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"To Buy a Smile": Entrepreneurial Individualism and the Tipped Wage

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Abstract

As of 2020, millions of restaurant workers across the U.S. labor for an hourly wage below—even *substantially* below—the ordinary federal minimum wage. These workers earn a significant portion of their incomes in gratuities, directly from the customers they serve. The special legal status of tipped workers is a consequence of a 1966 amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which instituted a federal subminimum wage for tipped workers. While some states and jurisdictions have implemented their own higher tipped wages or eliminated the tipped wage entirely, the federal tipped wage has remained frozen for 31 years at $2.13 per hour. The latter half of the 2010s saw a resurgence of anti-tipped wage campaigns, which highlight the connection between this wage and the perpetuation of inequality and racial and gender hierarchies. These campaigns have met with a smattering of successes and a wave of industry backlash—from restaurant employers and workers alike. In this thesis, I attempt to unravel the strange history and knot of interests at the heart of the tipped wage, and look to the tipped labor process itself to begin to answer a central question: why would any workers oppose a wage increase from their employers? From this ethnography of restaurant work, and surveys and interviews with tipped restaurant workers, emerges a picture of entrepreneurial individualism in the front-of-house—one that is, I argue, distinctly at odds with contemporary nonprofit-led anti-tipped wage mobilizing.

"TO BUY A SMILE":

ENTREPRENEURIAL INDIVIDUALISM
AND THE TIPPED WAGE

by

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B.A. Kenyon College, 2010

Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Science in Food Studies

Syracuse University
August 2020

To Evan Lee Weissman (1978-2020), who is greatly missed

and

To Mirabai Monika Bazan, born April 29, 2020, a bright light

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Chapter 1 From High-Touch to No-Touch

I used to work on my feet for 7 dollars an hour
Call my momma like, momma
I ain't making minimum wage momma…
                    —Frank Ocean, "Futura Free"

Today is March 27, 2020, and I am having the somewhat otherworldly experience of sitting

down to write the opening lines to this introduction from the first days of New York's official

stay-at-home order. Somewhere, beyond the walls of my apartment, a virus is spreading. A day

that was meant to be devoted to coding and drafting has gone by, like the last two before it, in a

blur of phone calls, frantic messages, shopping, disinfecting, confusion. Stranger still, I am

writing about work that in New York State has, in the matter of a few short days, come to a

screeching and vertiginous halt. With the virus came social distancing, and social distancing has

in turn rendered interactive, "high touch" service work—and, really, human interaction in

general—more or less taboo.

        When I first began this project, in the spring of 2019, it would have seemed to me utterly

inconceivable that the roughly 160,470 restaurant server jobs in New York State could vanish

almost overnight (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020a). My preoccupation with these jobs was

a longstanding one, and far from impartial. It was work that I myself had done in the not-so-

distant past, and that many of my friends and loved ones have done or still do. In the most

immediate sense, I had watched with some consternation as mobilization efforts around tipped

wage legislation unfolded in Washington, D.C., where I lived before I was a graduate student,

and then in New York State. To be honest, I had always found it baffling that *any* employers

could demand whole hours of exhausting labor out of their workers for a measly $2.13. I will

repeat that, just in case it seemed farfetched: as of 2020, the federal subminimum wage for tipped

workers is still, somehow, $2.13 per hour. In New York State, this tipped wage was, at the time

of this project's inception, a somewhat more generous $7.50, bumped up to $7.85 at the start of 2020. Service employers do not *have* to pay tipped workers the minimum wage, nor are they required to cap the wage at the state or federal minimum. Frank Ocean's "7 dollars an hour" wage at the top of this chapter perhaps reflects an employer who opted to pay somewhere between the subminimum and minimum wages, or employment in a state with its own tipped wage—or just an employer who eschewed wage laws altogether. Had someone asked me, back when I was a tipped worker, whether I thought my peers would support, vocally and overwhelmingly, legislation requiring restaurant employers to pay all of their workers at least the state or federal minimum wage, my answer would have been decidedly in the affirmative.

As it turns out, I would have been wrong. While a movement to eliminate state subminimum wages for tipped workers continues on, detractors have met with at least two decisive victories. In Maine and Washington, D.C., voters passed measures to eliminate the tipped wage, only to see them overturned, in 2017 and 2018 respectively, after sustained industry backlash from employers and workers alike (Dewey 2017; Nirappil 2018). Instrumental to the anti-tipped wage movement, and subject of much industry vitriol (Subminimum Wage Hearings 2018), is the worker center-turned national nonprofit Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) and its One Fair Wage (OFW) campaign. ROC, in its numerous publications on tipped restaurant work, argues that the tipped wage puts workers at an increased risk of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace and perpetuates racial and gender wage gaps (ROC 2012, 2013). So too does ROC attempt to draw a direct connection between the lower-than-minimum wage and disproportionate rates of poverty among food service workers (Jayaraman 2013). These claims are not, perhaps, surprising—while there may be a loose social consensus around tipping norms, tipping is not, in most cases, in any way regulated or obligatory. This would seem to

suggest that the greater a worker's dependence on tips for their income, the more that worker's income is determined by the whims and biases of the customers they serve, and who "buy" their smiles, as the line from Dickinson's poem goes.

Thus it was with some surprise that I watched as restaurant workers in several cities and states rallied behind "Save Our Tips" campaigns, writing opinion pieces arguing against the wage increase (for one example from the more organized opposition see Chaisson 2019), signing onto open letters (RWA, Raczynski) and testifying at public hearings (Subminimum 2018). Workers worried over the ramifications of a change to their industry, rejected the idea of a change to their wage structure and resented any encroachment on the "freedom" (ibid: 33) enjoyed by the tipped worker. Certainly, many workers also voiced their support for a wage increase (Hayes 2018), some throwing their support behind ROC and OFW (Subminimum 2018). And yet, that any workers appeared to be politically mobilized around their opposition to a wage increase, *especially* in an industry where organization itself is an oddity (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019b), seemed a rather striking thing. Further, tipped work itself contains qualities that seem patently insecure. In the tipped service encounter, I would argue that we can conceptualize the customer as a secondary employer, but an employer subject to no employment law. This secondary employer can selectively withhold wages adherent to their own biases, and, in a worst-case scenario, attempt to force workers to endure harassment and humiliation through the implicit (or overt) threat of the lost tip. As such, the tipped wage appears entirely paradoxical: at the very moment when workers seem to be most vulnerable, subject to the whims of not one but *two* employers—one of them entirely unregulated—workers describe an experience of autonomy.

Why would workers defend so unreliable a system, and one that appears to create materially unfavorable (Allegretto and Cooper 2014) and even discriminatory (ROC 2013) conditions? In order to come to some understanding of tipped restaurant work, I concluded, I would have to enter the workplace, and embark on an ethnographic study of restaurant service work. To begin to answer this question, I spent three months working as a host at a major chain restaurant in Central New York. Before, during, and after my employment at the restaurant, I also interviewed other restaurant workers in the area, conducting nine interviews with other workers—some of whom I worked with at my restaurant and others who were drawn from a variety of café and restaurants around the city. I supplemented this ethnographic data and interviews with analysis of New York State subminimum wage hearings and various other media and print sources.

