*Something within the training process to establish [new staff are taught] to treat people like they are you, kind of thing. I don't know. It's so difficult. Because again, it's such an*

*industry where there really, really isn't change unless the external factors outside of it change first [meaning ownership, franchisees, senior management, and team members].*

Chris' comment above really drove home the need for systemic change in the industry. An organization can be intentional in their hiring practices, the way they train, the people they recruit, etc., however, it will make little difference if the core issues, that contribute to the toxic environments, fuelled by power, are not addressed.

Lina compared her experiences with starting a new position at two different restaurants.

*[Name of restaurant] steps of service were not necessarily laid out in a list format. It was just like, here's what you need to do X, Y, Z, and do it however you want. Ok, great, but it wasn't necessarily a training standard for you to follow. And so, there was no standard service delivery across every server, which was also confusing because then when you go to help other people out, you don't know exactly what steps of service were done.*

Oppositely, the training Lina received was markedly different from her previous place of employment.

*And then, [name of restaurant] had two weeks [of training], it was a very different experience. Two weeks of onboarding and training where you went to seminars, and you learned about the menu, you learned about their steps of service which are different for brunch, lunch, and dinner. And then, at the end, you had to take a quiz, or a test and you had to pass it. Otherwise, you would have to redo it [the training] all.*

Lina went on to share more of her training experiences with the same restaurant.

*At [name of restaurant] you would have shifts as a hostess, shifts as a food runner, shadow shifts [as a server], and reverse shadow shifts where an experienced server*

*follows you around. And then, you're finally on your own able to serve people, but with a maximum of two tables, and then three tables, and then five tables. So, the entire experience was geared towards creating a successful environment where servers are prepared to kind of handle anything, and they were also very much more team focused, all hand-on deck. So, it felt like I was completely in a place where I felt comfortable and ready to go, and by the time you were on your own, you didn't necessarily need that much help.*

I asked Lina if she was paid for training time as often hospitality establishments will avoid paying new employees for the first few shifts calling them trail shifts; one example of how the industry is not caring. This practice has been going on in the industry for a long time and happens globally (Cole et al., 2024; Jeffery et al., 2024). In November of 2023, the Ontario government introduced a new law to address the malpractice of some restaurants that continue to require unpaid trial shifts as part of the interview process (Jones, 2023). Lina shared,

*We were paid for all the training at [name of second restaurant], I'm not sure if it was the same at [name of first restaurant], I didn't pay attention.*

To the contrary, not providing new people with training and onboarding that makes them feel confident in their new role can have consequences. Amber recalled her onboarding experience with the restaurant she is currently employed at and how she tried to *warn* new staff about the trainer, so they were not overwhelmed, causing them to quit immediately. Amber said,

*I say this to the new people a lot. I'm like, I know it's a lot especially if you're training with Judy, who is a machine [describing Judy's work style], because I was overwhelmed too. There were some days where I almost teared up because it was nothing like I was*

*used to before in my other jobs. Once, I was kind of on my own and got settled, like I absolutely love it there. So, I think kind of just being there for people can really make and difference and also letting them know, hey, I know it's kind of overwhelming right now, but it'll get better I promise and that has made people stay. Because there are people who only work a few training shifts with Judy, and they're gone. They can't handle it because that's what they think it's going to be like the whole time unless someone tells them otherwise.*

According to the participants in this study, one way an organization can show you they care is by investing in you. They do this by providing the worker with the skills and resources necessary to be successful in their roles. However, this may seem problematic to some as it may also be perceived that the onus is on the server to create change simply because they have been given the tools to benefit the organization's priorities through their work. Training, as a form of care, must move beyond the benefit of the organization and must trickle down to the team members themselves to be truly care-centred. The next component in an ethic of care framework that I explored is *taking care of* (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Below are some findings that illustrate how the *taking care of* dynamic presented in the lived experiences of the participants in this study.

## **5.2 Taking Care Of Hospitality Workers**

*Taking care of* is the second dimension in a feminist ethic of care framework. Taking care of is different from caring about (described above), as caring about indicated there is an intention to provide care. The main skill required in *taking care of* someone/something involves judgement. The carer must feel that their intervention will lead to predictable outcomes for those they are caring for. (Fisher & Tronto, 1990).

### 5.2.1 Being *Taken Care Of* by Management

The primary way that managers and owners can *take care of* their frontline team members is by considering their mental and physical needs and responding with the appropriate skills, resources, and actions (Tronto, 2013). Amber shared the importance of thoughtful staffing and scheduling and how meeting those needs made her feel cared for.

*It's important to have the proper number of staff, being understaffed is really hard to deal with and takes a toll on your mental health. You're being overwhelmed and it's not your fault...It's important for managers to check-in, see how you're doing so that they're not over-seating you because maybe you have a table that's really difficult and they need your attention a lot more. I can't necessarily take as many tables in that moment.*

Lina shared what it was like to receive *authentic care* by management.

*I asked my manager to do a wine service when I was really busy... It's more time consuming and you have to talk with them (guests), explain the wine and do the delivery, which is a fancier, more upscale process. It's not something that you rush. Taking the time to do that [the wine service], while I had other tables that needed things would put me behind. So, I asked my manager to help me out, and they were not just willing to do it but happy to do it! Sometimes asking for help can be received harshly or they can be very kind. When it's actually received and accepted in a way that they're happy to do it, it provides you with a sense of relief. It's times like this that I feel we're all on the same page. We're a team and there are supports and resources that help you succeed in the workplace.*

Marcy shared her positive experiences of being *taken care of* by her manager. She talked about the importance of breaks and having someone to assist with challenging guests. Marcy said,

*A solid break is important. It's huge because it's a long day. You're there from 2pm to 2am, its summer, you're going in, and out carrying heavy things. It's hot out. Just in terms of providing resources, food, water, all that stuff. Other people I've spoken to in-depth, that also work in the hospitality industry, are not getting that same kind of treatment [from management/ownership teams]...Even hostile interactions [with guests] the manager was very quick to intervene.*

The findings suggested that being *taken care of* by management/ownership means that they invest the skills and resources that lead to action to meet the physical and mental needs of their team members, contributing to their wellbeing in a positive way. Interestingly, these findings align with the needs of frontline restaurant workers as identified in hospitality scholarship (see Albashiti et al., 2021; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; Poulston, 2009; Pryce, 2020; Wijesinghe, 2013; Salzburg, 2014). The next section illustrates what care from guests looks like in the lived experiences of frontline hospitality workers in this study.

### **5.2.2 Being Taken Care Of by Customers**

One of the primary ways customers can *take care of* their servers is by providing a gratuity. The amount of the gratuity is seen as being thanked for a job well done and the time and energy invested by the server to create a lasting impression on their guests. This can be problematic as a study by Baltag et al., (2021) indicated that servers (male and female) will ignore sexual harassment if they feel it will benefit the gratuity the guest leaves at the end. Other ways guests can show their servers they care is through empathy, taking a special interest in their lives, and

writing an online review where the server is mentioned by name as identified by participants in this study.

When it comes to tipping, Lina described the tipping culture as follows:

*People can be super nice and they just tip within the average 15-20 per cent. If people have disposable income, they're able to tip an extra \$10 because they loved you, but that's not within everyone's budget. Although I don't expect someone to tip more, I do think it shows a level of appreciation when they tip you more than the 15-20%.*

Lina also likened the immediate reward through a cash gratuity to a *serotonin boost*.

*The demand of serving can be a lot and when you get good tips it can be a serotonin boost. So, it keeps you in the game. Kind of like when you get a social media notification or something. It makes you happy. It's like oh, I got tipped well, hurray!*

Although the frontline hospitality workers in this study all agreed that gratuities are a big reason why you do this type of work. They were all eager to share other ways customers showed care towards them. Sam shared an experience they had with a guest that observed them having an allergic reaction juxtaposed with her manager's reaction to the same occurrence.

*Onetime I felt really cared for was when I was having an allergic reaction at work. One of my regulars saw that I was clearly very itchy and very uncomfortable due to my allergic reaction. I had this huge rash on my arm. I had forgotten my allergy medication and no one at work had any. And this guy goes to his car, grabs his allergy medicine, and comes back. He kind of comes up to me, and he's like, hey, take one these. I promise you; you'll feel better in the next 10 minutes or so. In that that moment, I was like, wow, this*

*guy doesn't even know me. He just sees me suffering and he's willing to help. So, I thought that was a very cool experience. It's never happened to me before in my life.*

Here is how Sam's manager decided to handle the impact that their allergic reaction was having on them:

*Due to my allergic reaction, I couldn't wear sleeved shirts. I have to wear something like a little bit cropped but very professional looking. If the sleeves touched my rash that would have made it 10 times worse. Especially with me having to continually use my arms. I told him [the manager/owner] I have an allergic reaction. I can't really wear that [button down long sleeve shirt]. Either - one, I'm wearing this, or you can send me home and call someone else. He didn't like that very much and proceeded to yell, as he would, and told me to put on my proper uniform or I'd get written up or sent home.*

It is clear that, in the first scenario, the guest (someone who Sam had never met in their life) showed care to Sam by providing them with allergy medication to soothe the side effects they were experiencing for the allergic reaction. Opposingly, Sam's manager proceeded to not care about their suffering and continued to exert power and control over Sam. He had this attitude, even though showing care towards Sam by allowing a uniform modification did not harm the organization or its profitability. Amber shared the different ways that guests have made her feel *taken care of*. She explained,

*The old people, they're always so nice, sometimes [Amber rolls her eyes and smirks a bit as she finished the sentence.] I was wearing my engagement ring at work, and he [an older male guest] actually like snapped my hand [the guest grabbed Amber's hand from her body while he was seated and she was standing] which kind of caught me off guard*

*and I was like, okay, but he's like, oh, you're getting married and started talking to me about my wedding and seemed really sincere. He actually left me a very large tip.*

I cannot help but wonder if this would have been a positive experience for Amber if a large tip was not left behind. Amber continued to share the different ways guests she has served have made her feel cared for, reinstating that it is not all about the gratuity.

*Honestly, it's just little things; like people that pre-stack their plates so I can carry them off the table because I'm pretty short. Or, if they hand me their plate, because they know that I'm struggling to reach it, rather than the people that will just kind of tilt to the side and make you struggle. So, just like little things like that. I actually really appreciate.*

Chris shared the impact that a positive Google review had on him after his first serving shift.

*The first time that I was serving was a Saturday on the front patio and we [Chris and the guest he was serving] had a great talk the whole time. It was actually one of the loveliest conversations I've had. The guy ended up telling me afterwards that he travels around Ontario and does little reviews. So, he wrote a Google review and it's on the restaurant's page! I always kind of look back at it and smile.*

Undoubtedly, there are many ways that guests and managers can *take care of* the hospitality workforce. The next section focuses on the *caregiving* dimension in the feminist ethic of care framework.

### **5.3 Caregiving – An Act Reserved for Immediate Family and Close Friends**

One of the opening questions of the interview asked the participants to share a story of when they felt cared for and when they did not receive the care they needed or expected in their

personal lives. The section below shares Amber's, Marcy's, and Chris' experiences regarding what care looks like in their personal lives. Amber's husband acts as a caregiver in her life.

Amber shared,

*Every time I'm sick my husband basically tends to my every need, and it feels really nice. It gives me a warm, fuzzy, feeling inside. [When her husband who does not cook makes soup for Amber from scratch, Amber's skin glowed as she recalled this memory.]*

When asked to recall a time when she did not feel cared for, Amber recounted when she was a child.

*Going back to when I was a kid. I don't know if you know this, but I actually grew up in foster care. My mom was actually an addict. So, she, yeah, so she would leave for like weeks at a time. I actually didn't do most of grade two or grade three because she was never home, and I had to look after me and my two younger siblings, my baby sister couldn't even walk yet. So, I remember, sometimes I would hang out with people from school, and I would steal money and stuff [from their homes] to buy stuff from the store so we can eat. So, I guess that was probably the time that I felt cared for the least.*

Marcy identified instances where she felt she needed care, and her friends were there for her. In this same experience, Marcy illuminated what made her feel not cared for. Marcy shared,

*I had to move and that was a really difficult time just because of some extenuating circumstances, things that were going on in my family life. And during that transition, I really saw a different side of my friends and my partner in terms of them caring for me. They were willing to help me with their time and I think that's a huge thing. People offering their time in terms of in terms of support, you know, even something as simple as*

*offering their car or, you know, helping carry things or storing things for me when I had to significantly downsize, that sort of thing. I suppose it's beyond the, you know when people say, if there's anything I can do let me know but it's just something you say that as opposed to; no, I'm coming to your house and I'm gonna help you out kind of thing. I kind of saw different sides of the people in my life in terms of who's willing to be there? Because I would do the same for them.*

For Marcy, being cared for in her personal life goes beyond an intention to care and required the physical act of caring by providing the skills, time, energy, and resources necessary to help her overcome a challenging time in her life. Eventually, Marcy's relationship with her partner was strained when he did not provide her with the care she needed, that she would have provided had the tables been turned. Marcy went on to share,

*A couple of years ago there were some issues going on with my dad, he's a substance abuser and whatnot. So, I was dating someone at the time, and he [Marcy's father] was causing a lot of ruckuses in the house and there was something in his room that belonged to me that I wanted to get a hold of. So, I called my partner to come over and be there for me kind of thing and he basically said that he was scared. And so, I thought, okay, well I'm living here, and I wouldn't ask you for your help if I thought you would be harmed, I just needed his [the partner's] moral support. I wasn't asking anything beyond that, and so, that was quite disheartening and a big kink/downfall in the relationship.*

Chris shared a lovely story of how he and his friends care for each other. Chris shared,

*I have a friend group, it's just two guys that I've hung out with since basically grade nine. All three of us kind of get anxiety over different bits of things that have gone on in our lives. So whenever one of us has a moment, we all get the text, or we get a phone call,*

*and we all go out, and sit over by the lake the bay and just enjoy our time talking. I got one of those calls just the other day and we all had a great talk. But those happen frequently.*

When Chris was asked to recall a time, he did not feel cared for in his life, he simply shared the following:

*Unfortunately, I've had quite a few of those moments. My dad was an alcoholic when I was growing up. So, I'm gonna just keep it at that and say there was more than a few moments there.*

According to the participants in this study, the act of caregiving is mainly reserved for actions expected from immediate family and close friends during a time of major distress in the participant's life. As was illustrated in the participant stories above, these acts of care often revolve around being looked after during an illness, when grieving, and ultimately addressed the physiological needs of each individual. What I find interesting and unexpected in these findings is that three out of the six participants identified being brought up in a household where one or both parents had a substance use disorder impacting their ability to provide adequate care. There was only one case where a participant in this study required their workplace to take on the caregiving role. It happened when he suddenly lost access to safe accommodation due to a dysfunctional relationship with his family. Niko recounted,

*At my last job, I was having a lot of family issues. And I voiced what happened with my employer at that time. He was very calm and collected about it. I said, sadly I can't live where I am anymore. And I don't know where I can go. So, I stayed with my coworkers at that point. They were amazing. very hospitable, always caring. Showing that little extra support that goes past the workplace, that's not something anyone has to do at all.*

The above quote from Niko also illustrated the positive impact that care among team members has the ability to transcend the workplace and truly change someone's life. When writing this section, I could not help but think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and how they intersected with the lived experiences of participants in this study. *Caring with*, which refers to solidarity among team members is discussed next.

#### **5.4 *Caring With* – The Importance of Solidarity Among Team Members**

In 2013, Tronto, introduced the fifth dimension of care in response to the critiques that a feminist ethic of care lacks a justice-oriented lens and emphasizes that *caring with* each other, characterized by solidarity, may offer an opportunity to negate power imbalances and promote justice for disadvantaged groups. Two subthemes were identified as being of upmost importance in promoting *caring with* among team members; working together for a common purpose and comforting each other in times of need.

##### **5.4.1 Working Together for a Common Purpose**

For Marcy, *caring with* involved having *someone's back*. This meant picking up the slack for each other, sharing break times, supplying each other with snacks, and basically supporting each other by any means necessary while working together. Marcy described what this looked like at the wedding venue.

*A big part of that particular community that I was a part of [the wedding venue] was sort of picking up the slack when someone wasn't 100%. So, for example, if I was working at the bar there was always two bartenders working together. I can't think of anything specific, but just in general, the whole system of like, 'got your back' really helped. It was a back-and-forth kind of thing. And you know, when we would go on breaks, we were*

*lucky enough to eat there and got to eat the same food as the wedding guests, which was pretty cool, we'd always make sure that we'd save food [for each other]. We'd say, I put this aside for you, it's your turn, go eat, you know that sort of thing.*

What is interesting about Marcy's comment above is that she identified being supplied with a meal during a 12-hour shift was a form of care from the ownership, even though she was sharing her insights on team dynamics. This brings to question, is the staff meal a form of care or is it done deliberately to keep the staff from stealing, while also eliminating food waste? Sam talked about what working together for a common purpose looked like at the burger restaurant they work at.