At the outset, I had several ideas as to what might lead to the unexpected position of so many workers when it came to the tipped wage. One explanation might be that only certain workers defend a tipped wage—a small stratum of workers perilously balanced atop a lucrative, if unstable, system, concerned that any alteration to the status quo might topple their precarious privilege. While there may be some truth to this possibility, a more holistic look at stratification of amongst restaurant workers is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. That said, and while this explanation cannot be discounted, even cursory examination of the tipped wage debate in New York State seems to suggest that there is more to the story. Transcripts from the 2018 statewide hearings indicate that those workers who turned out to oppose the One Fair Wage campaign were a heterogenous group. True, some of those workers who testified at the New York hearings were in fact board members of the industry-funded Restaurant Workers of America (Thielman 2018; Subminimum 2018). And yet, some of the workers who seemed the

most politically engaged—those who bussed into various cities for the hearings and traveled around the state to testify numerous times (ibid)—in fact worked for large chain restaurants: Applebee's, TGI Friday's, The Cheesecake Factory. These are hardly the workers that come to mind when one imagines the comparatively high-earning workers of the fine dining sector.

Also beyond the bounds of this study is an examination of the significance of employer mobilization efforts (Hertel-Fernandez 2018)—orchestrated at the level of the workplace, corporation and even industry (Thielman 2018). A couple of the workers I interviewed had experienced something akin to this kind of mobilization. They had learned of the subminimum wage hearings through their employers or managers, and related to me various confused, half-recollected, and sometimes wholly inaccurate versions of events. One career server said that his employer explained that should the minimum wage for servers go up, he would be forced to lay off half of his wait staff and shift immediately to a largely automated system. "At that point I'm like, 'Oh my god, that's the end of my job,'" he told me, eyes wide. And, I want to note, I truly do not want to discredit this analysis by workers—as we shall see, the popularization of tipping was achieved through employers' assiduous spreading of the idea that unusually low wages necessitated tips *and* workers' efforts to establish a formally recognition of the labor of service. If the minimum wage were to increase even incrementally, that might undermine the cultural norm of tipping. Were the tip to vanish, this worker projects, so too would his job.

Another confidently explained to me that the question had not been over a change to base wages at all, but rather over mandated gratuity percentages and tip pools. She resented the idea that the tips she earned would suddenly be siphoned off by back-of-house workers and lower-earning servers. She remembered that an organizer had come "from Albany" asking everyone in the mall where her restaurant was located to sign some sort of a petition, but she was hazy on the

details. Notably, the "Save Our Tips" campaign signage that popped up around D.C. in the summer of 2018 has in fact been traced back to corporate strategists with a history of astroturfing (Fang and Jilani 2018). So too does the RWA have direct financial ties to the National Restaurant Association (Thielman 2018). These scattered accounts would seem to suggest that employer mobilization quite possibly did factor into these statewide campaigns over the tipped wage, and that this might be a fruitful avenue for future study.

But that is not *this* study, and as I formulated a research plan I was unable to shake the nagging sensation that any attempt to begin answering these questions that did not look to the actual workplace would neglect the crux of the issue: the work itself. After all, when we say that work is "tipped," we do more than indicate a discrete exchange of gratuities. We describe a particular kind of work, a specific *labor process*. Considering this, I felt it necessary to step over the threshold of the restaurant itself, and, heeding Marx's invitation, "into the hidden abode of production" (1867/1990: 279)—or, as the case may be, the "not-so-hidden abode" (Ikeler 2016) of service. This meant reckoning with the at times uncomfortable implications of the service interaction, in which smiles are hawked and paid for. To that end, I draw on a long tradition of understanding workers' perspectives on their work at the point of production—moving beyond a cursory description of workers' "interests" in an effort to unearth the mechanisms through which they are formed (Burawoy 1979).

Looking to the Labor Process

Studying the large, Fordist-era U.S. factory, Braverman (1974) explored the inner workings of the capitalist labor process and laid out what he saw as the most significant changes to work in the early 20th century, an era that saw the consolidation of capital in the form of giant

corporations. What he described was a wholesale de-skilling of work: the expansion of the role of management and accompanying "separation of conception from execution," of mental labor from manual labor (Braverman 1974/1998: 79). Writing several years later, Burawoy (1979) posed a critique of this notion of the de-skilled workplace. "In identifying the separation of conception and execution, the expropriation of skill, or the narrowing of the scope of discretion as the broad tendency in the development of the capitalist labor process," he wrote, "Harry Braverman missed the equally important tendency toward the expansion of choices within those ever narrower limits" (1979: 94). In the factories that Burawoy studied, this expansion of choice took the form of "making out," a work game that absorbed workers' attention and whiled away the hours. Work games provide avenues by which workers can exert agency in the workplace, achieve elevated status and attempt to maximize earnings.

Burawoy (1979) did not contest Braverman's (1974/1998) assessment that, overall, work in the 20th century had degraded to the extent that workers' control over the labor process itself was increasingly diminished. And yet, here was the real ingenuity of the development of the capitalist labor process. Though workers' control diminished and management's control increased, work games provided a means by which workers could satisfy their desire for autonomy and control over the labor process, even as the playing of those games served the ultimate end of the seamless extraction of surplus value. Thus are workers given "the illusion of participation while leaving management in undiminished control" (Lasch 1979: 268).

In playing these games, workers necessarily consent to their rules—rules that structure the labor process determined by management. Typically, workers do not even know that their consent has been elicited, as "game-playing obscures the relations of production in response to which the game is originally constructed" and "generates consent to the social relations in

production that define the rules of the game" (Burawoy 1979: 82). For Burawoy, this meant that games worked to obscure the exploitation of labor by capital, and thus stymy the development of class consciousness: workers could not, he argued, at once participate in playing a game and question the rules of that game—rules that, in a very concrete sense, govern the extraction of surplus value in the workplace.

This orchestration of workplace consent, Burawoy (1979, 1985) argued, was the most significant innovation to the midcentury capitalist labor process, and the answer to a real conundrum: why, in the absence of time-study men, were unionized workers working so hard? While Taylorist factories employed regimes of despotic management, wherein workers were explicitly controlled and coerced, the Fordist factory operated under a hegemonic regime. Workers acquiesced to the will of management, and reproduced the capitalist labor process, without ever realizing they were doing so. This does not mean, however, that workers' consent can be taken as a given. When the game no longer seems worthwhile, or when workers are engaged in economic or political struggles on the shop floor, they may withdraw their consent and refuse to continue playing. Importantly, Burawoy also argues that "whatever consent is necessary for the obscuring and securing of surplus value is generated at the point of production rather than imported into the workplace from outside" (1979: 135). In other words, he sees the labor process as "relatively autonomous" (ibid: 152), operating according to rules that bound the workplace. This autonomy remains, however, incomplete—throughout, Burawoy maintains the importance of the way that innately human qualities are channeled and expressed under specific sociopolitical conditions. Under capitalism, it is "an instinctive compulsion of workers to collectively control the labor process" that "expresses itself in the distorted form of a game" (ibid: 237).

Context

The conditions of work from which emerge workers' views on the tipped wage are not merely of academic interest. Nor, I would argue, is the relevance of the experiences of workers in this study contained to one modestly-sized Rust Belt city. Beyond simply seeming counterintuitive, workers' perspectives on and mobilizing around the tipped wage (and what constitutes tipped work itself) will likely hold real significance to the future of low wage work. The Raise the Wage Act would eliminate the federal subminimum wage for all workers, but it is currently stalled and unlikely to pass in a Republican-controlled Senate (Fernández Campbell 2019). Most recently, New York State eliminated its tipped wage, but only for non-restaurant workers (Governor Cuomo 2019). Meanwhile, tipped service work is a massive and growing sector of the economy. Between 2018 and 2019, "waiters and waitresses" and "combined food preparation and serving workers" both ranked among the top seven occupations for total job growth in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020c). Tipped work is also spreading to new sectors and areas of employment. Some gig and platform workers are now tipped and paid a subminimum wage, and tipped work has even spread to the airline industry (ROC 2019). If tipped work is becoming more widespread, it seems incumbent upon researchers to figure out how it is that workers experience this work, and how tips shape the labor process and influence whether and how workers organize.

Overview

This study proceeds in four chapters, followed by a closing epilogue and an appendix on methods. In that latter section, I relate the strange and circuitous story of this project, which began chaotically, unfolded unexpectedly and ends just where we are now—in crisis. Over these

next chapters, I attempt to relate much of the story of tipped restaurant work, past and present.

Chapter two contextualizes the contemporary debates over the tipped wage through a brief

history of its development and of the rise of tipping in U.S. service industries. This background

is, I argue, necessary to any understanding of tipped work today. In a very straightforward way,

much of the rhetoric employed by today's tipped wage abolitionists really only make sense in

light of this history, and is in many cases directly drawn from the earliest campaigns against

tipping. This account also sheds light on the roles of both workers and industry in the

development of contemporary wage structures, and the changing class character of struggles over

tips and wages.

In chapter three we enter the restaurant itself. Drawing on my own experience as a host

and interviews with tipped restaurant workers, I explore the ways that tips elicit workers'

consistent effort in the ongoing extraction of surplus value and figure in the orchestration of

workplace relations in the restaurant. In this discussion, I consider the particularities and

constraints of service work and how tipped work—conceptualized, drawing on Burawoy, as the

tip work game—is especially well suited to this work environment. Ultimately, I attempt to

demonstrate how the tip work game and attendant tipped wage function to offload the risk and

unpredictability of interactive customer service work in the restaurant from employers to workers

themselves.

In chapter four, we return to the question that prompted this study, that of why restaurant

workers support (and, just as importantly, reject) the perpetuation of a formal tipped wage. I

provide some preliminary answers to this question through an investigation of the way that

restaurant servers experience work for tips, and how this labor process shapes their identities as

workers. Drawing on both formal interviews and informal conversations with workers as well as

my own experience and observations of the workplace, I find a pervasive ethos of

entrepreneurialism and personal responsibility among tipped workers on the dining room floor.

While, as I argue, the labor itself inures the tipped workforce to the vicissitudes of tipped work,

so too do the conditions of instability and uncertainty that pervade workplace, industry and labor

market.

Chapter five concludes with some consideration of the implications of this picture of the

development of the tipped wage, labor process and worker for worker organizing—now and in

future. I consider tipped restaurant work in the context of contemporary discussion of post-

Fordist managerial regimes, and the operation of consent, resistance and control in the

workplace. While I think that insights gleaned from this realm of ultra-precarious tipped work

can hold real significance to the burgeoning gig economy and its legions of contingent workers,

this is all, of course, qualified by the yet-unknown ways that the current coronavirus pandemic

stands to radically reshape the future of low-wage service work. In the matter of a few short

weeks it has already done just that, and I find myself in the strange position of attempting to

define the contours of work that has temporarily ceased to exist.

At the mall restaurant where I worked, my former employers kept things going until the

bitter end, customers or no, until statewide closures barred customers from the dining room. Idle

servers were tasked with sanitizing the empty tables and chairs and then were sent home, no clue

as to when they might resume their jobs. It's a situation that is novel in the sense that news

articles often call COVID-19 "the novel coronavirus," but at the same time not at all new.

Several weeks ago these workers might have lost out on their earnings for a day, or a weekend,

based on the whims of a manager, or because of a snowstorm, or a shooting at the mall. Now

they will lose their normal incomes for weeks, or months, because of an infectious disease outbreak.

Thus, in a brief epilogue to this thesis, I reflect on some of the already-apparent ways in which the pandemic has affected restaurant service work and workers, including many of those whose stories are related in these pages. The workers who participated in this project, those I interviewed and those with whom I worked side-by-side for months, are all now unemployed or catastrophically under-employed. Most are among the 3 million U.S. workers who in the last week applied for, and now await, unemployment insurance. A couple have texted me to say that they have been "lucky" enough to score some takeout shifts. These young workers have become, in the space of a few short weeks and through no choice of their own, front-line emergency workers. A viral pandemic has demonstrated that though their work is not valued by society in the sense that the socially and historically determined value of their labor power is abominably low, their work is ultimately (and along with that of healthcare, sanitation, transportation and other workers) essential to the very continued existence of this thing we call civilization. It remains to be seen just what sort of a world we will all reemerge into, whenever that is.

What I document in the following pages is one account of the way that employers organize, and workers experience and deal with, contingent and unpredictable work. Thus, I would like to think that it may hold some insight for the extremely uncertain conditions ahead. Moreover, the workers whose stories are recounted herein let me into their lives in various ways, and gave over their very limited time. I hope the following chapters do that trust some small amount of justice.

Chapter 2 The Wolf at the Door: A Brief History of the Tipped Wage

Considering the current state of tipped work, one might wonder why, in the United States today, we have this strange two-tier wage structure at all. The question is not only an academic one, and this is for two primary reasons. First, as I will argue, the existence of the subminimum wage for tipped workers, and sheer ubiquity of the practice of tipping, needs to be understood within the context of a century of class struggle. The period spanning from the late-19th to mid-20th centuries saw a steady march of tipping across the U.S. At first an informal gratuity or gift, its status was ultimately codified in a federal wage. This was a process that met with opposition from workers—and sometimes customers—at every turn. At times, this opposition rose to the level of a pitched battle between workers, organized in service industry trade unions, and service industry employers. Unions adopted strategic positions in these fights over tips and wages, shifting their demands and tactics as the situation required. What remained constant was their recognition that in order to strengthen the positions of workers relative to capital, and the positions of the unions themselves, tipping must somehow be defeated.