*At the restaurant there's only three servers at the moment. It's me, my partner, and Bob. So, you know, we always checkup on each other. We're always like, hey, can I get you something? We always try to, you know, take a weight off each other's shoulders. We always make sure that we're eating and hydrated. That we're not stressed out or feeling like we're about to explode from so much pressure. So, it's definitely a good thing. We all have conversations regarding work or not regarding work. Regardless, we always have a short little conversation to catch up. and to make sure we're all doing okay, and if we're not, we try our best to help each other solve that issue.*

Niko shared the impact of team member solidarity at his workplace citing its importance.

*When people try to take a little bit of your mental health into the equation, it's honestly amazing. It's a very stressful, high-paced job. To have at least one person just take a minute and ask if you're doing alright, tells you to keep it up, asks you if you need a*

*second, offers you to get a drink. Nobody wants to feel like they're constantly extremely stressed.*

Amber spoke about the partnering system at her current workplace and how it helped promote solidarity among team members.

*One thing I like is [name of restaurant's] partnering system. So, you have to care about another person, because those aren't just their tables; they're also your tables. In general, even if you're not partnered up, say someone's having a really bad day or someone's like having a difficult table and they're falling behind on their other tables. If you could just say, "Hey, I have a free second, how can I help?" That really means a lot! I have a very strong belief of what goes around comes around, karma...It's all about give and take.*

Lina struggled to find the words to express how important team member solidarity is. She said, *If everyone works together and everyone supports each other in a serving environment, it's so much better! I don't know how to describe it, it's just so much better.*

When team members are not supportive of each other as described above, it caused tension in the care relationship whereby care relations among team members were challenged (i.e., if there was no reciprocation of care) (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Lina noted,

*I don't know if this is true for everyone, if I was in the weeds and someone wasn't in the weeds decided not to help me, I would be upset and not as willing to help them in the future. I would not want to reciprocate this care.*

Being *in the weeds* is a common term within the restaurant industry to describe when servers are feeling overwhelmed by their job responsibilities, in essence like they are drowning. I asked Lina to explain this further, she said,

*I can think of one time I was overwhelmed and had too much to do and I was stressing out. People [speaking of her fellow front of house team members] always say ask for help if you need it. Or, in some places they encourage that. Yet, sometimes when you ask for help, it's rejected. 'Everyone should be helping everyone' doesn't always translate, even though it's encouraged....whether there be other servers or managers just stepping in to kind of run one thing or clean up a couple of dishes, that can make a huge difference.*

Not only does *caring with* involve working together for a common purpose it also required that team members comforted each other when one was impacted negatively by a hostile encounter on the job.

#### **5.4.2 Comforting Each Other in Times of Need**

Niko highlighted the importance of having empathy for one another during a busy service. Service is a term used to identify the hours of customer service, for example lunch is usually an 11am-2pm service and dinner service is from 4pm-9pm. Being there for each other during a critical time in one's workday was integral to team member solidarity. He shared the following:

*I think one of the main things that kind of can drive it [solidarity among team members] home is empathy. The one thing that I see the most is people just reminding themselves that it is just another person on the end of the line, mistakes will happen. So, uh, yeah, I would say empathy is one of the bigger things I've seen [when describing a successful team environment].*

Niko went on to say,

*There was a girl named Stacy, I think she was 45 or 50 years old, somewhere around there. I remember my first few shifts, I was quiet, I was super anxious because it was my first time ever really being in the front of the house. Stacy was someone I could always go to. I could go to her, we talk about it, and we get over it and move on to the next. [In reference to navigating a new workplace, new position at an established restaurant, and the requirements of the job.]*

Lina shared how being comforted by team members was powerful in overcoming difficult guests and challenging situations at the workplace. Lina said,

*When we would have odd or aggressive experiences with a guest, we would have our little like, you know, informal meetings in the back and then complain about it. We just go to the staff room and complain. Maybe it's not nice on our part, but it helps you to have a release so you can go back [to work], put a smile back on, and continue to do what you need to do. It's that sense of community and being able to say, hey, did you see what just happened? And respond, that was horrible or make fun of [the situation] as awful as it sounds.*

Lina felt the need to justify the behaviours discussed above and shared,

*You know, there were some not so nice experiences and really entitled abrasive rude people that we dealt with. And yeah, I think just having almost like a group of friends [co-workers] that we had was really nice.*

Lina's comments further support what was discussed in chapter four in that hospitality workers have been conditioned to tolerate toxic work environments by identifying it as the norm. When I asked Sam why they choose to stay in the toxic job where they are currently employed, their response was quite simple: Sam is not only a server but also the General Manager and cared for the staff they were managing. Sam shared,

*I think it's a little hard for me to walk away because I know if I walk away, the district manager would become the general manager and he's not gonna listen to these people. I've grown to have a sense of love for these people.*

As important as it is for team members to care for one another it is just as important for ownership and management to show that they are all working towards a common goal regardless of power dynamics at play.

#### **5.4.3 Caring with Management/Ownership/Labour Advocates**

Management can show team members they are all working together towards a common goal (*caring with*) in several ways. A caring manager is a key component to building solidarity among team members and to promoting a positive work environment. Marcy shared,

*Positive management makes a big difference. Prior to the new manager that came in halfway through my time working at this venue it was a very different work environment. There was a lot of tension... As soon as this new manager comes in, he was very focused on hiring for soft skills, people skills. You can teach people how to polish glasses and stuff but in terms of ability to communicate with others and work in a healthy environment; that's a whole other thing. I don't think that can necessarily be taught.*

Chris shared how the managers/owners of where he worked were very hands on and that this had a positive impact on the staff. He said,

*They were always in the red because it was a family restaurant. They were always in the restaurant. [The one owner], the brother, was always in front. So, if there were ever moments where a server really couldn't come in for a day or someone couldn't do something, he was always checking-in with employees, being there to serve, bartend, or do whatever was necessary.*

Amber echoed that management and ownership teams supporting their team members enhanced the work environment. She said,

*I feel like checking in with your employees is really important. If we don't have time to talk my manager will do a thumbs up or a thumbs down to check-in on how I'm managing my workload.*

The above comments from participants in this study illustrated that the onus is not only on the server to perform their job duties correctly, but rather a healthy work environment starts from the top down. The next section explores what participants in this study would do when their care needs were not met.

## **5.5 Mitigating Care Needs**

Clearly, management's investment in the care needs of their team members is critical to operational success and maintaining an engaged workforce. However, who can the hospitality workforce turn to when their care needs are not being met? Afterall, we understand that tension percolates when care needs are not met with the care received (Fischer & Tronto, 1990).

### 5.5.1 Addressing Individual Care Needs

The primary way participants mitigated their care needs when they were not being met was to terminate their employment with an organization. Some factors that mediated this response was the amount of money the participants were making and concerns over financial security. Lina shared her experience in deciding to leave the one restaurant she was working at. Lina noted,

*The scheduling was hard to deal with and they didn't respect the hours that I submitted. They would either have me for two and a half, three hours or they keep me way over the time that I was able to [work]. And that was just because they were understaffed or over-staffed. And that is also just the restaurant industry. The scheduling for me [as a high-level university athlete] was one thing, and then just like tip money and pay I knew would be better at other restaurants.*

However, Lina also shared if the money was *really good*, she would likely stay in a toxic work environment. For Lina really good money meant \$200-\$400 per shift in gratuities alone. Lina shared,

*If it's really good money, I would do it [working as a server]. I don't know how long I would do it though because the demand of serving can be a lot. It's a physical job and when you're able to do it and push through it is worth the money.*

Sam shared that they left a *good job* due to one manager. Sam recalled,

*It was a good job. It was just one manager that really irked my soul, so I had to leave.*

For some of the participants in this study there was no returning once a workplace had become too toxic to withstand. Niko was owed money and chose to cut all ties with his former place of employment.

*Honestly, I just didn't even want to deal with them anymore. I just dropped the whole thing. I didn't want it to turn into something massive because to be honest, they would probably just twist anything I said against me. I don't want to end up losing something. I'd rather have nothing, than lose something.*

Amber revealed the lack of care that was shown towards her was too much to bear and that she was willing to risk her financial security to keep her mental sanity.

*I actually quit my job at [name of restaurant] before I had another job lined up because I was just so done with it!*

### **5.5.2 Caring with the System**

The question of who to go to in times of need surfaced in conversation with the participants of this study. The consensus being that more needs to be done to make third party resources accessible to the workforce. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development of Ontario reports back to the Federal Ministry of Labour and is responsible for all labour issues in the Canadian province of Ontario. However, many participants in this study shared that accessing legislative supports is a challenge. Although legislation exists to protect workers rights in the hospitality sector it is often not followed as business needs almost always take the priority (Hjalager, 2008; Knani, 2014; Lugosi, 2019), this has only become more pervasive since the rising costs of food and goods has severely impacted profit margins in the restaurant sector, with many establishments starting to shut their doors. For example, the Red

House, on the corner of William St. E., and Caroline, St. S. in Waterloo recently shuttered their doors as the owner and head chef accepted a position to lead the culinary department at Conestoga College after eleven years of operating a successful business with happy staff (Clark, 2024).

Amber spoke about the need for legislation to ensure employees are not over worked by limiting how many hours can be worked in a day and legislated rest times between shifts.

However, this legislation exists. According to the Labour board of Ontario,

Employees must receive at least eight hours off work between shifts. This does not apply if the total time worked on both shifts is not more than 13 hours. An employee and employer can also agree electronically or in writing that the employee will receive less than eight hours off work between shifts.

Yet, during her interview, Amber, (with over 10 years of experience in the restaurant industry) shared the following:

*I think there should be laws to like how many hours you can work. Like, let's say someone called in sick and they need you to work a double, which is a 14-hour day. I think that they should have like written consent. And they can't just put you on the schedule without notifying you...so people aren't overworked.*

Amber went on to say,

*If I were to make a complaint to the Labor Board. I wouldn't even know how to go about it. I feel like that should maybe be advertised more. And HR [Human Resources] policy kind of things like you know, the little packages that you do at the beginning. If I worked*

*an office job, they'd show me how to contact HR if I needed to right away. Whereas in the restaurant industry, I feel like they there's no information [shared].*

Amber noted that this lack of transparency regarding worker's rights from organizations shines a light on our failing systems as young workers are exploited from early on. Amber noted,

*It's very young people, people who have never entered their first job sometimes, or have never really worked in the restaurant industry, or worked at a job where they have had those, like needs met so they think that's normal. Therefore, they'll complain about it. But not necessarily take it to the top because they don't necessarily know the rules.*

Sam shared one of their team members did go to the Labour Board regarding money that was being withheld from them. Sam said,

*One of my staff has actually gone to the Labour Board four times and nothing's happened. The labour board had a conversation with corporate and nothing came out of it.*

It is clear *caring with* must transcend beyond team members to all stakeholders in an organization to potentially create a paradigm shift to a more care-centred, relational approach to business praxis. In my 25 years of working in the hospitality sector, the only time I had access to a human resources department was when working for a global hospitality provider that operated in a unionized environment.

## **5.6 Discussing the Benefits of a Care-centred Organizational Culture**

In showing care to team members, organizations may have the opportunity recruit new talent, to retain existing talent, or to have staff that may otherwise have found employment elsewhere

return. Marcy had quit the wedding venue to attend university, which complicated her ability to commit to her job. However, the caring nature of the management team and the solidarity she felt with her team members meant she still picked up shifts *here and there*. Marcy recounted,

*I really can't think of any instances where I felt uncared for and that's the only reason I was there. I mean, of course I needed the extra money but if I would have gone without it, I would have made it.*

Niko talked about how feeling cared for at work has a positive impact on the bottom line. Niko shared,

*In my earnest opinion, if you had people that just enjoyed the place, took care of it, and was kind to everyone, you'd be making a lot more than what you'd originally be doing.*

I asked Niko to explain this further and he went on to say,

*Just by having someone you can have better communication with and all around just, you know, can make jokes out of a bad situation. It'll brighten up your mood, you'll be able to work faster.*

Niko's comments above also indicated that a care-centred organizational culture can be compatible with a profit driven model. Amber shared that not only does a caring environment increase productivity for the organization; it also promoted positive mental health.

*If you feel cared for, if you feel like people go out of their way because they care about you, it's gonna make me want to go into work. It's gonna make me want to be there rather than if I feel like nobody gives a crap about me like, I don't want to go there. It's gonna give me anxiety about being there because I feel like I'm drowning.*

Lina discussed how communication is a form of care towards staff and how that then benefits the organizational goals. She said,

*The communication is a huge thing because when people don't communicate, things will get very unorganized, and things might end up not being delivered in the same standard that you would like them to at a restaurant. So, making sure that there's really good communication and really good support, through like a team environment, where everyone is willing to be all hands-on deck, as opposed to individually just sticking to your own duties.*

In the chapter thus far, the participants in this narrative inquiry have shared their stories about what care looks like in their work environments and the consequences that ensued when organizational care towards team members was lacking. The chapter ends with a discussion on the importance of integrating an ethic of care framework into hospitality scholarship and the sector itself.

### **5.7 Discussing the Importance of Integrating an Ethic of Care to Organizational Culture**

Based on my findings, the scholarship, and the discussion hitherto, it is clear the misuse of power is an overarching theme of what makes the hospitality sector undesirable to a talented workforce (Lugosi, 2019; Lynch et al., 2021). The insights expressed by the participants above, align with hospitality scholarship in that they suggested one's work environment strongly influenced staff retention rates. If the care needs of team members do not match the care they receive, they will terminate their employment with an organization (Albashiti et al., 2021; Armstrong, 2019; Herzberg, 1959; Mudhar, 2022; Nadri & Tanova, 2010). This logic is irrational and indicated that with no mechanism (like a union) to help address the care needs of staff they will simply

pull out entirely, a quality unique to the hospitality industry that does not happen in any other industries. Perhaps, *caring with* has the potential to eliminate the need for union representation to ensure equity in the workplace.

### **5.7.1 Operationalizing Care Ethics**

Moreover, the findings suggested that care may serve as a powerful tool to navigate the power imbalances that make the sector unattractive to the available workforce. What we believe to be the most salient finding of this research study is the value and importance of operationalizing care ethics in a “purpose economy” (Higgins-Desbiolles & Monga, 2021, p. 1989). A purpose economy thinks beyond profit, it is centred in ethical values, and is community driven, unlike the neoliberal individualist model that is no longer working for the hospitality sector. Yet, hospitality scholarship has neglected incorporating an ethic of care theoretical framework as a basis for addressing the downfalls of a neoliberal capitalistic marketplace that currently dominates hospitality encounters.

Operationalizing a feminist ethic of care framework in the hospitality sector will assist in the dismantling of power dynamics that are inextricably entangled within all facets of the industry (Lee et al., 2024). Additionally, having a sense of camaraderie among team members played a crucial role in negotiating negative aspects of the workplace such as a toxic environment, poor pay, poorly trained managers, challenging guests, etc. However, it was not enough to keep someone in the workplace if they felt their dignity was at stake, as was mentioned by Lina in one of her interviews. By *caring with* their team members, organizations are in a position to address the power dynamics that make the industry undesirable and are contributing to the current shortage of a talented workforce. However, worthy of further

discussion is the problematic use of the word solidarity to describe the *caring with* component in an ethic of care.

### **5.7.2 The Problematic Nature of Using the Word Solidarity to Describe Caring With**

Tronto (2013) uses the word “solidarity” to describe the camaraderie that comes with *caring with*. This is somewhat problematic when exploring the traditional use of the word solidarity in academic literature. Although I like the idea of *caring with*, using the word solidarity to identify acts of caring within this study is troubling due to its traditional use within tourism and hospitality scholarship. Scheyvens (2002) stated that, “justice tourism builds solidarity between visitors and those visited; promotes mutual understanding and relationships based on equality, sharing and respect; supports self-sufficiency and self-determination of local communities; and maximizes local economic, cultural and social benefits” (p. 104). Higgins-Desbiolles (2006 & 2022) builds on Scheyvens (2002) work by illuminating the power the tourism industry holds to address Imperialism and systemic injustices placed on disadvantaged groups in destinations as a consequence of global crisis’ by engaging in solidarity with the local population. It alludes to the power solidarity has to change existing dynamics of injustice within the sector and beyond.

Within hospitality scholarship specifically, the term solidarity is often referred to the workers’ relationships with the unions representing them, which seek to address the precarious working conditions of the sector and to eliminate the degrading factors associated with such employment (Papadopoulos & Ioannou, 2023; Shevey, 2022). The guiding principle of unionization states that if we come together collectively, we have more power. It is no surprise then, that unions tend to be unwelcomed by organizations in the hospitality sector, with Starbucks most recently in the news (Love, 2022). Despite the above remarks, it does not mean

that the *caring with* component is not represented in the findings. Rather, it serves as a reminder that the industry can support their workers and workers can support each other to relieve some of the power imbalances they face in their everyday work without impacting profitability.