Unfortunately, when viewed this way, the history of tips is also a story of the steady erosion of service industry workers' power relative to their employers, and even to the customer. The first half of the 20th century saw massive union-led fights to abolish tipping, to raise service sector wages and some real material victories. Today, there is little union presence among tipped workers—only 1.4 percent of workers in the broad food services and drinking sector, within which most tipped workers are employed, are union members (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020d). Even in a country with low private-sector unionization rates across the board[1], the rate of

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[1] In 2019 the rate of private-sector unionization stood at 6.2 percent. The combined rate of unionization of both pubic- and private-sector workers was 10.3 percent, down by 0.2 percentage points from the previous year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020b).

union membership for food service workers is exceptional. The aims of the contemporary, nonprofit-led One Fair Wage (OFW) campaign are more modest—not to abolish tipping but to eke out a few additional dollars per hour from employers (OFW 2020). The union-led battles and largescale opposition have all but faded into the distance, and the informal system they fought has become firmly and institutionally entrenched.

Even still—and this is the second point that I want to make here—the form and content of these historical struggles remain significant to the claims made today by workers and their advocates. These involve, in a broader sense, the way that workers have at various points argued that the particular work required to elicit the tip both heightens and normalizes class inequality. For their part, labor unions typically recognized that tips posed an obstacle to organizing workers and sustaining the growing unions—they encouraged competitive individualism, while a tipped wage effectively set a ceiling on unions' ability to negotiate wage increases from employers. These claims would seem to have been prescient: as tips have become entrenched in the service industries, union representation has dramatically declined[2] and income inequality increased.

Specific claims made by and about particular groups of tipped workers are also traceable to those deployed by historic workers' anti-tipping campaigns. The very thing that prompted me to acquaint myself with this history was an assertion that surfaces in contemporary opinion pieces on the tipped wage (see for example Barber 2019) and ROC's own publications (ROC 2013), that the tipped wage has its origins in the legacy of enslavement. It was not immediately clear to me what this meant, whether authors were pointing to a literal history or making a

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[2] This is somewhat conjectural, and based on the fairly obvious difference between the power and presence of unions representing food and drink service workers in the mid-19th century and today, as evidenced by numerous news articles referencing the organization and militancy of those unions. It is difficult to find specific pieces of data to chart this decline (because the categorization of these jobs has changed, and because the Bureau of Labor Statistics' own data only goes back so far), but it is possible to see this decline even over the shorter term: in 2010, the union membership rate for food preparation and serving related occupations was 4.3 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010), while in 2019 that number had dropped to 3.4 percent (ibid 2019b).

particularly evocative allusion. What I found was that it was the member organizers of the nascent Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters who first made this argument in a significant way, identifying the very real connection between their employer's racist hiring practices and the menial servitude that work for tips required. In 1925, when the union officially formed in Harlem, the Brotherhood took as its motto the words "Fight or Be Slaves" (Santino 1989: 37).

Workers have historically opposed tips and a tipped wage on the ground that tipped work, precarious though it may be for all workers, is not experienced in the same way by all workers, and is inflected by the identities and axes of oppression. They recognized, from the very inception of tipped work in the U.S., that employers targeted particularly precarious or exploitable workforces for these extremely low-wage jobs. In turn, the work itself only amplified the precarity of those workers. This, too, appears to be born out in the status of tipped service work today: while the restaurant industry is the single largest employer of people of color, these workers disproportionately occupy the industry's lowest-paid positions (ROC 2013). Researchers studying costumer tipping behavior have also that on the whole, workers of color receive lower tips from customers than do white workers (see for example Lynn 2008).

Just as we can see in today's wage debate a reiteration of the very rhetoric of early anti-tipping movements, so too does the arc of this chapter demonstrate a strange mirroring of circumstances. The span of years covered herein sees the rise, height and eventual decline of restaurant worker unionism. While mid-20th century fights over tips and a tipped wage were predominantly worker-led, the class character of today's campaigns is oddly reminiscent of the earliest consumer-led anti-tipping movements. Even the modest successes of historical and contemporary anti-tipping campaigns bear a strange symmetry: today, seven states have

abolished their tipped wages. In the early decades of the 20th century, seven states instituted anti-tipping legislation—all of which was ultimately overturned.

Over these next pages, our story begins even before those anti-tipping campaigns, with the very origins of the tip among various U.S. service industries. From there, we follow the parallel development of tipped work and, ultimately, a formal tipped wage, through union fights, court rulings and sweeping changes to both work and the laws that govern it. Finally, we land back at the present day, to consider the issue of anti-tipped wage campaigns in light of this history. Through that history we can see that the tipped wage is, like all wages, a site of political and cultural struggle under capitalism (Mann 2007). It is, at all times, "a locus of working-class politics," and "a functional means through which capital and workers assert, contest, and address workers' interests" (ibid: 150). Workers' perspectives on the tipped wage do not emerge in a vacuum, and are, I suggest, best understood in the context of struggle that has dramatically reshaped—and will likely continue to reshape—the terrain of work.

A Murky Past

Ferreting out those origins of tipping is, however, easier said than done. Scholars provide a number of possibilities, many of which are contradictory, evoking a sense of the folkloric: the practice may have originated in medieval Europe, or it may be a much more ancient custom (see Segrave 1998; Azar 2004). The word "tip" may have its roots in an acronym scribbled by coffee house patrons across notes they passed to their servers, or displayed on a vessel in which gratuities were collected: T.I.P., "to insure promptness." Alternatively, "tip" may have its etymology in the Dutch word *tippen* ("to tap") or the Latin for gift.[3] It has at least been in use

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[3] While a number of sources make reference to these possible origins, I first encountered them in Kerry Segrave's (1998) comprehensive *Tipping: An American Social History of Gratuities.*

long enough to feature in a 1736 poem by Jonathan Swift, which Segrave (1998) quotes: "When I saw the keeper frown / Tipping him with half-a-crown…"

What is fairly clear is that the practice was imported to the United States from Europe, where guests were accustomed to dole out small amounts of money in recognition of the labor of their hosts' servants (Segrave 1998). Newspaper articles from the mid-19th century make frequent reference to the experience of frustrated American travelers abroad in Europe, forced to dole out small amounts of money to the providers of various services, including in private households.[4] By the late 1800s, tipping had been adopted in many U.S. cities, predominating in certain industries and types of establishments. Significantly, the era that marked this inception and early spread of tipping coincided precisely with the end of enslavement in the U.S. These two histories—that of the absorption of formerly unfree workers into the wage labor force and the spread of tipping through U.S. service industries—cannot be disentangled. As we will see below, many of those formerly enslaved workers were quickly assimilated into, and even targeted for, the earliest tipped occupations.