### **5.7.3 Concluding the Care Discussion**

Perhaps, a care-centred organizational culture is enough to create the systemic change necessary if the hospitality sector is going to survive and thrive. Maybe, it will even eliminate the need for unions that currently force change in the industry through collective action. The next chapter concludes this thesis.

## 6.0 Chapter Six: Concluding the Study

The aim of this research was to illuminate the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. By illuminating the care crisis that hospitality workers are experiencing and amplifying their voices, we are in a better position to understand and critique how power relations and neoliberal attitudes disrupted the potential for a care-centred focus in an organization's culture. To create systemic change and promote social justice in the hospitality sector, it is necessary to re-orient our care relationships, only then will hospitality work become safe, rewarding, and contribute to human flourishing. The following three objectives guided my work:

1. To explore how the power differentials of power and privilege based on gender, race, and class shaped the lived experiences of the participants in this study – they impacted the participants negatively.
2. To understand the care-related experiences of restaurant workers – I think we have a good understanding now.
3. To illuminate how caring about, caring for, caregiving, care-receiving, and caring with are reflected in the lived experiences of SO's frontline restaurant workers - relational care is critical and can be used to negotiate power imbalances frontline restaurant workers face in their work environments.

To accomplish all of this I explored my findings through a critical lens and a feminist ethic of care framework. Narrative inquiry was my choice of methodology based on my wanting to expose counter-narratives in the hospitality sector. The primary method deployed were semi-structured interviews; six participants were interviewed once, and three participants agreed to

follow-up interviews. My findings revealed that the two broad themes of power and care dominated the lived experiences of participants in this study. They indicated an ethic of care may negotiate the power differentials of power and privilege based on gender and race, which in turn will make the industry more attractive to those looking for work. In this process many topics were revealed that were worthy of further exploration.

### **6.1 Reflecting on the Process**

Wow! Where do I even begin. Designing and executing a research study you can be proud of, that has integrity and shows rigour can be daunting the first time around. I wish I would have had more time to recruit participants so I could be more mindful of the people I was recruiting - ensuring that there would be a chance to follow-up after the first interview and potentially offering deeper insights on experiences of racism and sexism in the workplace. I wish I would have had more time practicing interviews before conducting them on my own. By the time I got to conducting interviews through my research assistantship, I was a pro. Similarly, writing the analysis of my thesis research has better prepared me for writing the analysis of a manuscript I am currently leading with Dr. Boluk.

I can also not neglect admitting to the fact that in the beginning I was trying to do too much which may have impacted my data collection and my analysis in a negative way. Taking on the notions of power, privilege, gender, race, and care felt hefty for a master's thesis. Had this been a PhD dissertation, I likely would have written three papers focusing on the different elements. For example, one paper focused on sexism in the industry, one paper focused on racism in the industry, and a third paper discussing the importance of integrating an ethic of care in the hospitality scholarship. If there is one thing my findings revealed, is that there is a lack of

qualitative hospitality scholarship exploring the lived experiences of the diverse group of individuals who are working in the hospitality sector. Moreover, I realized that I have an affinity for conducting research and I hope to incorporate this into my future career goals. In the future I will spend more time planning out the study's design to maintain scope.

It was important to me that I engaged in responsible inquiry. In my work, this meant I left the “research setting” and everything that encompassed it in a better state than I found it. I attended to this goal by honouring the lived experiences of the participants in this study by sharing their stories authentically and I look forward to sharing my research with industry leaders and tourism and hospitality scholars at large. Hopefully, the sharing of this important work will promote justice for future hospitality workers by emphasizing the need of a paradigm shift in organizational culture. I believe this can be accomplished by adopting a care-centred approach, taking the onus off the employees as being the only carers in the industry.

## **6.2 Opportunities for Future Research**

Although sexism and racism were reflected in the lived experiences of the participants in this study, the topic of gender was much more passive. None of the participants shared any experiences where they felt someone's gender identity had a negative impact on their work experiences. Participants in this study did not make any comments about workplaces not being inclusive to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Worth noting here, only one participant identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, which came up organically during our conversation. This warrants that further research be conducted with members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Moreover, a review of the scholarship regarding racism and other types of discrimination in the hospitality sector is limited and warrants more attention as racism and discrimination

numbers in the sector continue to grow despite the implementation of equity-focused policies and procedures at the organizational level. (Benhadda, 2022). This area for further research is especially salient as women and POC make up the bulk of the hospitality workforce (Lynch et al., 2019). Lashley, 2022 stated,

The reduction of prejudice and discrimination in all forms can only happen within a social setting where there is a strong sense of the collective good, where there is a low level of economic inequality, and where the political culture recognizes all citizens as in in status and importance. (p. 176)

Showing up for communities that are ongoingly forgotten is important, not only for the participants in this study but for the tourism sector as a whole.

Furthermore, one participant in this study hinted towards feeling that behaviours of managers and guests were pre-determined by the type of establishment they were working at. In this participant's opinion, they believed that lower-end establishments had less qualified management teams and cared less about their employee's success versus higher-end establishments that they felt attracted more talented and caring managers. This topic is worthy of further exploration as it is difficult to gauge if the experiences would be the same or different based on the socio-economic status of each organization. Some may argue that a Michelin star restaurant (as an example) may exploit their staff to a greater extent and that the staff may tolerate the behaviour more readily to maintain the prestige associated with working higher-end hospitality roles. This warrants the argument for a case study in future research that explores this dynamic further.

Finally, this thesis neglects the problematic nature of tipping cultures. You may remember from the findings one of the top ways that customers can show their server they care is by providing a gratuity of 15-20% or more. This thinking is problematic as it has been recently revealed that many customers are starting to feel tipping fatigue because of how invasive it has become in the service industry at large. Tipping is no longer dependent on the quality of the service you receive but has rather become an expectation to boost the minimum wage hourly rate frontline restaurant servers are subjected to. Supplying the workforce with a living wage has become more popular in the sector, however, there is no research available that indicated whether this is a pro or con for the hospitality workforce. Future research is warranted in this domain.

### **6.3 Practical Implications of this Research**

What was made clear in the analysis of my findings is the absence of a reporting structure that holds hospitality organizations, managers, and employers accountable to promote caring communities that lead to regenerative actions. There exists an opportunity for a third-party firm to audit hospitality businesses ensuring that they are engaging in best practices when it comes to safeguarding the care needs of their employees. GreenStep Solutions Inc. is one such organization that comes to mind. GreenStep is a consultancy firm that businesses can hire to audit and address their sustainability and regenerative opportunities as they relate to organizational climate action plans (GreenStep Solutions, Inc., 2024). In addition to measuring green initiatives within the sector, the agency I propose can also measure the caring capacity of each organization. In turn, assisting them to develop strategies and action plans to cultivate a culture of care.

Moreover, if we really want to get serious about resolving the aspects of the hospitality industry that make it unattractive to a talented workforce, we will ensure a culture of care is in place prior to a business receiving their license to operate. Much like Public Health Ontario has occupational health and safety inspectors that maintain the integrity of public health and guarantee safe workspaces, they would also protect workers from power dynamics that disrupt the worker's ability to achieve self-determination through their work. Employees would have to complete training that informs them of their rights and encourages employees to speak out. This would be similar to receiving a Smart Serve Certification prior to serving alcohol or WHIMIS training that informs employees of workplace hazards before they start a job.

Areas of audit can include measuring team member knowledge as it relates to reporting and addressing concerns of all types of discrimination in the workplace, whether it be gender, race, or class. A hospitality auditing agency would also ensure management receives training that goes beyond maintaining operational efficiency. Management training would focus on the responsibility managers have to show care towards their employees, making it clear that the withholding of staff gratuities, inaccurate reporting of hours worked, unfair pay deductions, and other forms of theft are financial crimes that can be prosecuted by the law. This training can also reiterate that any type of unwanted touch and verbal assault equates to workplace harassment and will be treated as such.

Additional criteria can include whether team members have access and knowledge regarding how to access the resources available to them. A community bulletin board can share information regarding labour rights in Ontario and how to go about submitting a claim with Ontario's Labour Board. They can also provide information on how to access additional

resources that promote the mental health and wellbeing of team members. The Not 9 to 5 Organization is a global website that offers resources to support the mental health of hospitality workers in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These organizations are generally made up of hospitality industry professionals that have experienced several hardships as a consequence of working in a fast-paced, production focused environment (Not 9 to 5 Organization, 2024).

Based on the care audit, that I envision being similar to a health inspection, organizations can receive a designation of gold, silver, or bronze that would allow the Ministry of Labour and other governing entities to be made aware of any organizations that were not working towards creating caring workplaces - where employees have the opportunity to flourish and grow. However, we must remain aware of the potential for *care-washing*. Whereby, organizations may falsely claim they are operating regenerative workplaces when in fact they are not. Not abiding by the laws set out will have serious consequences similar to failing a health inspection. Maybe then organizations, managers, and employers will take the undesirable aspects as identified by participants in this study into consideration as part of daily praxis.

#### **6.4 A Call to action**

Having policies and procedures in place to protect the worker from being negatively impacted by power differentials exposed in the hospitality sector is not enough. Systemic change through relational care is the answer. As was made clear in the findings, many employees are not aware of policies that exist to assist them or the dread having to access such resources for fear of retaliation. As a society, we need to take the onus off the worker for fixing the talent shortages the hospitality sector currently faces. I have heard enough about acquiring the right talent and

accepting the undesirable aspects of this type of work. I am the talent they are talking about. I am the type of talent the sector says they are looking for yet the blatant misuse of power and privilege from those who were meant to mentor me in the industry was too toxic to withstand. Without systemic change that leads to a cultural shift based in care ethics as the guiding principle behind all hospitality encounters, it will not matter who you hire or how talented they are.

Directly linked to the focus of this research is Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, the right to decent work and economic growth. In September 2015, prominent leaders with representatives from the United Nations met to form a set of objectives that work towards sustainable global futurities, regardless of a country's economic wealth (UNESCO, n.d.). These objectives are to be actioned by 2030, less than six years away as I write this today. According to the United Nations (2023), "Goal 8 is about promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all" (p. 1). In an effort to achieve goal # 8 United Nations (2023) recommended that:

Governments can work to build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, promoting youth employment and women's economic empowerment, in particular, and decent work for all. Implementing adequate health and safety measures and promoting supportive working environments are fundamental to protecting the safety of workers (p.2).

Perhaps one way to achieve Goal 8 in the hospitality sector is by initializing an ethic of care to inspire the systemic change that is needed in the industry, shifting to an economy of purpose, not profit. Just imagine, what it would be like if hospitality encounters were centered on *caring with* one another. There would be no need for unions if team members all worked together towards a common goal. Financial benefits would be distributed relationally.

Organizations would care about their workers as much as they care about profits. Facilitating a hospitality encounter would be a team effort. Frontline staff would no longer be at the mercy of guests behaving badly and toxic managers. Workers would have the opportunity to flourish, and their work would promote wellbeing. It would be beautiful. I leave the reader with this parting thought from Dr. Seuss's the Lorax, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

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## **Appendix A**

### Researcher Interview Guide

#### **Interview Guide Questions**

**1A:** Tell me what care looks like for you in your personal life.

**1B:** Share a story with me of when you felt really cared for.

**1C:** How did that make you feel?

**1D:** Tell me a story when you felt like you really needed care and you didn't feel like you were receiving it.

**1E:** How did that make you feel?

**2A:** Tell me what care looks like for you when working at the restaurant.

**2B:** Share a story with me of when you felt really cared for.

**2C:** How did that make you feel?

**2D:** Tell me a story when you felt like you really needed care, and you didn't feel like you were receiving it.

**2E:** How did that make you feel?

**3A:** Thinking back to your time during the heights of the pandemic when restaurants and bars were shut down for in-person dining, what did care look like at that time of your life?

**3B:** How would you describe your care needs?

**3C:** How were your care needs met?

**3D:** Tell me how your workplace made you feel cared for during this time? (employer, co-workers, guests)

**3E:** How did your care needs change throughout the pandemic? For example, in the beginning, during the re-opening, and now if you are still in hospitality.

**4A:** Thinking back to your time when restaurants and bars were able to re-open for in-person dining, what did care look like at that time of your life?

**4B:** Were your care needs the same or different coming out of the pandemic?

**4C:** How were they the same?

**4D:** How were they different?

**4E:** Why do you think this is?

**5A:** Tell me when care has been distributed differently based on someone's gender or sexual preferences?

**5B:** Share a story of me where you feel care is distributed differently towards male frontline restaurant workers versus a female frontline restaurant workers?

**5C:** How does this come about?

**5D:** Why does this happen?

**5E:** How does care giving change if someone identifies as 2SLGBTQ+ (explain what this means if needed)?

**5F:** How does this come about?

**5G:** Why does this happen?

**6A:** Thinking generally, throughout the span of your career in hospitality, please share with me the times that you felt really cared for whether it was by an employer, organization, coworkers, or guest.

**6B:** How did these experiences make you feel?

**6C:** Did they change you in any way?

**7A:** Now same as the previous question, can you share experiences during your career in hospitality when you felt like you weren't being cared for?

**7B:** Why do you think this happened?

**7C:** How did these experiences make you feel?

**7D:** Did they change you in any way?

**8A:** On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being a lot, how important do you think care itself is in the food and beverage industry?

**8B:** Tell me what changes are needed to make the restaurant sector a more caring industry?

**8C:** Do you think these changes are possible?

**8D:** Why or why not?

**9A:** Is there anything you would like to add to the conversation?

## **Appendix B**

### **Amber – Follow-up Interview Guide**

#### ***Introduction***

*Tell me a little bit about what's going on in your life right now. You mentioned you started a new job?*

*Today we go through what I am finding in my initial analysis to make sure I'm hearing my participants properly and follow-up with some topics needy of further exploration.*

#### ***Theme One: Caring with***

*Will having a strong connection with team members, where you care for one another, keep you working in a toxic environment?*

- *What were your team connections like at each restaurant*
- *Can you give me an example*
- *Do you keep in touch with previous team members you felt really close to in other jobs?*

*Does money and making tips trump all? (Make note how questions are received – start discussion)*

#### ***Theme Two: Power – exploring care manipulation***

*We didn't speak to this at all in your interview, however, it did come up in other interviews, are you familiar with the term kissing-ass/sucking up, etc.*

*Can you explain what that looks-like in a restaurant environment?*

*What are the outcomes for staff who engage in these types of activities?*

*I can't help but follow up with a few more questions about that employee. What qualities do they possess that cause potential new team members to leave before training is complete?*

- *Can you share some stories of things you've seen or speak to your own experiences?*

#### ***Theme Three: The Exodus***

*So far, one of the primary things that participants have mentioned when things get really bad or there is a lack of comradery amongst team members is they leave and find a new job.*

- *Can we talk a little bit more about this?*

#### ***Covid Questions***

*Basically, what I heard when analyzing your interview is the Covid precautions were not intended to make the staff feel safe but rather to show care towards the guest.*

- *One question – Did you keep in touch with any of your team members when restaurants were closed during covid?*

#### ***Concluding the Interview***

*You just started a job in your field, what motivates you to stay in hospitality?*

*Thank you so much, I'll be sure to send you a summary of my report when it's ready.*

## Appendix C

### Marcy – Follow-up Interview Guide

#### **Introduction**

*Tell me a little bit about what's going on in your life right now. You've just started the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of your PhD, how is that going?*

*Today we go through what I am finding in my initial analysis to make sure I'm hearing my participants properly and follow-up with some topics needy of further exploration.*

#### **Theme One: Caring with**

*In your last interview, you speak a lot to the comradery you had with your team members while also giving credit the manager/owner with building that solid team environment.*

- *Do you think the solidarity among the team would have existed from a more absent manager?*
- *What potential outcomes could have come about was he not such an advocate for his team showing them he cares?*

*In your last interview you talk about your role as the work mom, was there ever a work dad?*

- *How do you think that role elevated your status as a team member?*
- *How did it give you power? How so?*
- *How did other team members play any caregiving roles?*

*In your last interview you spoke about the tension between female servers and bartenders due to tips and the fact that the males on the team would always prioritize helping the bar tenders. I'd like to explore this phenomenon further.*

- *How did this impact how close you were with those servers?*
- *Did it create tension in the team? How?*
- *Did it change how you cared for one another?*
- *Would you tip out the young guys who helped out?*
- *Did the servers receive a piece of service charge? Please explain.*

*Is tipping the best way customers can show they care about you?*

#### **Theme Two: Power – exploring care manipulation**

*We didn't speak to this at all in your interview, however, it did come up in other interviews, are you familiar with the term kissing-ass, sucking up, etc.?*