As Josephson (1956: 18) writes, in his voluminous history of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, "Wages of waiters in luxurious hotels and restaurants in America, where the tipping system generally prevailed, were often less than half of those paid in cheaper eating-places patronized by the common run of people who did not tip." Adopted first in higher-priced eating establishments, tipping became steadily more commonplace, spreading to more affordable and so-called "popular" restaurants. An 1888 article in the *Weekly Pelican* (originally printed in *The Brooklyn Eagle),* attributed only to "Sesame," distinguishes between what the author calls first-, second- and third-class waiters and restaurants, and provides an interesting picture of

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[4] There are many such examples, but see Segrave (1998) for a good roundup.

Brooklyn waiters and public perception thereof. Sesame displays a distinct preference for the so-called second- or third-class waiters, those employed at so-called "popular" establishments, noting that the

> second class of waiter in Brooklyn…is more approachable and does not carry himself with the grandiose air affected by the man of tips. He never receives a tip, and is at least more natural if less obliging than the man whose palm must be crossed with silver before good service can be secured. ("An Analysis of Waiters" 1888)

Sesame also sheds light on the typical earnings expected by waiters, as well as the price of a meal, in these various strata of Brooklyn restaurants. In the most expensive of Brooklyn restaurants, the author tells us, waiters earned anywhere from $12 to $18 a week, much of which came from tips. In these restaurants "one [could] secure good service and an excellent dinner for about $1" and tips were "indispensable." Waiters of the second class, working in the "popular" restaurants more accessible to ordinary Brooklynites, might average $8 a week in earnings, including three meals a day. Wages in these restaurants were higher, "Sesame" writes, but total earnings lower due to the lack of tips. In such establishments "a good dinner" could be had for about 50 cents, "and while tipping [was] not absolutely necessary, it [went] a long way toward securing the choice cuts. The "third class" restaurant, Sesame tells us, offered a meal for somewhere between fifteen and twenty-five cents. No tip would be expected, but "the food may not be clean and well cooked" ("An Analysis of Waiters" 1888).[5]

Outstretched Palms

Even its infancy in the United States, the practice of tipping met with opposition—although in the absence of strong service industry labor unions, this opposition was consumer-led and

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[5] It is possible that Sesame's estimates might be slightly inflated. By 1901, newly organized Boston barmen and New York waiters and bartenders had managed, through campaigns of moral persuasion and strike activity, to pressure their employers to raise wages to $9-$12 a week and $2.50 a day, respectively (Josephson 1956).

ultimately, unsuccessful. Many other turn of the century opinion pieces and editorials display an antipathy not unlike Sesame's toward the higher-earning, customary tipped class of waiters. Perhaps unsurprisingly too, the bulk of this anti-tipping sentiment seems to emanate from frustrated customers, rather than workers. Whether this fairly characterizes early supporters and critics of tipping or merely the makeup of those publishing opinion pieces on the subject is difficult to know.

An 1877 opinion piece in the *New York Times* makes the moral case against tipping. The author impugns the server who exerts a "compulsion…of a subtle, pervasive, undermining variety" upon the customer, but so too does the author castigate the tipping customer for "corrupting [the waiter's] honesty, and harming his manliness," by acceding to the tip (6). Interestingly, this unnamed author suggests a direct link between tipping and pre-capitalist Europe, writing,

> nothing is easier than to prove its origin in the darkest agues of feudality. The man who receives a tip is in so far forth a retainer, a vassal of the giver, and his individual pedigree—strictly on the tipping basis—at once goes back to the venal brawlers and banditti any rich man could assemble and keep about him during the Middle Ages, just so long as his store of rings, drinking-cups, and broadcloth held out. Wages or salaries were not in vogue, but an expedition or a war was begun by tipping the bravoes into good nature and devotion. ("Corrosive" 1877: 6)

This leaves one to wonder if, perhaps, this attribution of the origins of tipping to pre-capitalist, non-wage labor stems in some part from these rhetorical flourishes of the early U.S. anti-tipping movement. For this author, the rooting of tips in the coercion and violence of medieval Europe serves to lend credence to the claim that "tips are utterly opposed to the spirit of the New World and modern civilization" (ibid).

While this unnamed author directs much of their ire toward the "banditti" themselves, the workers who demand tips on pain of bad service, the ultimate benefactors of this system do not

escape identification. "After a little study of the question, you begin to see that your deleterious influence on the waiter is even greater than you imagined," the author writes.

> For behind the waiter stands the proprietor of the hotel. Is he, the quintessence of a sharp business man, going to let slip a chance to beat down the wages of a waiter, thank you? On the contrary, do not perquisites of this kind furnish him with an excuse to pay small wages, and thus levy two tolls upon your pocket, one in the price of food, the other in the salary of his unfortunate employe [sic]? (ibid)

Smith D. Fry, writing in 1900, draws a similar connection. While waiters themselves are castigated as "robbers who stand athwart the highway and demand your money or threaten your discomfort," Fry identifies the employer as the progenitor of this system. Customers are depicted as helpless victims, bullied and extorted—a running theme ("The Tipping Habit"). But it is the hotel proprietor, or the restaurant owner, whose refusal to pay adequate (or any) wages creates these exploitative conditions (ibid). While such letter to the editor-style complaints from patrons are perhaps the most common reflections on the early spread of tipping, there are, too, periodic examples of defenses of the system. These typically express the opinions of tip-earning workers themselves. A 1902 article in the *Broad Ax* quotes one such waiter, whose frustration is palpable. Some may say that tipping "is un-American" and that "a waiter of proper pride and independence would scorn to accept a quarter or a half in return for the serving of a meal" ("Many People" 1902: 2). But, this waiter argues, tipping is not so different from the small gifts and gratuities exchanged in all forms of commerce, and "tipping runs clean through our social system, from top to bottom" (ibid).

Tipped workers also valued the power that tip earning afforded them relative to the customer, the very ability to assert themselves that previous authors described as base highway robbery. The 1901 "A Colored Man's Reproof," published in *The Freeman,* contains the following story, related by a black restaurant server:

A gentleman came here with three friends. He ordered dinner for the four. I gave them the best service I could for an hour and a half. The bill was $4.94.

I took the nickel change back on my little tray. The gentleman put his finger on it, and pushed it toward me. 'That's for you,' he said.

I shook my head. "No, sir, I couldn't think of taking it."

"Why not?" he said.

"Because, sir, I couldn't think of your walking home."