- *Was it present at the wedding venue?*
- *What are the outcomes for staff who engage in these types of activities?*

#### **Theme Three: The Exodus**

*Part of the purpose of this research study in the beginning involved the labour shortage that was going following Covid, in your last interview you talk about when the venue first re-opened you had the chance to work as many shifts as you wanted. Do you think there is still a plethora of work available?*

- *Share Amber's comment about applying to 100s of day serving jobs*
- *Going in versus online application*

### ***Covid Questions***

*Basically, what I heard from other informants is the Covid precautions were not intended to make the staff feel safe but rather to show care towards the guest. I didn't get this from your interview. You made it clear that the manager did his best to address the power imbalance that Covid protocols created within the workplace.*

*In your interview you used the word "polarizing" to describe what it was like working during Covid. Can you unpack that for me a little bit.*

*The one year that the venue was closed during Covid did you stay in touch with any of your team members?*

### ***Concluding the Interview***

*Is there anything you would like to share that I am not asking you?*

*Thank you so much for everything. Your insights are illuminating, and I'll be sure to send you a summary of my report when it's ready.*

## Appendix D

### Lina – Follow-up Interview Guide

#### **Introduction**

*Tell me a little bit about what's going on in your life right now. How was your summer?*

*Today we go through what I am finding in my initial analysis to make sure I'm hearing my participants properly and follow-up with some topics needy of further exploration.*

#### **Theme One: Caring with**

*Will having a strong connection with team members, where you care for one another, keep you working in a toxic environment?*

- *Do you keep in touch with previous team members you felt really close to in other jobs?*

*In your last interview you spoke about how sometimes you don't get the care needed from team members, maybe the restaurant got slammed and you're all running around...does that create tension in relationships within the team, when you asked for care and didn't receive it?*

- *Does it change how you feel about each other?*

*Does money and making tips trump all? (Make note how questions are received – start discussion)*

- *Is tipping the best way customers can show they care about you?*

#### **Theme Two: Power**

*In our last interview you spoke about how some managers mesh with servers and greet them differently, etc.... i.e., hug vs. hello*

- *Why do you think that happens?*
- *Are there attributes certain team member's have that others don't that make them easier to mess with?*

*In your interview and in others the term kissing ass was used to describe how they or others navigate the power imbalances with management or owners, sucking up, and stroking one's ego were also used.*

*Can you explain what that looks-like in a restaurant environment?*

*What are the outcomes of staff who do this?*

*In our last interview you spoke about being hit on when working at the golf course and old money versus new money attitudes, and that this behaviour is normalized in the industry*

- *Can you talk about this a little further and give me an example?*
- *What does old money versus new money look like when you're a server*
- *If a customer hits on you is that a sign that they care?*

### ***Theme Three: The Exodus***

*So far, one of the primary things that participants have mentioned when things get really bad or there is a lack of comradery amongst team members is they leave and find a new job.*

- *Can we talk a little bit more about this?*

*Part of the purpose of this research study in the beginning involved the labour shortage that was going following Covid, do you think there is still a labour shortage?*

- *H's comment applying to 100s of day serving jobs*
- *Going in versus online application*

### ***Covid Questions***

*Basically, what I heard from other informants is the Covid precautions were not intended to make the staff feel safe but rather to show care towards the guest.*

- *One question – Did you keep in touch with any of your team members when restaurants were closed during covid?*

### ***Concluding the Interview***

*You just received your MA, congratulations! What are your next steps?*

*Thank you so much, I'll be sure to send you a summary of my report when it's ready.*

# Appendix E

## Researcher Notes During Interviews

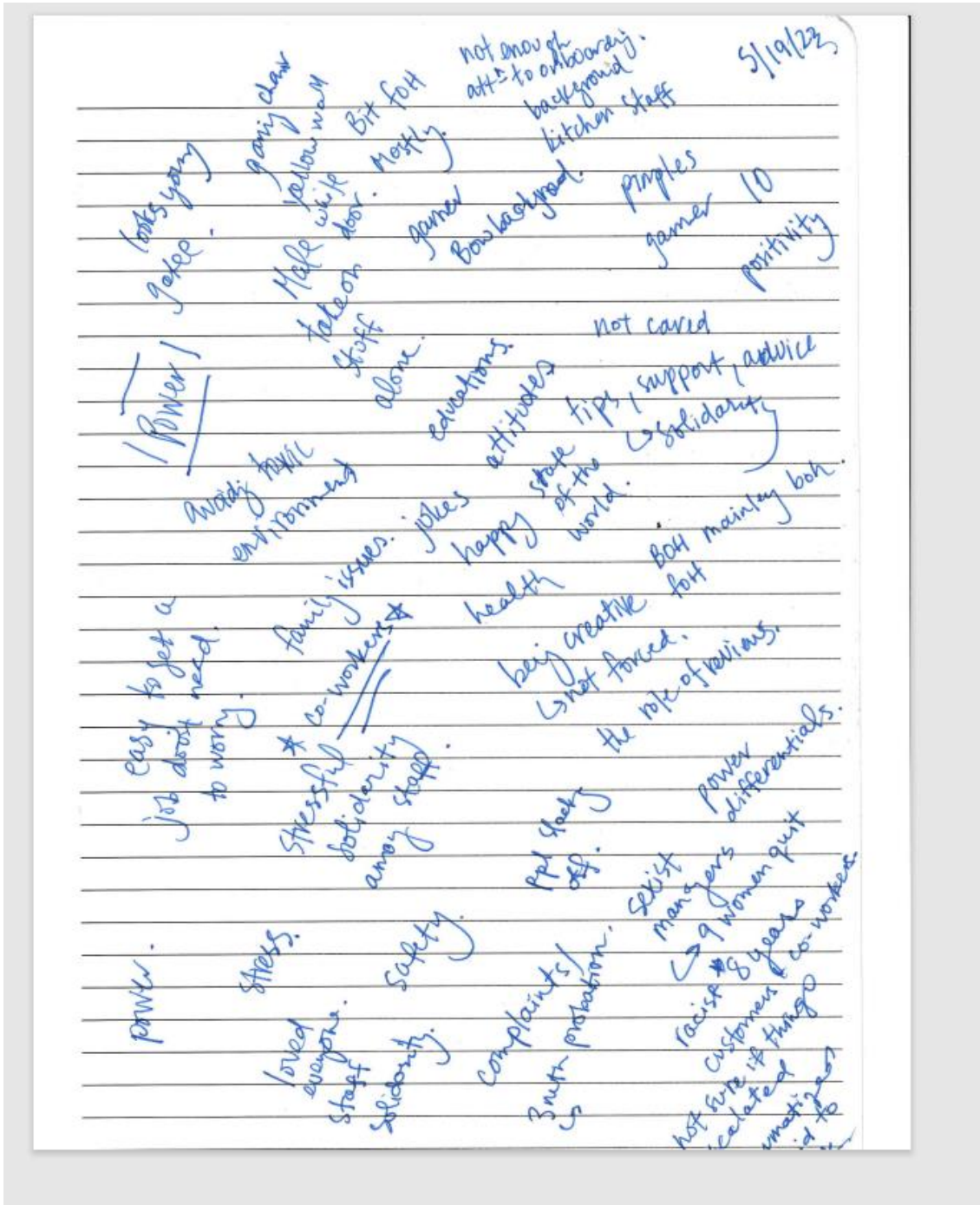


Figure 1. Researcher interview notes. These notes are meant to be messy as your focus should be on listening to your participant.

Teams  
 briefings  
 aware problems  
 bad costings  
 covid won't go back  
 affluent labour  
 google review  
 positive comments  
 not really care for important  
 young to Alastair's dad  
 6/15/1100am

factory plus better  
 location stay  
 no knowledge better than comments  
 write them out  
 let said the same importance of owner involvement  
 Why do you think customers behave so badly?  
 Christmas parties  
 family vs franchise?

Owners as managers  
 no one say  
 no excuse  
 How do staff feel appreciated?  
 one of servers angry over tables or types of guests  
 plenty of stories and examples of guests covid

inclusive customers  
 Ppt leak + diverse team  
 [blacked out]

Figure 2. Researcher notes – please note identifying features have been blacked out to protect participant anonymity.

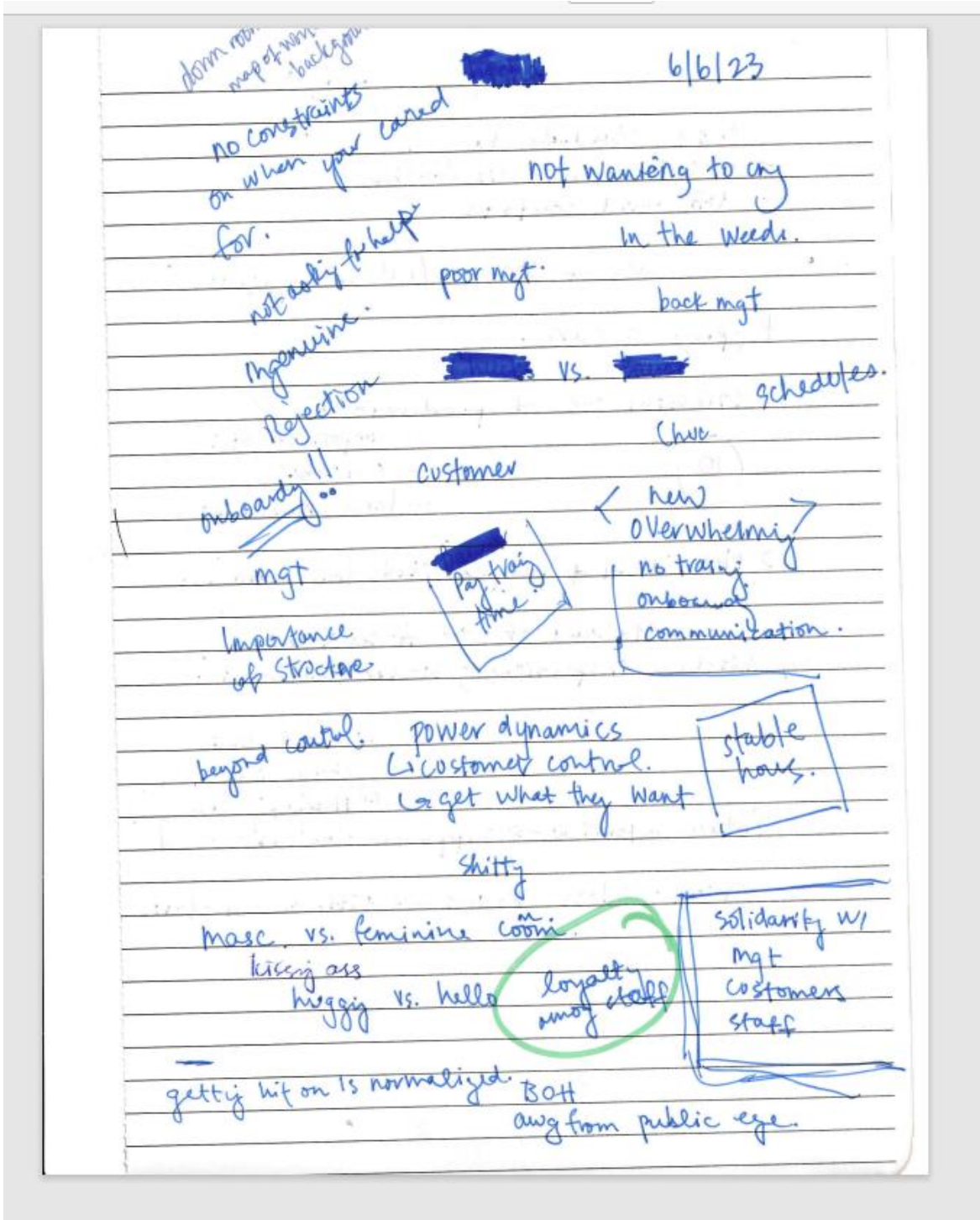


Figure 3. Researcher notes – please note identifying features have been blacked out to protect participant anonymity. Furthermore, big ideas are put in boxes for further reflection.

## Appendix F

### Determining Codes During Analysis

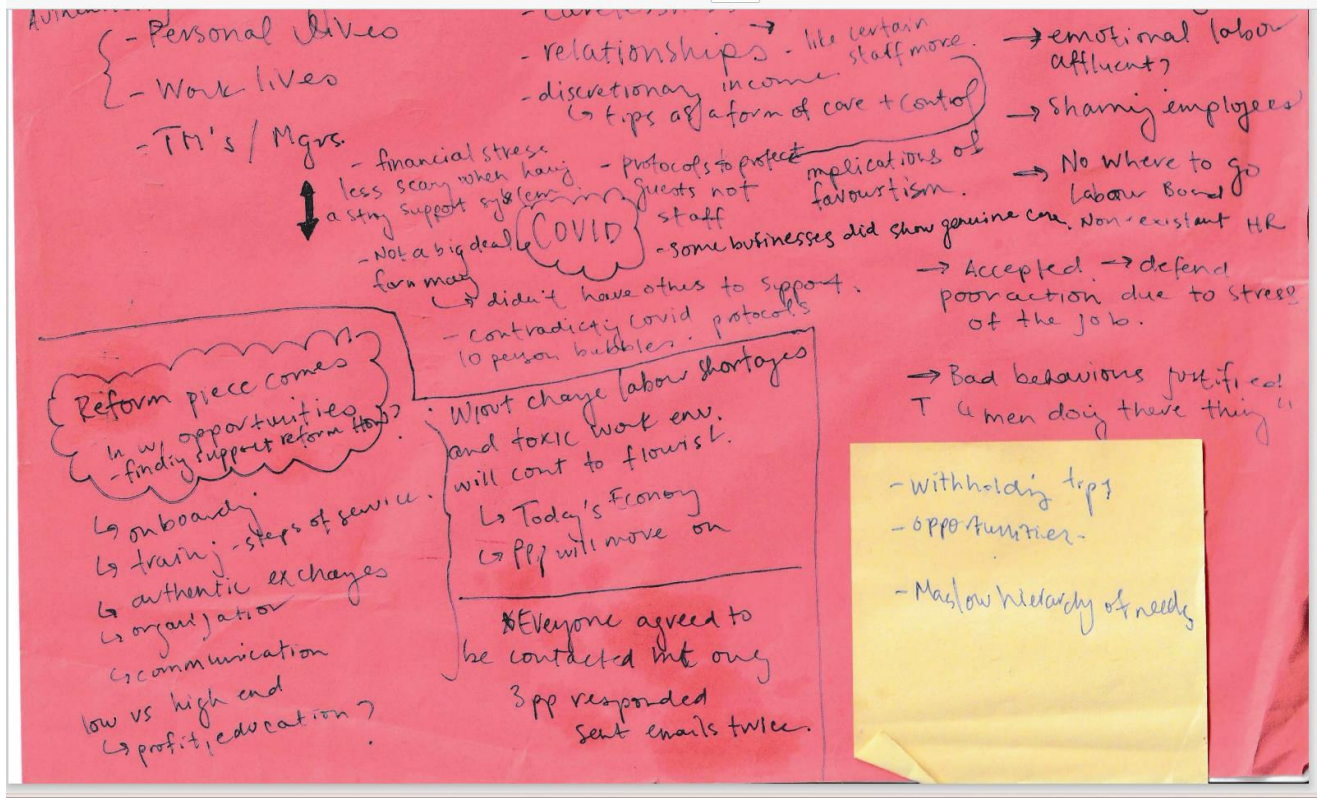


Figure 1. A mind map of my findings as I was working through codes and initial themes.

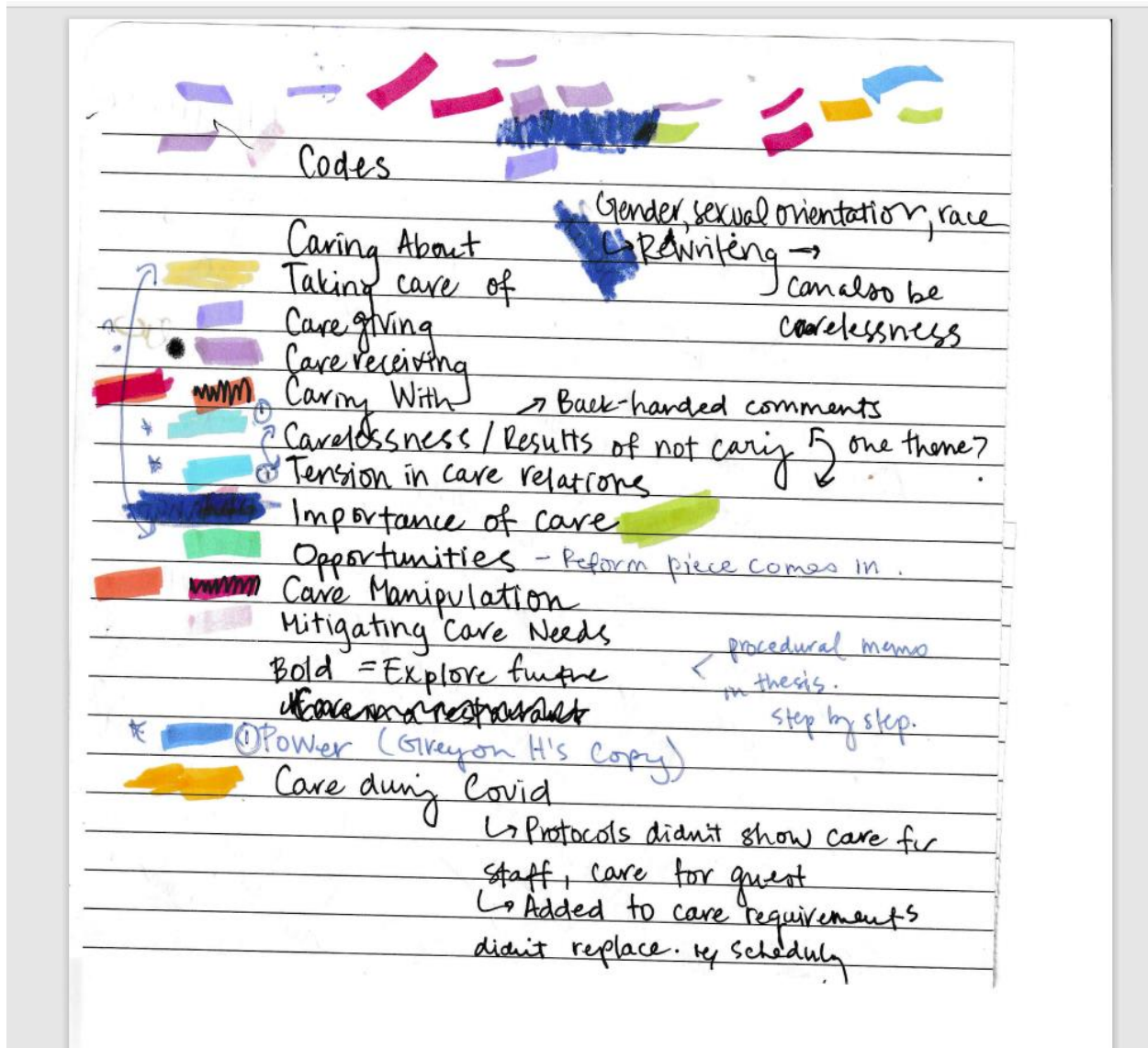
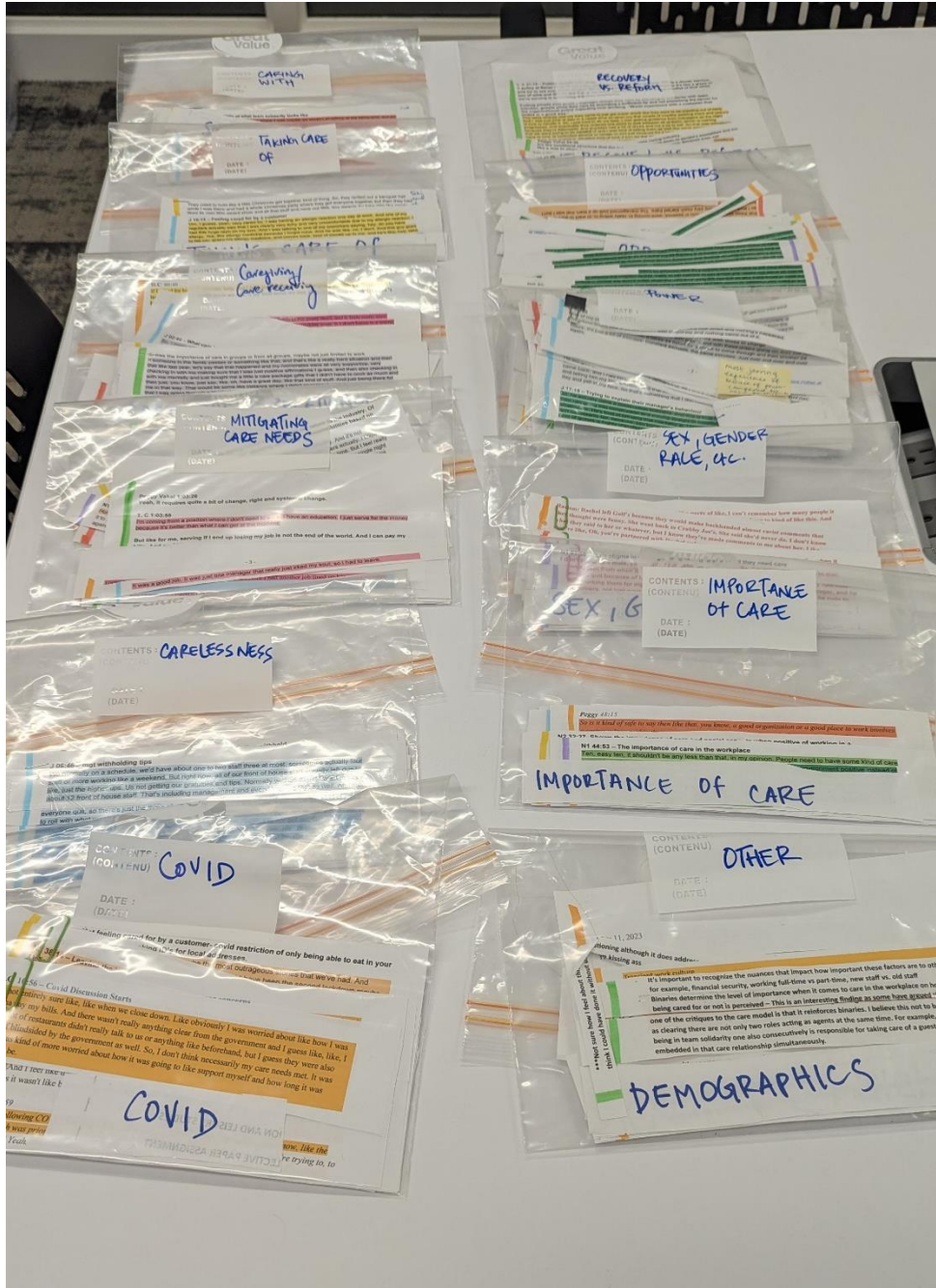


Figure 2. A list of original codes and corresponding colours to organize analysis of interview transcriptions.

# Appendix G

Photo of Analysis Process



Appendix G. Image of code organization process.

# Appendix H

## Summary of Research Findings

### EXPLORING AN ETHIC OF CARE IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Caring about your staff looks very much like what is included in the literature review. Short shifts, not paying for uniforms, paid breaks, being able to request time off, communication, responsible scheduling, staff meals, having the tools to do the job, etc.

Fulfilling these staff needs will in turn create a positive work environment where team members can flourish and be themselves.

A says, “Restaurant X is pretty reasonable. So, I actually love going to Restaurant X. I love going to work and I told my husband, which is so annoying, because like, I went to school, and I was like I’m just going to work at the restaurant all summer. That’s all I want to do. I don’t want to chase after a job in my field.”

One of the primary ways customers can take care of their servers is by providing a gratuity. The amount of the gratuity is seen as being thanked for a job well done and that time was invested by the server to create an impression on their guests. Empathy also goes along way when venues are busy. Being taken care of by management is similar to the opportunities that exist for improvement in this sector. For example, participants felt cared for by management when they were given an opportunity to train, schedules are fair, pay is fair, resources to do the job, breaks, time off requests, managing challenging guests, appropriate staffing levels for business demands, being able to take sick days, etc. (very similar to the findings in my lit review).

L: Emphasizes feeling cared for when a guest tips because they understand the demand the job takes on you and value the connections you tried to make when they are in your care. T also highlights that fellow servers tend to be better tippers (understand the demanding nature of the work) and acknowledges tipping percentages are higher in more upscale establishments. Feeling cared for by management in T’s story has a lot to do with them giving their time when needed. This can be perceived as a care giving/care receiving relationship and shares a story of a manager taking care of a wine service for her on a busy night and how that made her feel cared for.

M: M works at a wedding venue and has the title of bartender that is the only role that receives tips from a function. These gratuities are in the form of cash as a service fee is incorporated as part of the celebration’s cost. This gratuity is not split evenly among staff, more about that in the power section. The venue keeps the gratuity and instead pays a slightly higher wage than minimum increasing their staff’s hourly rates the longer they stay on. M does not think this practice is unfair and this could have to do with the relationship I spoke about earlier. For M, guests can also show they care by being courteous, saying cordial things, and showing empathy when needed.

A: Shared two nice stories of when she felt she was being taken care of by management and a guest. H was called into work on her husband's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and being the team player that she is she decided to go in. She asked the manager if she could take a piece of cheesecake home for her husband's birthday and as he knew she was having people over and because she worked, she would not have time to make a cake provided her with a full cheesecake to take home with her. She also talks about an elderly couple that noticed her engagement ring and provided her with a nice tip after their experience.

N: Feels taken care of by customers when they let him get creative with their orders and leave positive reviews about his work. He also feels cared for when guests consider his time and make sure to get orders in before the restaurant closes.

C: Also feels cared for by customers when they feel compelled to write a positive review based on their interactions with him. N feels management shows the team they care by providing an annual Christmas party. This goes a long way in the service industry when workers often miss celebrating holidays with their families due to the nature of the work. C relates caring to the need for more empathy. He says, "It goes back to that whole empathy thing where sometimes it's there and sometimes it's not."

S: Recalls one time when they had an allergic reaction at work and a customer went to their car to get her allergy medication to relieve her suffering. This is an interesting exchange juxtaposed with her manager who showed no empathy for her suffering and forced her to continue to wear the clothing that was causing the reaction to begin with.

For all participants this was a highly personal topic where this level of care was only expected from friends, family, and partners. Three participants spoke about parents with various forms of substance abuse did not provide the care they needed when needed at different ages (One childhood, one as an adult).

The only data that reflects care giving and care receiving in the workplace is when C's coworker offered him a place to stay when he found himself in a precarious position for housing and M's role as the work mom. In both of these cases the level of care exceeded that which is provided in the other dimensions (caring about, caring for, and caring with). The main characteristic of the care giving and care receiving relationship is that the level of support needed by the participant at a moment in time is equal to the way in which they receive the care from the giver and their ability to meet the care demand.

Having a sense of solidarity among team members played a crucial role in negotiating negative aspects of the workplace such as a toxic environment, poor pay, poorly trained managers, etc. but it was not enough to keep someone in the workplace if they felt their dignity was at stake as is quoted by L in one of her interviews. Also, playing a role in this dynamic is how long someone has been working at an establishment and how important teamwork is to the venue itself. Some of the relationships formed during this time last even after team members were no longer working together, although not in all cases. Although there were some days where team members may be *off*, but for the most part it was this team environment that created the most positive

impact on the workplace. Caring with involves having “someone’s back” (M). This means picking up the slack for each other, venting when needed, sharing break times, bringing food and beverages, etc.

M: Was labelled as the work mom which she says came with a level of respect and willingness to support her role. For example, as a bartender her team members understood that she had to deal with more of a mental stress when working as opposed to other who were doing heavy physical labour. To help each other navigate this stress the physical team members would do the heavy lifting for the bar and in turn the bar would create non-alcoholic refreshments to help alleviate the stress of the team members who were working physically hard – exchanges of care are made based strengths and skills. Part of this team solidarity also included doing things to lighten the mood – for example telling jokes about difficult guests in the staff area while eating left over desserts and drinking Shirley temples. These were called “informal meeting in the back.” In M’s case when she had to deal with racist remarks of rude guests her team members would often take over serving that person, taking her out of the line of fire. In M’s case she felt a major component to this team solidarity involved managements willingness to share this same type of care with TM’s. It was organically revealed to me that M is dating her manager at the wedding venue, and I cannot help but wonder if she sees her manager under such a positive light because of this. No other participants held their managers in such high regard when it came to the solidarity piece of the ethic of care framework. In other cases, as you will see below, manager played more of a taking care of role which was often manipulated to achieve optimum results.

A: Talks about how not having solidarity with TM’s would be anxiety inducing. A’s main point on solidary with is the importance of reciprocity, being there for each other if someone is having a difficult day, whether that means picking up a bit extra of a workload, having another TM cheer you up when you are feeling down. The venue A works at often employs a partnering system where two servers share the responsibility of looking after the same guests, A believes this promotes solidarity among TM’s and helps take away from the overwhelming nature of the work being a busy establishment catering to small groups and large parties. A also talks about the importance of time in building these relationships, as many hospitality workers are transient often new people are less likely to be brought into the fold right away.

L: Solidarity with is a bit more formal for L. L really highlights the importance of reciprocity. For example, if she needed help and was denied she is less likely to provide this favour to the TM that disappointed her. L is also less likely to become friends with workmates outside the workplace. This may be because L is heavily involved in sports and likely has enhanced solidarity with members of her sports team. L also questions if this is because she does not work full time, however, other part time workers involved in the study still spoke to the importance of team solidarity. L highlights the importance of everyone working together to create a positive working environment.

C: Talks about the intricate web of TM solidarity where you do not need to talk, you understand by each others’ actions what needs to be done and look to your fellow TM’s and be conscious of their care needs and have empathy for each other. C talks about solidarity being the main

component to functioning at top capacity. Knowing everyone knew what they had to do and were doing it. C also discusses the importance of having TMs you can talk to after stressful encounters at work with guests. C says solidarity among TMs can be tense when people do not work as hard as each other and that TMs that have been around for a while will take advantage of new TMs by having them complete the side duties at the end of the night.

N: Talks about if he were ever to return to an old workplace it would be because of the TMs. He also mentions the same tension in the care relationship when some do not work as hard as others. N also highlights making jokes and understanding the stress each person is under contributes to solidarity.

S: Solidarity with is critical in S's case. There are three friends working together in a toxic environment with poor management and where tips are not being distributed evenly. S talks about the care they show to each other to ensure they are able to keep working at this venue. To do this they have open communication about work and their personal lives, they make sure they stay hydrated, fed, and work together to solve issues in and outside of the workplace.

Participants were asked to rate how important care is on a scale of 1/10. Overwhelmingly participants answered a ten stressing the importance of being cared for and that when one feels cared for, they are more likely to reciprocate the care which leads to better performance and profit as has been noted in the literature review and is identified in participants comments (see limited quotes).

Showing your workforce, you care leads to benefits for the businesses themselves.

L talks about how communication is a form of care towards staff and how that then benefits the business goals. She says,

“I think, the communication is a huge thing because when people don't communicate well things get very unorganized and things might end up not being delivered in the same standard that you would like them to at a restaurant. So, making sure that there's really good communication and really good support through like a team environment where everyone is willing to be all hands-on deck as opposed to individually just being having to stick to your own duties and staying within that like just helping everyone else.”

Also, showing care towards your employees means that they will be willing to go back and work for your organization. M had quit the wedding venue as she was attending a Canadian University and would no longer be able to commit, however, the caring nature of management meant she still picks up shifts “here and there.” T says, “Yeah I would go back...we ended on good terms.” Although she questions the enjoyment she gets from the type of work.

N talks about how feeling cared for at work has a positive impact on the bottom line. This has also been proven to be true in the literature (xxxx). N says, “In my earnest opinion, if you had people that just enjoyed the place, took care of it, and was kind to everyone, you'd be making a lot more than what you'd originally be doing.”

He also shares that more work gets done in a caring environment. He says,

“Just by having someone you can have better communication with and all around just, you know, can make jokes out of you in a bad situation. It’ll brighten up your mood, you’ll be able to work faster.”

The number one-way participants mitigated their care needs when they were not being met was to leave work. In extremely toxic situations participants vocalized the significance of quitting a job before finding new work. This varied across participants, and it was recognized that life circumstances (family, bills, etc.) may not allow one to leave a toxic workplace.

L: Shares the tensions she feels between putting up with a negative environment and the financial opportunity that a serving job provides. For example, L mentions if she was getting the shifts she wanted, didn’t have to close, and open consecutively and was making good money on busy nights (\$400) she would put up with a toxic work environment (guests, staff, managers, everything included); although she does not know how long she would be able to last. Furthermore, L stresses the importance that the job is an opportunity to make money and not a necessity in her life as she plays other roles such as a student athlete.

M: Never felt like she needed to mitigate her care needs as her manager fulfilled her needs and was there to offer support when she experienced acts of carelessness from other team members and guests. M also talks about cutting people off in her personal life when they were not there to offer her care when she needed it most.