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"Why, sir," said I with all my dignity, "no gentleman would offer a waiter a nickel for a dinner like that if he had any more money about him." Then I walked off and he put the money in his pocket and left the room. ("A Colored Man's Reproof" 1901: 3)

This story reflects the fundamental complexities of tipped work, and tensions that resurface in the debates around tips and the tipped wage, historical and contemporary alike. The unnamed waiter who relates this episode seems to relish an apparent power of the tipped worker—rather than graciously accepting the tip he deems unworthy of his labor, this worker rejects the nickel, making a show of shaming the customer. For some patrons, like those early anti-tippers whose opinions are related above, this behavior was perceived as alienating, even tyrannical. The tipped worker, however, sees in this moment an opportunity to assert his "dignity" and the customers' violation of an accepted code of conduct. It is a moment made only more significant by the fact that this unnamed waiter is black, and likely serving a table of white men. The rejection of the bad tip provides not only an opportunity for the waiter, as a worker, to assert that his performance of service is, in fact, labor, but also a means through which a person of color can assert his autonomy, his status as a free (wage) worker, relative to the customer. This is made all the more significant when we consider that at this point, for many black men, and especially

formerly-enslaved workers and their descendants in the U.S. South, tipped service occupations were among the few available avenues of employment (Santino 1989).

The waiter's story also demonstrates another side to the early tipped labor process, undermining the waiter's brief moment of triumph. The waiter has already performed his labor, "the best service" he can provide. Though he may savor this moment of public humiliation, he has no actual ability to demand payment for his work. He may expect the tip, and his employer may have lured him into employment with the promise of high-tipping customers, but ultimately his labor is elicited without a guarantee of remuneration. There is no security in the tip.

Two Tolls, Two Bosses

By the first decades of the 20th century, popular etiquette guides instructed patrons on appropriate tips for various industries, 10 percent of the bill being the usual recommendation for the hotel or restaurant waiter (Scott 1916). Along with tipping spread the practice of employers reducing, or even outright eliminating, wages, and the general depression of wages among service industry employees. While in many lower-end, "popular" restaurants servers earned only their wages, waiters in many establishments made half or more of their earnings in tips. Tipping purportedly became lucrative enough that in some cases workers themselves *paid* for the privilege of earning tips (ibid). Rather fantastically, the author of a 1928 *New York Times* article writes of the rise of tipping syndicates, jockeying for exclusive tipping rights in New York City cloakrooms. These syndicates would furnish hotels with workers, paid a wage, whose tips would be turned over to their employers ("Porter's Tips" 1928: 35). Scott (1916) confirms the existence of this practice.

As for workers, they bridled at the constraints and "nerve-wracking" nature of tipped work, in which they served "two bosses," and had to put up with "nasty" behavior, "at the mercy of the customer all of the time" (Josephson 1956: 17, 19). A 1919 report in *Monthly Labor Review,* surveying earnings and hours in various service occupations, found that "tipping has…it's undoubted influence upon the hours and wages of bellmen, door men, baggage porters, and waiters" (192), inducing employees to work longer hours and relieving employers of the responsibility to pay adequate wages. These objections did not entirely diminish, however, the "speculative excitement" some workers felt over the prospects of landing an especially flush customer (Josephson 1956: 89).

William R. Scott, in his 1916 anti-tipping polemic *The Itching Palm,* claims that by the time of his writing more than 5,000,000 U.S. workers—or ten percent of the total working population—derived at least a portion of their income from tips.[6] Scott sees the ills of tipping primarily from the perspective of the customer, and repeats many of the claims made by earlier anti-tippers: tipping is akin to grift or piracy. The customer is exploited, compelled to pay twice for only one service. Tipping is a moral threat, conditioning workers to demean themselves and take advantage of their customers. Where Scott goes further is in drawing a direct connection between the legacy of enslavement and tipped service work—a connection that, as we will see, was central to the anti-tipping position of the nascent Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. While the enslaved laborer was "servile by law and inheritance," writes Scott, "[t]he modern tip-taker voluntarily assumes, in a republic where he is actually and theoretically equal to all other

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[6] Scott comes to this number by taking the number of Americans engaged in tip-earning (service) occupations from the 1910 census—3,772,174—and then accounting for the growth in population between 1910 and 1916. He includes, also, "a partial list of those affected: Baggagemen, Barbers, Bartenders, Bath attendants, Bellboys, Bootblacks, Butlers, Cab drivers, Chauffeurs, Charwomen, Coachmen, Cooks, Door men, Elevator men, Guides, Hatboys, Housekeepers, Janitors, Maids, Manicurists, Messengers, Mail carriers, Pullman porters, Rubbish collectors, Steamship stewards, Theater attendants, Waiters" (Scott 1916: 19-20).

citizens, a servile attitude for a fee. While the form of servitude is different, the slavery is none the less real in the case of the tip-taker" (1916: 11). Scott makes much of the apparent freedom of the wage relation, which allows a "citizen in a republic…to stand shoulder to shoulder with every other citizen, with no thought of cringing, without an assumption of superiority or an acknowledgement of inferiority" (ibid: 50-51).

Tipping, for Scott, is "undemocratic," it is "the price of pride," a literal representation of the sum that can entice one free American to voluntarily submit to relations of inequality (ibid: 50, 37). Scott writes that at the time of publication nearly every U.S. state had seen various attempts at anti-tipping legislation, most unsuccessful, a situation he sees as fundamentally ironic: in many cases governors vetoed anti-tipping laws "on the ground that they curtailed personal liberty. That is to say, a bill which removed the chains of social slavery from the serving classes was declared to be an abridgment of liberty!" (ibid: 11). While at least seven states did for a time adopt anti-tipping laws in the early years of the 1900s, over the next two decades all such laws were repealed (Segrave 1998). Though his moral argument centered on the "liberty" (or lack of liberty) of the tipped worker, *The Itching Palm* coincided with a wave of consumer-led, rather than worker-led, anti-tipping mobilization. This wave included The Anti-Tipping Society of America, The Society for the Prevention of Useless Giving, and the Consumers' League, which—at its Second International Conference in 1913—adopted an official anti-tipping position (Segrave 1998; Needleman 1937).

As such, it is not uncommon to find Scott lumping together the worker and the employer, both "deliberate" and "shameless" in their "exploitation of the public" (ibid: 156). Scott does note that there had been, by that point, a few organized attempts by workers to raise wages and

abolish tipping in their workplaces, and some condemnation of the practice from labor unions[7]. This was by no means a consistent stance toward tipping among workers, and higher-earning workers tended to defend the system on the basis of its lucrativeness. In an argument strikingly reminiscent to ones that I will discuss at greater length in chapter three, Scott goes on to claim that tipped work itself redirected workers' attention from conflicts with their employers over wages. Consumed by their preoccupation with tips,

> personal service workers are nursing a grievance much of the time. Their conversation and thoughts are about some patron who has failed to compensate them, or has, in their judgement, inadequately compensated them. They devote little time to thinking of a reform in the system that would give them an adequate compensation from the employer and do away entirely with the patron-to-employee form of compensation. (ibid: 75)

And so while a great deal of Scott's criticism, like those of earlier anti-tippers, is levied at the service workers themselves, he does not neglect to lay some blame at the doors of the employers who benefit from these wage schemes. They are the "high-grade hotels, sleeping car company, expensively conducted restaurants and like enterprises" that "aggressively exploit the propensity to give," and Scott continues on to provide a list of the "more noteworthy employers who profit by the custom" (ibid: 88-9). Even at this early date, and to anti-tipping crusader-reformers like Scott, it was readily apparent that service industry employers could deliberately deploy a tipped wage to maximize surplus value and offload their obligation to pay workers. At the same time, and much as the tipped labor process can work to obscure the objective relation between worker and employer (as we shall see in the following chapter), in the service interaction objective exploitation by employers could become obscured, and antagonism manifested between customers and the workers who served them.