A: As one of the older participants and not old by any means – serving was a means of providing her with life’s basic necessities. She indicates that the level of carelessness she received at one of the places of her employment was enough for her to quit her job, knowing she did not have another lined up, and not knowing how she would cover life’s necessities.

N: When reaching the limit of a toxic workplace (regardless of money owed) N would just move on. As someone who works both front and back of house, he never experienced any difficulty in finding jobs quickly. N also indicated once leaving a job he is never going back.

C: Left the industry shortly after the death of his co-worker although that was not the reason for leaving. C is enrolled in a post secondary education and is studying psychology. He says, even though the money is good, and it can help pay for his education, he will never go back to the industry because of how poorly he was treated by customers when working during Covid and worries that he was lucky to work in such a positive environment and he feels that’s not possible anymore.

S: Is staying in a toxic work environment. They sight walking away from their team and leaving them to fend for themselves is a big reason S does not leave. S also feels with the title of General Manager it will help in the future when looking for work. S too is unwilling to return to a workplace after having left.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Although team member solidarity (caring with) is identified as a vital component of a positive work environment as well as a necessity to keep people at their jobs, it does not come up when participants are asked about opportunities. The three main opportunities participants in this research study identify as being salient to a caring workplace includes the role of managers, third parties/legislation to mediate power imbalances, and thoughtful training and onboarding reflecting care towards the employee.

### Caring Management/Ownership

A manager can show their staff they care in several ways. A caring manager is a key component to build solidarity among team members and to create a positive work environment.

M says, “Positive management makes a big difference.” She shares the story of a new manager that came in before Covid and the impact it had on the team. M also shares that Covid offered the new manager the opportunity to hire staff more critically rather than looking for an extra set of hands.

M says,

“This manager that came in came in halfway through my time working at this venue and prior to that it was a very different work environment, there was a lot of tension, it almost seemed as though the employees that were hired, we picked randomly online and were told come in tomorrow you’re hired. There was no filtration process of making sure this person was dedicated, has people skills and is willing to work as a team. So, there was a lot of ego, a lot of butting of heads, especially because they were chosen based on years of experience. So, if you have all these random people coming in, competing over who has more experience, it got tense. A lot of people quit as a result, a lot of people got fired as a result, because things got heated, nasty words were exchanged and then as soon as this new manager comes in, he was very focused on hiring for soft skills, people skills. You can teach people how to polish glasses and stuff but in terms of ability to communicate with others and work in a healthy environment. That’s a whole other thing. I don’t think that can necessarily be taught.”

M goes on to talk about how Covid offered the perfect opportunity to address staffing of the business.

“I think the reason, from what I know, from the particular group of people I worked with, went so positively, was a lot to do with the management. So, for example, in 2019 I never had a bad experience, but I know in 2019, before the news before the manager came in, in 2021, we had a different set of people working and, you know, there's nothing necessarily bad happened but there was no sense of camaraderie. We were sort of just like all robots working together. There was no sense of friendship or community. And the following after COVID happened most of the servers didn't end up coming back. A new set of staff had to come in the form the following year after the COVID time and I think the management was really good at sort of assessing people and making sure they came in with good intentions, you know, hiring people with positive

energy with a willingness to adapt a willingness to help out with people based on their experience just based on I guess, the one on one interview sort of thing. So, I think that I think that was quite effective. And I was surprised just in the short interviews that these servers, mostly kids in essence, were coming in. really willing to, to want to work and to learn so I think I think it really very much started there. The management built up a team that was I don't know what that word is. harmonious.”

C shares how the managers/owners of where he worked were very hands on and that this had a positive impact on the staff. He says,

“They were always in the red because it was a family restaurant. They were always in the restaurant. So, there were two owners actually. It was a brother and a sister. The sister used to work in the kitchen all the time making a bunch of the recipes with the mother. She was always in the restaurant. So, we always had to have some kind of communication and trust and that kind of thing there. But the brother, he was always in front. So, if anyone else, like if there were ever moments where a server really couldn't come in for a day or someone couldn't do something, he was always in checking employees being there to serve and bartend or do whatever was necessary. So, I think just knowing that someone was so dedicated to it and also just all have little moments of him being there and saying I can do this to help you with that and I can't think of anything truly specific but just little moments like that.”

A also shares the importance of having a manager/owner who is hands on. A says, “I feel like just checking in with your employees is really important. If we don't have time to talk Manager X will do a thumbs up or a thumbs down to check-in on how I'm managing my workload.”

N's experiences are much different than other participants as they have worked primarily in places where the ownership is not invested, and the managers are nothing more than a title.

N says,

“They were just managers, nothing more, the owners were never around. That plain and simple for one of them. Our manager or owner was just nonexistent. I don't know why. I don't know how I came to the point of being there that he actually got fired. And then the other place it took our district manager so little bit under the owner, but above him to actually get to leave. Not to mention the number of complaints they got to everyone was terrible, he was reported 16 times (in reference to sexual harassment of female staff).”

It is clear lack of capable managers and invisible owners has a negative impact on the team environments at a detriment to creating solidarity among team members.

## **A Universal Standard of Care**

L emphasizes the importance of having someone invested in the businesses to onboarding and staff wellbeing. She compares this to the need for a sports psychologist in advanced athletics environments.

L says,

“I would say like hiring, hiring, like requiring a role for someone that properly onboard people so like the training that I had at restaurant X was outstanding, but also like not just like, I would want that also for how to create a team environment like almost like HR or and there's managers that oversee that, but they're not dedicated to the serving experience and wellbeing of servers. And I think that if there was someone in a role to focus on that to bring it in, it's kind of like if equivalent in my mind to if you're on a sports team, and you have a sports psychologist to come in and guide everyone and to provide advice and for us to go to a meet up that kind of thing to lead people in the right direction. In equivalent serving, in my mind is kind of just like having that role of someone that currently is not a standard become baselines for all restaurants so that it's hard because everyone's an independent franchise sometimes. So, the management is different and there's no standardized way of managing restaurants. But having a standard of care, standard of management for the serving industry”

L likens restaurants needing to pass a standard of care similar to kitchens having to pass inspections. She makes a few suggestions below on what needs to happen and recognizes the challenge of systemic change which is what is needed if the hospitality sector is going to become more caring. L says,

“A kitchen needs to pass all these inspections. It should be in my mind to create such a good positive working environment like the same for how do we treat our workers? How do we lead them? How do we train them? How do we guide them, like who was there for them?”

L suggests one way to do this is by, “Avoiding performative actions as opposed to actually being valued and like heavily emphasized, implement them in a way that is more standardized, but also affordable.”

L shares that this change is possible but will require a lot of work.

“I just think it's gonna take a lot of work. And it's also going to be hard to regulate how people go about implementing. Because you can just post a sign up and say, here's what you're supposed to do, or you can have an entire week of training where people actually have seminars and workshops and that kind of stuff. But there are definitely ways that we can improve it. It's just gonna take a lot of wheels in motion to get everyone on board.”

### The Need for More Accessible Legislation

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development of Ontario reports back to the Federal Ministry of Labour and is responsible for all labour issues in the Canadian

province of Ontario. However, many participants share that accessing these services is challenging for your average worker. Although legislation exists to protect workers rights in the hospitality sector it is often not followed as business needs come first.

A talks about the need for legislation to ensure employees aren't over worked, however it exists. According to the Labour board of Ontario (put in policies relevant to breaks, hours worked, hours needed between shifts.)

A shares the following on this topic.

“I think there should be laws to like how many hours you can work. Like, let's say someone called in sick and they need you to work a double, which is a 14-hour day. I think that they should have like written consent. And they can't just put you on the schedule without notifying you...so people aren't overworked.”

During our conversation I mention the protections put in place for workers on this topic. A's impression of accessing resources is as follows.

“If I were to make a complaint to the Labor Board. I wouldn't even know how to go about it. I feel like that should maybe be advertised more. And HR (Human Resources) policy kind of things like you know, the little packages that you do at the beginning. If I worked an office job, they'd show me how to contact HR if I needed to right. Whereas in the restaurant industry, I feel like they there's no information.”

A talks about the impact this has on our young workers who often start working for the first time in the hospitality sector. She feels this makes them more likely to be exploited and says the following:

“It's very young people, people who have never entered their first job sometimes or have never really worked in the restaurant industry or worked at a job where they have had those, like needs met so they think that's normal. Therefore, they'll complain about it. But not necessarily take it to the top because they don't necessarily know the rules.”

In my 25 years of working in the hospitality sector the only time I had access to a human resources department was when working for a global hospitality provider that operated in a unionized environment.

### The Need for Onboarding and Training in the Sector

The number of resources an establishment dedicates to the onboarding and training of their new recruits varies. Based on participants discussions, less formal establishments will put less resources into their new staff than finer establishments that may feel they have a reputation to

maintain, and more knowledge is required of their staff. Up until recently, (XXX) often training time paid by employers as they exploit free labour under the guise of trial shifts.

L shares her experience when starting to work for a budget diner.

“The restaurant is just chaotic like the, the people there were nice and willing to help but the management of it in terms of organization and communication was not great. So, I know like my first when I was starting my shadow shifts. I didn't even know when I was supposed to be coming in exactly like there was absolutely no communication. And I had to if I didn't call if I didn't talk to someone, I wouldn't know that I was working, or I would have to confirm myself. There was no like email chain or platform to check your work shifts. It was a sheet of paper that was posted in the back, and you had to go in to see it personally to know when you were scheduled.”

L compares this experience to a casual fine-dining establishment that she worked at following the budget diner.

“And then the other restaurant had two weeks it was very different. It was a very different experience. Two weeks of onboard training where you went to seminars, and you learned about the menu. You learned about their steps of service which are different for brunch, lunch, and dinner. And then at the end, you had to take a quiz, or a test and you had to pass it otherwise you'd have to just redo it all...One more thing to add as matters but like for them you would have shifts as a hostess shifts as a food runner. And then shadow shifts and then reverse shadow shifts where you serve an experienced server follows you around. And then you're finally on your own able to serve people. But with a minute like with a maximum of, let's say two tables, and then three tables and then five tables. So, the entire experience was geared towards creating a successful environment where servers are prepared to kind of handle anything, and they were also very much more team focused all hands-on deck. But in terms of just being able to help someone that walks in the door if the hostesses are in the middle of something like we had the skills and the knowledge of how to do that, and so it's kind of to run food and all that stuff like we were prepared to do that. So, it felt like I was completely in a place where I felt comfortable and ready to go and by the time you were on your own you didn't necessarily need that much help.”

N share the importance of recruiting the right people.

“I think it just comes down to picking and choosing people more wisely. Is people take an opportunity of all they brought in a resume taking in a running so but there's a lot of bad tendencies people have they really to watch over who they employ. They can't just leave that on someone else.”

N shares the importance of ownership taking over training responsibilities. As is often the case in lower-end establishments training is often an afterthought that is looked after by a co-worker who does not care. N says,

“I believe it should be done by whoever actually owns the place because typically it's done by managers, even people under that just coworker in general. And they're not gonna care, it's not my job and that'd be paid for it. Why would I have to do that?”

A agrees and shares her experience of a team member where she works that is responsible for training. A says, “the trainer will often forget new people’s name, she is not warm or welcoming but rather cold, she makes you feel like an idiot.”

## EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF COVID AND CARE

L – Worried about her family, protocols a façade that created inequities among team members. Some took things very seriously (worried about someone at home), others did not care. Designed to make guests feel at ease. Thinks people that were really scared did not go out.

S – Took time off during Covid. Commends her employer for providing resources with the first shut down. Felt like they were going stir crazy spending so much time with a large family in a small house. Had schedules to use the washroom, etc.

M – Really talks about the Covid façade and how guests would belittle them if they were not following protocols (mask falling down during a hot summers day outdoors). Some guests would hire third party vendors to do Covid testing on the guests as an added measure of protection. Commends manager for standing up for staff during this time by holding guests accountable to Covid standards (mask on when not eating, etc.)

C – Was scared of getting Covid. Lucky that owners wanted to keep all staff on and shifted roles to accommodate this. Speaks to the extra outrageousness that Covid caused in some people’s behaviour. Got called lanky cunt, people coming from out of region when we could not cross borders, etc.

N – Laid off indefinitely. Did not have a tough time finding new work as a Chef.

A – Felt employer could have done more to keep staff employed, all available work went to one employee. Agrees protocols are a façade and tips were better during this time, customers felt sorry, masks, goggles, etc.

Across all stories participants discuss how covid protocols and precautions were only a façade to make guests feel more comfortable and were not for protecting them from the virus. Most felt there was not much their employers could do when they were all suddenly laid off although some employers went out of there way to keep staff employed. Many were also worried for their families should they catch Covid at work.

## EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF POWER AND CARE SEX, GENDER, RACE, ETC.

A: Talks about fat shaming in the workplace. Shares the story of a coworker that quit, due to passive aggressive racist remarks in the workplace and did not feel she could speak up. Went back to a toxic work environment as a consequence. Another TM was fired; her drug use made her unreliable and regardless of how long she had worked there, and her personal circumstances lost her job. She is permitted to work banquets which is viewed as a step down. This is because different owners (brothers/managers) operate the different departments. We also discussed applying in person versus online and how some managers preferred that. I posed the question of is that because they want to know what the person looks like or because it means the present professionally?

L: Talks about how sexism and racism were more prominent in lower end establishments – feel like a piece of meat. A certain amount of flirting was tolerable within the industry and not frowned upon. Also, talks about how some managers greet certain servers with hugs and others just get a hello. Feels that looks are one component of how easy it is to find work in the service industry. Also discusses how male staff would be communicated to more harshly versus female staff that received a soft tone from managers.

N: Talks about how female colleagues felt having to deal with a sexist manager, some were too scared to speak up because of power differential, nine staff quit. Manager would hit on coworkers and customers alike. Also dealt with a racist manager. Questions whether eventually (it took a while) losing someone's job is a fair enough consequence for extreme sexist and racist behaviours. Also, speaks to the fact that he is uncomfortable sharing his feelings because it goes against the typical male stereotype. This is in contrast to C who discusses who his friends would get together regularly to share their feelings.

M: Had to deal with much racism from guests at the wedding venue, especially when alcohol would get the best of some people. Usually negotiated this with humor and venting to other team members. Talks about the nuances between gender roles in the workplace. For example, guys would carry cases of beer and liquor to the bar and in turn the bartenders would make them non-alcoholic drinks. This often-created tension between the servers and others who were not necessarily being cared for in the same way. M felt this nuance can be compared to younger guys wanting to impress older girls. Discusses being asked for a photo when applying to job and for links to personal social media accounts. Talks about stroking the male ego to get what you want and describes herself as the work mom. We spoke a bit about the different life stages women encounter when in hospitality – start of young, then turn into work mom, and the implications of aging in the industry.

All participants agreed that LGBTQ2S+ folks were not treated differently in the workplace. Worth noting, only one participant identified being part of the LGBTQ2S+ community. This happened organically during a conversation where they referred to their girl friend.

## CARELESSNESS

Careless actions from managers are similar to what I address in my lit review – not taking individual needs into account and putting the business first – poor scheduling, training, being short, not communicating, not helping, inconsistent scheduling (cutting staff when weather is poor), over working staff, screaming at staff, not taking personal lives into account, nepotism by managers, gossiping about other TM's . Customers are careless with staff when blaming them for things beyond their control (food taking too long, etc.)

A: Likens carelessness to being uncared for – not providing the time, energy, and resources necessary for success. A also shares at one venue that she worked (more budget friendly) the managers, owners, and kitchen staff were all the same ethnicity and would talk to each other in the mother language. This made her feel uncomfortable as though they were talking about her or other team members that did not understand. A explains how these budget friendly establishments tend to be more careless in general.

M: Shares a time when a new bartender was hired at the wedding venue. Tips were always split 50/50 and she noticed during service the new bartender was pocketing tips she was making. This was very upsetting, and M shared it with her managers, who shrugged it off as poor personalities and to take it as a life lesson.

A: As one of the more senior servers in this study, A has experienced much more acts of carelessness than the others. Often these acts of carelessness leave A feeling angry and anxious. A mentions of a manager that use to gossip about others behind their backs and resist helping when the venue was busy. She shares stories of one venue she worked at the would require 14 hours shifts with no breaks. If someone did not show up for their shift, she would be forced to stay. The final straw for A at this venue was when her grand mother was dying, and they denied her time off. A also shares a story of a coworker who was fired from her job due to being unreliable as a consequence of drug and alcohol use. She felt the manager in this case showed no care to what the individual was going through but was strictly focused on the business needs.

N: Shares a story of a manager who yelled at a server in the kitchen area in front of ten or more people for dropping a cup. The server was so shaken up by the experience she could not stop crying and was visibly upset.

C: Talks about how when something is wrong with the customer, and they act careless their energy is “tattooed” on the server.

S: Works at a franchise burger joint where the owner is very distant from the business operations and also owns a construction company. Any tips that are not paid in case are held for an indefinite amount of time, take more than three weeks to be paid out, and are not paid out accurately. As a serving manager this leaves S and their coworkers feeling stressed, annoyed, mad, embarrassed, and anxious as to how they will cover their living expenses. S mentions the establishment is currently understaff and she does not want to bring anyone new onto the team knowing what a toxic environment it is and that they will not be paid correctly. S has escalated this issue to corporate headquarters and states that other employees have gone to the labour board, and nothing is being done about it.

## **CARE MANIPULATION**

Can happen in all directions. Servers can try to manipulate their managers by bringing in treats, picking up extra shifts, doing extra work, hoping in return the manager gives them better sections, schedules, etc. Managers can also manipulate servers into doing more work. Both of these acts are accomplished by stroking one's ego and/or *kissing ass*. Engaging in these exchanges does not always guarantee the outcomes one is expecting will come to fruition. When a server manipulates their manager with a form of care it is often financially driven and when a manager manipulates a server through an act of care it is to benefit the bottom line of said business. Care manipulation must be distinguished from nepotism that involves power relations.

## **POWER**

Customers and managers/owners may show power over the server in several ways. Customers demean servers for errors during service delivery and control them with the dependence on the gratuity they leave to maintain their financial security. Managers show power over servers by engaging in nepotism, prioritizing business needs over the needs of their staff, and engaging in inappropriate behaviour that includes but is not limited to racism, sexism, controlling, and patriarchal ways of being. As long as the situation is not too toxic most servers shrug poor behaviours off as signs of the stressful nature of owning/running a business.

### **L's Story of Power Relations in Her Career**

One of the most interesting things I gathered from my conversation with L was the notable difference in how people in positions of power (managers/guests) changed based on the class level of each establishment. For example, a discount diner was more likely to have guests treat staff poorly and inappropriately than a fine-dining establishment.

L shares, "In the serving industry, there is not your A+ managers that know how to control or present in ways that show strong leadership styles, lots of mediocre and bad in the serving industry." L goes on to say "B+ managers do not manage relationships between staff in the best ways often showing favouritism based on personality traits because you get along with them." L also shares this sentiment (find quote staff smoking marijuana). L talks about the "correlation between the level of service and the type of customers you attract (find quote where she felt like the customers eyes were burning in her back as she walked away) L says, the diner was, "not a great place to work, not great management, and the customers were more forward, upfront, and sleezy I would say." L also talks about nepotism at the golf course (the highest level of service where she worked). Serving positions were reserved for adult children of members. L says, "28-year-old girls were able to get jobs because they're parents are members. Somone had been there since she was 14, worked her way up to serving. To explain poor behaviour by managers that should know better, L says, "I think sometimes managers are definitely stressed out and so they don't even probably care how they speak to people. They're just saying it to get stuff done. To be productive and get lots of things done, get food out, that kind of thing. I think sometimes they are trying to be the most efficient that they can and that means being hard on people." Often being hard on people led to a "three-minute cry" in the back. L says, "Personally, I haven't really had

like breakdowns, but I've seen people need like a three-minute cray. And so, that's kind of normal or normalized in the industry, which is daunting in a way."

### **M's Story of Power Relations in the Wedding Venue**

M: Talks about how heat affects guests in a negative way amplified by the presence of alcohol. M says, "They get really hot, and something that's really hostile some you know get too much in your face." Guests try to gain power over servers using the money they paid and their higher socio-economic status to make demands. M says, "People love to say that they paid a lot of money to be there." In her mind she's thinking it was their choice to "have this big extravagant wedding and your guilt tripping servers to provide you something that's out of their control." Often these requests revolved around more food and drink for the same cost they had paid.

M: says, "The bar was a huge problem. They would ask for extra liquor and or straight liquor and we don't serve shots. They'd get really upset over that because it was an open bar, they expected it's just a free for all, but there's still regulations and safety issues." This often resulted in the line heard many times, "we paid a lot of money to be here."

According to M, denying these requests meant "they would swear at us and run around looking for the manager." In M's case her manager was very supportive in dealing with unruly guests and upholding the staff decisions. An interesting caveat here, is that M and her manager who is also part owner are romantically involved and it is unclear if she receives nepotism because of their relationship.

M's bartending role at the wedding venue was more prestigious than the serving role and was the only position that received tips from guests. M says, "I think the bartenders are treated better than servers in my workflow. The biggest difference between working as a server and a bartender is the servers do a lot heavier physical labour. And the bartenders to a lot more emotional labour. You're not working up a sweat as a bartender as opposed to a server. I do think there was some tension because the bartenders take home all the tips, you know, thinks like that.

When following this line of questions further, I asked M is the servers receive part of the service charge the venue was collecting from the guest. A service charge can be anywhere between 18%-24% of the total event cost ([Wedding Etiquette | Service Charge vs. Gratuity | taylordevents.com](#)). M's answer was disturbing but unsurprising. M says, "Staff do not receive a service charge. We get paid \$18.00/hr instead of \$15.50 that's how they (the owners) compensated for it. And then the longer you work it starts going up. So, they don't have people coming in for two months and then taking off and never seeing them again. The following year when you come back, they will raise it by another \$2.00." M justifies the owner's actions to not share the service charge because staff have the opportunity to eat, "\$100 meals" when working an event.

### **Power Dynamics in H's hospitality encounters**

A, talks about her best care experience in the hospitality sector was working in an establishment where the owner was her friend. This is similar to M's relationship with her manager, where

these relationships that move beyond peer to peer negotiate power plays with the respective people. A says, “I used to work at a bar and the bar owner was my friend. So, he obviously was really nice to me and anything that I really needed or wanted he kind of would work around it and we were allowed a free meal every shift and our shifts were even a full eight hours.” It is difficult to tell as in M’s testimony whether this treatment rolled over to all the teammates or was reserved for those with exclusive relationships.

A has also experienced power inequalities in her workplace. She talks about how her boss says, “I like when I see you running around. It makes me feel like I get more for my money.” A talks about how her current managers “tread water a little bit, to see what they can get away with.” She goes on to say power imbalances can occur because of the prestige of ownership. “I think it (poor behaviours towards that would otherwise be considered socially unacceptable) comes with ownerships, like theirs a sense of dominance over their staff. I worked at one restaurant where it was a female owner, and she was probably the worst out of all of them. I feel like it’s almost like, a power dynamic.”

As for guests they show power over A in a variety of ways. One time she was called a “two-bit dictator” because there was an automatic gratuity added to the bill for serving a larger group. She also speaks to how customers ignore what she is doing to get her attention. She goes on to say, “I’ve had people be really rude with me over things that I don’t think you should be rude to another human over like, I forgot your sauce. My favourite one is when my arms are full of plates, and they’re like, well, where’s the other thing I ordered. I’m thinking, I haven’t forgot, I only have two arms. There’s just no patience with some people and that’s pretty bad.”

A has mentioned during the first interview that she found it therapeutic having the opportunity to “get things off her chest.” I asked her if she still felt this way, “They’ve been in such good moods, I can’t remember the last time I saw Manager X mad. I can’t help but question why is acting out like this (verbal abuse) towards staff acceptable, it surely is not the way customers are spoken to when manager’s feel under pressure and stressed.

### **N’s Experiences with Nepotism**

Unfortunately, N has had to deal with much nepotism in his jobs within the hospitality sector. N tends to be a hard worker that keeps to himself but enjoys the comradery of the working environment (see notes above). N shares the experience of working with a manager that was drunk all the time. He says, “We had two of our co-workers go outside for 15-minutes and they were just smoking weed while on the job. Our boss came out and caught them and he’s like, just don’t do it here again. I’m like they’re literally high on the job. That’s not legally acceptable. And he just did not care. Maybe it was that he didn’t want to hire new people; but the two people who were smoking weed are not really that great at their job.”

N also shares his experience with toxic owners/managers. In one place of employment he says, “One of the owner’s sons came in and he just expected money to roll through the door. It was his only expectation.” In another case he talks about a place he worked the owner’s died, and her husband inherited the business. Within a year, he had found a new partner who took it upon

herself to run a business that she knew nothing about. N says, “She is just yelling at me (when I’m busy) to put an order in the bag when she is literally doing nothing. Our actual boss would stay quiet, he would always take her side, obviously. He’s like well, she’s doing this for free and I’m like that does not give her the right to act like this. Obviously, it was just terrible, and you could not stand up for yourself because he wouldn’t do anything about it. No one could contest her behaviour. N goes on to talk about a restaurant he was fired from. “It’s the only place I’ve ever been fired from. And the reason for firing me, is just terrible, they had no claim to it. They came up with all these reasons that I could fight them against, I just didn’t want to work there at all. One of the reasons for firing me was so they could bring back a co-worker who was fired and quit eight times, they kept bringing him back. He made a list of things for me to do because it was a bit slower, I corrected him and told him we have more than enough of this (ingredient), and I threw out the list.” When asking N why nothing is done when managers are drunk on the job, sexist, and racist he thinks it’s because “they can’t find a better manager, or someone doesn’t want to step up to that that position.” Similar to T, he mentions the industry does not attract many A+ managers and shares the destruction that can be done during the time these people are in positions of power.

### **C’s Power Experiences – Tension with Guests and Senior Colleagues**

“I don’t know if it’s an entitlement they feel, maybe there’s a little bit of hunger that takes over, but there is definitely a feeling of they feel like they are better than us so they can talk down to you in a sense. I don’t know if that is driven by a sense of entitlement or just maybe the way that people view restaurant workers as a whole, maybe that’s what needs to be changes.”

C goes on to say that this sense of entitlement from guests was only heightened during Covid. C talks about being called a “lanky cunt” when he was unwilling to move a table from inside the restaurant to accommodate a couple who wanted to sit outside where there was no room. He feels that during Covid, “people were really challenged because things they could normally get, they couldn’t.

C also share that nepotism is often shown to senior staff who he says hold power over more junior staff that is reflected in how work is distributed. C says, “The people who have been there quite some time, are very comfortable in their positions and stable. So, in turn, they did a little less than was expected and others had to pick up the slack. They’ve been doing the same thing for 15 years they’re not going to change it now.” When asking C why these coworkers get away with this he thinks, “they hired the person kind of expecting that they would do this kind of thing, but like the person, so they don’t want to interfere with any of that and ruin a friendship or something like that. Maybe they let the dynamic play out just because they realize people (others) will work hard, I don’t know.”

If you remember from earlier, C was one of the only participants who kept their job when restaurants were closed to indoor dining during the time of Covid. He also mentions above the many and varying ways the owner of the business showed them they care. However, when owners were feeling the financial stress associated with the business showing care towards their employees was traded for a focus on productivity. C says, “The restaurant itself never had a

whole lot of money flowing through it; it was always stressful for the family. So, I think one thing that I would say happened more often than not, was sometimes manners were forgotten for just getting shit done. Sometimes just forgetting that there was another person on the other end that you were talking to instead of just a worker or something like that.”

### **S’s Jarring Experiences Dealing with the Misuse of Power**

Based on the lived experiences of the participants in this study, S by far had to deal with the greatest misuse of power where it was being a victim of nepotism, care manipulation, carelessness by the manager, and abuse of privilege by their manager.

Although tips can be great and a major driver of why people work in the hospitality industry the fuzzy nature in which these transactions take place can also have its downfalls. I little bit about S. S works as the “general manager” at a burger shop in a busy strip mall in Southwestern Ontario. This burger place happens to be part of a franchise and in S’s case is owned by someone who also has a construction business. As many know, the most common way to pay these days is by card. That means any gratuities team members earn go into the business bank account and need to be redistributed as such. Now, sometimes places will take in cash and in most places, I’ve worked at it’s a plus or minus deal. Either you owe money from your sales, or the restaurant owes you money to cover your tips. In S’s case they work as a team and each server does not use a float it all goes into a register. S and their team members are owed \$100s of dollars in owed gratuities that have yet to be paid out at a time when many in the world suffer from precarious financial positions due to the economic climate.

S’s manager abuses the privilege he has in his position, one of the ways he does this is by withholding tips for long periods of time. Basically, S and her team have been getting the run around.

S explains:

One of my staff has actually gone to the Labor Board four times and nothing's happened. The labour board had a conversation with corporate and nothing came out of it.

They go on to say,

I've tried communicating to corporate and the district manager to see what's going on. I never really got a definite answer on why me and the staff are kind of thinking maybe it's just because they took a hit during COVID, and it's taken a little while a little longer than expected for them to get back up and run. So, you know it's maybe they're using that money to pay invoices, or maybe it's for whatever. Yeah, we're not too sure.

When trying to confront the manager/business owner about the money they are owed it is often the same response.

He just tried to explain it by saying that like with payroll and with these orders going on, they just need a little bit more time or you know, it takes 24 hours for a check to come through and

then another 24 hours. It's just a lot of excuses. Constant excuses, the same excuses. Just over and over and over again.

S's manager is also guilty of nepotism.

“He'll tip out somebody faster if he likes you. Obviously, there's been cases where he'll withhold tips because he doesn't like you. He focuses on whoever he likes and fulfills his needs first. And he'll very much show the whole restaurant that like, hey, if you do something good, and I like that, and you're gonna be my favourite for a little bit. I'm gonna prioritize you for a little bit. He will give you all the shifts if he likes you.”

One way S's the owner will try to deflect his negative behaviour is by trying to turn the staff on each other. As S mentioned before the team is the only thing the keeps them their, thus this strategy is not successful.

“We all know that he's just trying to get us to turn each other, and we quite honestly do the opposite of that. He'll tell one person one thing and then tell the other person another thing and then it's just causing arguments Like, for example, he told me that he was going to send us our tips last Saturday. And he didn't and my partner who was also a server there just texted him and he was just like, what? I didn't say that. I can't pay a month of tips in one day.”

S goes on to talk about how this behaviour influences the staff's actions towards each other, potentially impacting solidarity.

“He likes to very much favorite you when he sees that you're your last leg and one foot out the door. But then when he favorites you, he really makes it known that like, hey, man, like, I need you to stay type of deal. I find that sometimes when you are his favorite, it tends to change people in a sense that they act a little differently at work as well. They act a little bossier and a lot more demanding, so I know that is his doing too.”

S also shared with me blatant misuse of the owner's power that impacted her mentally and physically. Below is the story S shares with me of their trip to Montreal.

“Going back to our district manager, he's also the owner of the restaurant. He has a very bad temper. So, he likes to yell. I'll give you an example, I went on vacation. My first vacation since working with me for three days I went to Montreal and during my trip I was getting constant phone calls and text messages from this guy yelling at me because I was on vacation. And he wanted me to be at work because it was the May 24 weekend. And he didn't have much faith in my staff that they could handle whatever would come in and he kind of shot himself in the foot because we didn't have anybody come in to for the weekend. He texted my partner asking where I was. He texted me constantly asking me where I was. And when I tried explaining to him that I didn't have service going up there. And I had absolutely no way of contacting him. Unless I found Wi Fi, but you can't necessarily find Wi Fi in a moving car. So, when I came back, and I had Wi Fi or when I got past Kingston, and I got my service back I tried texting him and telling

him my little situation and that made me even more angry. He proceeded to come in the next day and yell in my face. So that's something that I don't necessarily like.”

Earlier I shared how S had felt cared for by a customer when they saw her suffering from an allergic reaction and retrieved Benadryl from their care to ease the symptoms. This was not the case when S requested care from her manager in the form approval for a uniform adaptation to ease the symptoms of their reaction.

“Due to my allergic reaction there, I couldn't wear sleeved shirts. I have to wear something like a little bit cropped but very professional looking. I'd like to say because if it touched my rash that it would have made it 10 times worse. Yeah. Especially with me, you know, continually using my arms, it scratches at my rash. I told him like, hey, I have an allergic reaction. I can't really wear that. Either one I'm wearing this, or you send me home and call someone else and he didn't very he didn't like that very much. And he proceeded to yell as he would and told me to put on my proper uniform or I'd get written up or sent home.”

When asking S why they feel their manager behaves this way, the behaviour was explained as follows:

“So, he actually owns a construction business. And this is how he talks to us construction workers and from him going into construction and moving straight to hospitality with no like, prior experience whatsoever. He's kind of bringing that mentality and bringing that behavior into the workplace. Which isn't necessarily fair, because, you know, we're a restaurant, first of all, and talking to us that way in front of guests is highly unprofessional.”

Many of the participants showcase the above to be a problem that contributes to careless work environment. Lack of knowledge within the hospitality sector with all the expectation of financial gains. As N says, “There's a lot of them that only care about the money like, that why our owner was just absent for years, upon, years, upon years. This and other practical implications of this research are discussed in great detail in the next section that focuses on....

An unintended benefit to participating in this study for S is that they “got everything off my chest.”

## **THE NEED FOR INDUSTRY REFORM**

L shares a policy at a bistro she worked at that she felt put the staff and their safety first.