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[7] Then-AFL president Samuel Gompers was generally against tipping, and Scott includes a portion of a letter from Gompers to the manager of the Hotel Stowell in Los Angeles. In it, he writes that he opts to tip at hotels when traveling, but continues: "yet I have maintained the principle of tipping to be unwise and that it tends to lessen the self-respect of a man who accepts a tip" (Scott 1916: 146).

The Wolf at the Door

At the top of Scott's list, and subject of the next twenty-odd pages of his book, is the Pullman

Company,[8] which, he said, "stands in the public mind as the leading exponent of tipping" and

"largest beneficiary of the custom" (ibid: 105). Founded in 1867 by George Mortimer Pullman,

the Pullman Company actively recruited formerly enslaved men from the South to work as

porters on the new Pullman sleeping cars. The racial division of the company's hiring practices

was clear and explicit—Pullman hired only white men as conductors and only black men as

porters[9] (and at only half the wage) and specifically targeted older black men from the South,

excluding younger black men from the urban industrial North (Bates 2001; Santino 1989). A

manager for the Pullman Company, questioned about the company's hiring practices before the

1915 Commission on Industrial Relations, or Walsh Commission, put it thus: "the Southern

negro is more pleasing to the traveling public. He is more adapted to wait on people and serve

with a smile" (Scott 1916: 107).

Also at issue was the wage paid to Pullman porters, $27.50 a month in 1915. As the

Commission made clear, and chairman of the board and ex-president of the Pullman Company

Robert Todd Lincoln[10] admitted, this wage was insufficient by design, requiring porters to

supplement their earnings with tips (Bates 2001). Notably, while the Pullman Company

explicitly drew on Robert Todd Lincoln's legacy as the son of the "Great Emancipator" in

published pamphlets, members of the porters' union (discussed at length below) were not fooled

(Santino 1989). A. Philip Randolph, who would lead the early Brotherhood of Sleeping Car

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[8] The Pullman Company is then followed by The Hotel Company, The Taxicab Company, The Transfer Company, The Steam Ship Company, The Master Barber, The Apartment House Owner, The Restaurant, and the Telegraph Company (Scott 1916, 90).
[9] At only one point did the company veer from this hiring policy. For a brief period in the late-1920s, in an effort to undermine the organizing efforts of the nascent Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the company began hiring Filipino porters (Bates 2001).
[10] Son of President Abraham Lincoln.

Porters, called this "a most unhappy and pathetic gesture," noting that while "Abraham Lincoln freed Negroes from economic exploitation as *chattel slaves…*his son, Robert T. Lincoln, has lent his influence to the notorious exploitation of Negroes as *Pullman slaves*" (quoted in Santino 1989: 96).

Porters who testified before the Commission confirmed that they would be unable to live on their wages alone and in fact relied on tips for the bulk of their incomes, roughly $75-77 a month (Scott 1916). In their report, the commissioners called the Pullman Company's stockholders "the real tip takers," estimating that were the company to pay its workers a living wage, its cost of labor would increase by $2.3 million[11] a year (Bates 2001: 23). An editorial from the St. Louis *Republic,* written in response to the Walsh Commission's report and cited by Scott (1916), argues that the Pullman Company explicitly invoked the history of enslavement in both its hiring practices and wage structure (Scott 1916: 111). In hiring formerly enslaved men, the editorial claims, Pullman sought to employ workers conditioned to the performance of servitude and to naturalize the servile relation between porters and customers. The editorial also goes on to make a more complex claim about the relationship between the history of enslavement and Pullman's strategic wage design—knowledge of the low wage paid to porters was "industriously circulated" in an effort to leverage customers' awareness of, and presumably guilt over, this history *and* continuation of exploitation. With this knowledge, customers were compelled to tip generously, leaving the company responsible for only about a quarter of its workers' incomes (ibid). Porters' views on this wage relation were, however, complex. Though the wage was insufficient without tips, employment with Pullman Company still promised higher

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[11] Scott (1916), writing a year after the Walsh Commission, puts this figure at $2,535,000.

earnings than many black workers could otherwise expect to earn, and the added enticement of travel around the country (Santino 1989).

Working in the sleeping cars, porters were simply called "George," after the company's founder, and expected to fade unobtrusively into the background like so many pieces of scenery (Bates 2001). These were not, however, conditions that the porters were willing to accept, and it was by the Pullman porters that the most significant early worker-led campaigns against tips (and what amounted to a proto-tipped wage) were mounted. Mention of these efforts can be found as early as the last decades of the 19th century, decades before the formation of a formal union. An 1890 *New York Times* article mentions the "cunning porters who ask to have their wages doubled and their tips abolished" ("The Pullman Porters": 4). Even from this early date the practice of tipping, and its implications for the labor process, were debated, and on explicitly racial terms. The same author, referring to the "austere and frugal American moralists" who, like Scott, objected to tipping "upon the ground that it undermines the manhood and self-respect of the tippee," writes blithely that "this proposition loses all its force when the tippee is of African descent," and further that "the business of a Pullman car porter is especially congenial to citizens of African descent" (ibid). Bates (2001: 22 note 31) also quotes a 1904 article written by a Pullman porter, who describes tipping as the "most demeaning aspect of the job."

By the 1920s, the Pullman Company was the single largest private U.S. employer of African Americans, with a workforce of about 12,000 porters. Pullman porters continued to voice their objections to their treatment by the company, and in particular to their wage structure and the necessity of earning tips. In 1925, Pullman Company porters—long excluded from the all-white labor unions recognized by the Pullman Company (Santino 1989)—organized their own union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), and soon demanded both a wage

increase and the abolition of tipping (Bates 2001). It is significant here that the porters insisted

on *both* a wage increase and an end to tipping—they understood these demands to be

inextricably linked. So long as porters continued to receive tips, the company would continue to

make a case for paying meager wages. In their public statements, BSCP members, under

Randolph's leadership, were also quite clear on what they saw as the primary reason they were

subjected to this wage structure, and thus a labor process that necessitated tip earning. A 1928

New York Times article quotes an organizer from the BSCP, who claims that the Pullman

Company was by that point saving an estimated $7 million a year in wages ("Porter's Tips"

1928: 25).