“A policy at the restaurant is we're not a bar, people don't come here to drink, this is a dinner service, and we try to not over serve alcohol. We try to keep it under control because it's like a glass or two of wine and like it's not five or six kinds over dinner. So just being mindful of that while you're serving is something they emphasize.”

L goes on to share a story of when a group she was going to serve made it clear to her they were there to get drunk.

“This table directly told me they came to just get super drunk like they want to be crawling out of here. And I was just kind of also in a newer time so when my first couple of months working there and unsure of how to handle it. So, I just tried to do my best. I was getting guidance from managers as the night progressed. And eventually they ordered one pizza to split between all of them, which is nothing because they're flatbreads, and anyways had a lot of drinks and not a lot to eat. So that was something that we were trying to be careful of and I was kind of telling them as well like we're gonna like be might have to kind of controlled alcohol or certain to you just because it's a lot in the timespan that you've been here And anyways, situation kind of took a turn for the worst in that my like the top dog manager went to talk to them and say like, Hey, we gotta like control the liquor. And they got really mad and upset because they wanted to drink obviously. And anyways at the end of the day they left they got free food out of this whole kerfuffle and the came to talk to me because they understood that I was in a tough position and that I was doing my best to handle it so that they weren't necessarily mad at me. They're mad at the manager but still, regardless, it made me feel kind of like they understood the position I was in from a serving standpoint, in that I had to kind of follow these rules and it's not that I was doing it personally to limit them. It was just kind of our policy. So, the way that they were kind of a little bit more compassionate and understanding at the end that I was doing my best and I was not the one to be shit on was very appreciated and then they left a good tip, which is not the point of the story that also just shows that they actually cared.”

L's experience at the bistro is different than M's experiences at the wedding venue where guests have access to an open bar within limits. What is the same about these two experiences is that in M's case her manager also mitigates problem guests (see quote above).

A, talks about how when Covid protocols like distancing between diners were abolished, tables were put together as closely as possible to accommodate as many guests as possible.

A says, “Covid was a really big change in that because when I first started there, it was like in the middle of Covid, so the tables were really far apart. As soon as like the Covid restriction were lifted, they packed so many tables back in there and I was like, holy crap, you can't even move, and Riverside, and then people will get mad because it's so loud.

N shares his dystopian insights as to whether the hospitality industry can become a more caring industry. He says, “Maybe within another 1000 years. At this point, it all comes down to people's mentalities and the world isn't really amazing. So, I can see it changing anytime soon because even our government doesn't seem to care much.”

C recognizes that the industry cannot fully change.

He says,

“That's a really tough one... There's a certain element, where you really just have to put your head down and work but there is a certain element that really does need to be changed where maybe instead of people being seen for their appearance or their gender or the things that they do, they're just seeing the mind that's behind it and operating it. Maybe there's more that an owner can do and maybe something within the training process that yeah, I guess maybe something within the training process, or an established treat people like they are you, kind of thing. I don't know. It's so difficult. Because again, it's such an industry where there really, really isn't change unless the external factors outside of it change first. So yeah, it's such a reaction. It's such as you know, it's such a reactionary industry. It's, you really have to go along with either what your manager is doing or what the chef is doing or what the customer is doing. Yeah, maybe, maybe changing finding a way to change the dynamic between customer and employee. Maybe that's a real base that needs to change. But that's difficult.”

As a current psychology undergraduate student at an Ontario university C decides to talk about how free will influences this dynamic.

“Freewill means that all good can happen but the equal reaction all bad can happen. It's just one of those things where people do have the right to think of good and bad because that's just how life goes. I want to say change can be made. I want to say that. That, history doesn't repeat itself, in a sense, I guess. But unfortunately, history does repeat itself. And people do have tendencies to especially over food and over things that they feel they should be entitled to because food is one of the things that you just need to live right. So, I think there's a very problematic aspect to it where it's just, I deserve this, or I deserve that, and they go back to a little bit of base default. So, I want to say can change. I bet it can change maybe 65% of the way who will ever change fully, human nature would need to let it happen, so, I don't know.”

This statement of C's is a stark reminder that nothing much has changed in the industry in the last 20 years in the hospitality sector. There was no Covid reset to be seen.

## Appendix I

### Ethics – Recruitment

Contact over social media:

Hiya! I hope you have been keeping well. As you may know, I am conducting research about exploring the lived experiences of frontline hospitality workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please let me know if you are still interested in participating, and I will share an information letter with you with more details about the study. Also, I would really appreciate if you passed on my details to anyone you think would be interested in working on this project. My email is [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca).

Thank you for your kind consideration to volunteer to help with this research.

If Yes – Request email address and send Email Script with Information/Consent Letter attached.

If No – Thank them for their consideration and wish them all the best

Contact verbally:

Hiya! Great to see you today. By the way my study was approved by ethics! Are you still interested in being a participant?

If Yes – Great! I would really appreciate if you passed on my contact details to anyone else who may be interested in participating. You can give them my email [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca)

Email Script and attach Information/Consent Letter to follow

If No – Thank them for their consideration and wish them all the best

Figure II. Recruitment message for phase one of the recruitment process.

Hi [insert name]!

I hope this email finds you well.

Thank you for showing an interest in participating in my research study, *Recovery-versus-Reform: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Frontline Restaurant Workers in Waterloo Region (WR) and beyond*.

As part of my degree requirement, I am conducting a study to explore the lived experiences of hospitality workers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has acted as a catalyst in our community, exposing inequalities that may otherwise have gone unnoticed.

I believe there is a care crisis in the industry, reflected in the ongoing labour crisis of the sector, and highlighting the need for industry reform. This research will share the care experiences of frontline hospitality workers, potentially highlighting the need for a more caring industry.

Attached is the information letter and consent form that will provide you with all the details necessary to participate in this study. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, comments, and thoughts you may have. If it is easier for you, I can also obtain verbal consent before engaging in the first interview.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board. Completed consent forms can be sent to - [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca).

I thank you for considering to be a part of this very important work and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,  
Peggy

**Peggy Vacalopoulos** | MA Thesis Student  
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies | Faculty of Health  
University of Waterloo | 200 University Avenue West | Waterloo, ON, Canada  
N2L 3G1 | [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca)

*I acknowledge my privilege to do research and attend the University of Waterloo is because I have access to land promised to the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Waterloo region is situated on the Haldimand Tract, honoured by the Haldimand Treaty of 1784, and includes six miles on either side of the Grand River. This land is stolen land.*

Figure I2: Recruitment messaging for phase two of the recruitment process.

# Appendix J

## Ethics - Information and Consent Letter

### Information Letter

**Title of the study:** Recovery-versus-reform: Storying the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers in Waterloo Region (WR).

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Heather Mair, PhD, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo. Phone: 519-888-4567, ext. 45917, Email: [hmair@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:hmair@uwaterloo.ca)

**Student Investigator:** Peggy Vacalopoulos, BA, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo. Email: [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca)

To help make an informed decision regarding your participation, this letter will explain what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a research participant. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask one of the investigators prior to consenting to the study. Please print/save a copy of this letter for your records.

#### **What is the study about?**

You are invited to participate in a study that seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of those working in the hospitality sector (frontline restaurant workers) during the Covid-19 pandemic in WR. The study is informed by Fisher & Tronto's (1990) components of care. By illuminating the care crisis in the hospitality sector and amplifying your voices, we are in a better position to address the labour crisis in the industry. The five objectives guiding this proposed research include: (1) To illuminate how caring about, caring for, caregiving and care-receiving are reflected in the lived experiences of WR's frontline restaurant workers. (2) To understand if these care-related experiences for frontline restaurant workers were the same and different before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. (3) To discuss how race and gender intersect with the level of care perceived and received by WR's frontline restaurant workers. (4) To assess the level of importance of care itself concerning the lived experiences of WR's frontline restaurant workers. (5) To explain what care looks like for frontline restaurant workers.

This research project is being undertaken to fulfill a master's thesis requirement for Peggy Vacalopoulos.

#### ***I. Your responsibilities as a participant***

##### ***What does participation involve?***

*Participation in this study will involve a semi-structured interviews that will take 1.5hrs of your time. You are welcome to participate in additional interviews if you would like to share further information (up to 3). You will also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview to clarify or elaborate your responses if needed, and to review/approve how your data will be used. These interviews are designed in a way to share stories relating to care itself as a frontline worker in the restaurant industry. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission and the types of questions you can expect to be asked include:*

- Tell me what care looks like for you in your personal life.
- Share a story with me of when you felt really cared for by your work.
- Tell me if you have ever experienced care being distributed differently based on someone's gender or sexual preferences?
- Thinking generally, throughout the span of your career in hospitality, please share with me the times that you felt really cared for whether it was by an employer, organization, coworkers, or guest.
- Can you share experiences during your career in hospitality when you felt like you weren't being cared for?

*The researcher plans to conduct interviews with several project collaborators between April2023 and June 2023.*

### ***Who may participate in the study?***

*To participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age and a frontline restaurant worker during the Covid-19 pandemic. Back of house staff, managers, and supervisors are not part of the sampling frame for this proposed study. Potential participants will not be excluded from the study based on sex, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, linguistic proficiency, culture, religion, and/or language.*

## ***II. Your rights as a participant***

### ***Is participation in the study voluntary?***

*To participate in this study, you must have been employed as a frontline restaurant worker during the Covid-19 pandemic (server, bartender, host, and/or bus person). Because the focus of this study is on frontline hospitality staff, back of house staff, managers, and supervisors are not eligible to participate at this time.*

*Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question(s) you prefer not to answer by notifying the researcher. Further, you may decide to end your interview at any time by notifying me of your decision.*

### ***Will I receive anything for participating in the study?***

*As a token of appreciation, a \$25.00 Visa gift card will be given to participants. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes.*

### **What are the possible benefits of the study?**

Participation in this study will not provide any personal benefit to you, however, you may enjoy the opportunity to share your experiences and contribute towards a better understanding of the care need of frontline restaurant employees.

### **What are the risks associated with the study?**

Covid-19 is still among us, and as such, there is potential physical harm for participants if they were to contract Covid-19 through in-person interviews. To mitigate this risk: government safety protocols regarding Covid-19 will be followed, and participants will have the option to conduct interviews virtually.

When sharing stories of experiences, the participants have encountered in the hospitality sector, there exists a risk that psychological harm may occur when recounting stories that caused unfavourable outcomes and/or emotional distress to the participant. If, during the interview, the participant's reflection on their experiences leads to any emotional upset, the researcher will provide the participant with contact information for community mental health services. If a question, or the discussion, makes you feel uncomfortable you can choose not to answer. See above for more details on voluntary participation.

Please note: it's possible that others may be able to identify your involvement in the study by recognizing your comments and stories even with the use of pseudonyms in place of real names in study results, depending on the information you chose to share. The researcher will mitigate the risk of financial harm by meeting in a private space (possibly virtually), at a location of the participants' choosing. Additionally, the researcher will remove and/or replace all identifying or potentially identifying information from all data collected. The researcher will have a list of key codes stored separately in a password protected One Drive folder. The researcher encourages participants to only share information they are comfortable sharing publicly. The second interview offers participants the opportunity to review/approve the quotations/stories the researcher plans to include in the final manuscript prior to use.

### **Privacy, Data Retention, and Storage**

Your participation in this study is considered confidential. Your name will not appear in any papers or presentations resulting from this study, however, with your permission quotations may be used with a pseudonym in place of your real name (e. g. Jane Doe). Identifying information will be removed from your responses and stored separately up until 10/30/2023 when the thesis will be submitted. After this time, identifying information will be permanently erased. You may withdraw your consent and request for your data to be deleted by contacting me within this time frame. Afterwards, it will not be possible to remove your data because I will have no way of knowing which responses are yours. De-identified data will be password protected and stored on a secure University of Waterloo server for at least one year.

Interview audio will be transcribed using Otter.ai. Transcripts of interviews will be promptly downloaded and removed from Otter.ai as they are generated, however, Otter.ai will briefly hold audio and written transcripts of the interviews. Please see [Otter.ai's Privacy Policy](https://otter.ai/privacy-policy) for further information about how data is handled through the platform at <https://otter.ai/privacy-policy>.

The interview will be conducted over an online platform, MS Teams. MS Teams has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information provided via the services from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration or destruction. However, no Internet transmission is every fully secure or error free.

### **III. Questions, comments, or concerns**

#### **Who is sponsoring/funding this study?**

*This study is not sponsored.*

#### ***Has the study received ethics clearance?***

*This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #44627). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4400, or [reb@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reb@uwaterloo.ca)*

#### ***Who should I contact if I have questions regarding my participation in the study?***

*If you have any questions regarding this work or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact Peggy Vacalopoulos or the Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Heather Mair, at the contact information listed below.*

*Sincerely,*

Peggy Vacalopoulos, BA

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

[pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca)

Heather Mair, PhD, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

Phone: 519-888-4567, x45917 [hmair@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:hmair@uwaterloo.ca)

\*\*\*Please see next page to provide consent if interested in participating in this study.

## Consent Form

By providing your consent, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

**Title of the study:** Recovery-versus-reform: storying the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers in Waterloo Region (WR).

I have read the information presented in the information letter about work being conducted to explore the lived experiences of frontline restaurant workers before and/or after the Covid-19 pandemic. I have had the opportunity to ask questions related to the study and have received satisfactory answers to my questions and any additional details.

I was informed that participation in the study is voluntary and that I can withdraw this consent by informing the researchers.

*This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #44627). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4400, or [reb@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reb@uwaterloo.ca).*

For all other questions contact Peggy Vacalopoulos at [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca) or Heather Mair at [hmair@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:hmair@uwaterloo.ca).

I agree to my interview being audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

I agree to the use of quotations in any paper or presentation resulting from this study with the understanding that a pseudonym will be used in place of my real name.

I prefer to meet virtually.

I prefer to meet in-person.

I agree of my own free will to participate in the study.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal consent was obtained.

Participants signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix K

### Ethics - Mental Health Protocols

#### Mental Health Resources

Canadian Mental Health Association of Waterloo Region (CMAHWW)

<https://cmhaww.ca/>

Carizon Family and Community Services

<https://www.carizon.ca/>

Here 24/7

<https://here247.ca/>

KW Counselling Services

<https://www.kwcounselling.com/>

Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region

<https://www.sascwr.org/>

Spectrum Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space

<https://www.ourspectrum.com/>

Appendix K. A list of resources accepted by ethics should participants in the study show signs of mental distress.

## **Appendix L**

### Ethics – Appreciation Message

Dear [Insert Name],

Thank you so very much for participating in my master's research and assisting me fulfill my master's thesis requirements. Your willingness to share your time and stories with me is inspiring and extremely insightful to my work. Hopefully, through this important work we will be one step closer to creating a more caring industry and world. As a show of my appreciation, please enjoy this \$25.00 e-transfer to treat yourself to some self-care.

I wish you all the very best!

Kind Regards,

Peggy

## Appendix M

### Feedback Template

Project Title: *Hospitality in Crisis: Maybe Care is the Answer*

Student Investigator: *Peggy Vacalopoulos, Recreation & Leisure Studies,*  
[pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca)

Principal Investigator: *Dr. Heather Mair, Recreation & Leisure Studies,* [hmair@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:hmair@uwaterloo.ca), 519-888-4567 ext. 45917

We appreciate your participation in my study and *thank you* for spending the time to help with our research!

In this study we explored care itself as it is presented in the lived experiences of WR's frontline hospitality workforce. By illuminating the care crisis in hospitality, we are in a better position to address the labour crisis in the industry. The five objectives that guided this study include: (1) To illuminate how caring about, caring for, caregiving and care-receiving are reflected in the lived experiences of WR's frontline restaurant workers. (2) To understand if these care-related experiences for frontline restaurant workers were the same and different before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. (3) To discuss how race and gender intersect with the level of care perceived and received by WR's frontline restaurant workers. (4) To assess the level of importance of care itself concerning the lived experiences of WR's frontline restaurant workers. (5) To explain what care looks like for frontline restaurant workers.

Below we share some of the key insights we discovered, ...

As a reminder, paper records of data collected during this study will be retained for at least one year in a locked filing cabinet in the home office of the student researcher. Electronic data and audio recordings will be kept for at least one year in a password secure OneDrive folder. All identifying information will be removed from the records as needed prior to storage.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #45049). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 519-888-4440, or [reb@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reb@uwaterloo.ca)

If you would like to receive a copy of the final thesis from this study and for all other questions contact *Peggy Vacalopoulos* by email at [pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pvacalop@uwaterloo.ca).

If you think of some other questions regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the research team.

We really appreciate your participation, and hope that this was a meaningful experience for you.

References (*related studies that may be of interest to you*):

Appendix M. Feedback template for sharing the study results with participants.