That said, there is some evidence to suggest that *internally* BSCP members were not

entirely in agreement on the subject of tips, and that while Randolph immediately pushed for

their abolition, some porters resented the threat to their incomes. In 1928, the same year that the

BSCP joined the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Randolph made the somewhat

controversial decision to petition the Interstate Commerce Commission, calling into question the

legal status of tipping, and threatened—although never called for—a national strike (Santino

1989). While the strike was never to happen, it caught the attention of the press, where it was

reported that a strike would call "to public attention the war which workers have been waging to

abolish the custom of giving and receiving tips" ("Pullman Porters" 1928).

The BSCP also construed work for tips as a fundamentally racialized labor process, and

one that in its servility recalled enslavement, as Frank Walsh had pointed out in the Commission

on Industrial Relations a decade earlier. A BSCP publication from around this time featured a

drawing of Frederick Douglass, with a caption equating their fight with his own to abolish

enslavement (Bates 2001). BSCP's member organizers refused the naturalizing of this servility

in the tipped labor process. The same *Times* article quoted above summarizes their argument

thus:

> The outstretched palm which the traveler may find when 'Georgie' has blackened his
> boots, brought him a pack of cigarettes or rendered some other personal service is not
> necessarily a characteristic of the Pullman porter. It is a necessity if he is to keep the wolf
> from his door, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters points out, as the average
> monthly pay is only about $78. To eke out a living, the porters assert that they must rely
> on the more or less capricious generosity of travelers. ("Pullman Porters" 1928)

The Pullman porters opposed the practice of tipping, and the low wage that necessitated it,

precisely because it compelled workers to make a choice they should not have to—to adopt a

manner of servility or face "the wolf" at the door. They recognized, too, that the requirements of

tipped work allowed customers to ignore this fact and to obscure the conditions of the wage

relation, construing inequality of the labor market as merely a "characteristic" of the workers

themselves.

Union Opposition

It was not only the BSCP that opposed tipping, however. Labor unions broadly, although

unevenly, opposed the practice, and many union representatives made the argument that tips, and

thus the tipped labor process, made workers more difficult to organize by encouraging

selfishness and individualism, and motivating workers to work beyond their requisite hours

(Segrave 1998). Waitress unions, which proliferated in the first half of the 20th century, also

generally opposed tipping, citing the way that a reliance on tips made female workers extremely

vulnerable to sexual harassment from customers and, again, made workers more difficult to

organize.[12] While the opinions on tipping among waiters and waitresses were by no means

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[12] Membership in waitress locals hit its peak in the mid-20th century, and while tipping was by that point commonplace, it was
not yet the "norm." By the 1970s, tips accounted for the bulk of most waitresses' earnings, and waitress locals were on the
decline (Cobble 1991).

uniform, many waitress locals sought to ban the practice or require employers to pay a higher hourly wage (Cobble 1991). The form that mid-20th century service worker organizing is quite distinct from mobilizing around the tipped wage today, but in this analysis is already apparent a direct connection between the conditions of tipped work and worker organizing—or rather, the lack thereof, a theme that will be explored in greater detail in chapter four.

In October of 1927 *Monthly Labor Review* published a short roundup of union stances on tips and wages, noting that "in most instances the conclusion has been unfavorable to the continuance of the system. Especially this is likely to be true as the union gains in power and inclusiveness in the field" ("Opposition of Organized Labor": 717). The report adds that in most cases unions found tips to be an obstacle in their fights to win higher wages for workers, forcing workers to "depend upon the generosity of the patron, an uncertain factor at best" (ibid). This list included the BSCP, who at the time were embroiled in the fight for formal recognition of their union. The BSCP had also recently "filed a complaint with the Interstate Commerce Commission" asking that the company be forced to cease encouraging, or even requiring, the earning of tips (ibid: 3).

The report also details the stances of several other prominent unions representing various service industries. Daniel J. Tobin, president of the Teamsters,[13] is quoted as touting the union's success in increasing wages and reducing workers' depends on tips. Members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance and Bartenders' International League of America emphasized their fight for higher wages, but acknowledge the necessity of tip earning until such time as a living wage "is guaranteed to employees of restaurants and hotels" (ibid: 3). While the president of the Journeymen Barbers' International Union expressed unequivocal objection to

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[13] Then the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen, and Helpers of America.

tipping systems, the report goes on to note that the issue continued to be hotly debated amongst the union's membership (ibid). That said, the stance of organized labor, across various service industries, was clear. While the Pullman porters voiced some of the most prominent and consistent opposition to tips, so too did "organizations of waiters, chauffeurs, taxicab drivers, barbers and beauty parlor operators…[line] up to outlaw tipping and obtain an adequate wage" ("Pullman Porters" 1928). With the mid-century rise of service industry unions came the necessity of tackling the tipping problem, which, I would argue, was in fact two-pronged. Workers recognized, as discussed above, that tipped work itself amplified the vulnerabilities of workers and disinclined them to participate in collective organizing. But so, too, did an (as of yet) informal tipped wage hobble unions' ability to fight for significant wage increases from employers, effectively setting a ceiling on workers' employer-provided wages.

Wage Wars

Despite widespread union opposition, tipping became a firmly entrenched custom across the U.S. In 1937, an estimated 888,458 U.S. workers were employed in tip-earning occupations, though there are no measures of how many workers *actually* received tips within those industries (Needleman 1937). From a legal standpoint, tips languished in a gray area well into the 20th century. The earliest court cases involving tip earning revolved around whether or not tips should be counted as wages in the calculation of worker's compensation. Courts typically found that "where tips [were] contemplated in the wage contract, whether expressed or implied," they were to count toward the calculation of the wage (ibid: 1315).

Tips went for the most part unmentioned in state-level minimum wage laws in the first decades of the 1900s, but were a major issue in the formation of industry-wide wage codes under

the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and National Recovery Administration (NRA). Here the conflict between service industry employers and workers over whether or not tips constituted wages came to a head. The initial wage codes proposed for the hotel, restaurant, and barbershop industries all contained explicit provisions for the inclusion of tips as a part of the wage. Organized labor fought the wage codes bitterly, and while the final codes made no mention of tips, they set a markedly lower minimum wage for the service, as opposed to nonservice, industries (Needleman 1937).

Even after the wage codes were established, organized labor and service employers continued to do battle over the implementation of the wage laws. A series of short articles from the *New York Times,* unfolding over the course of five days in 1933, captures some of the intensity of that moment. On November 10, the *Times* mentions a local NRA board ruling that would allow restaurants and hotels to apply for individual exemptions from the industry-wide wage for tipped workers ("NRA Includes Tips in Waiters' Wages"). Two days later, roughly 30,000 members of the New York locals of the International Hotel Workers and Waiters Union were poised to strike and "the local joint executive board of the New York unions of waiters and other restaurant workers" called for "[a]bolition of the tipping system in restaurants and its replacement by" a $30 minimum wage and fixed forty-five-hour workweek ("Restaurant Union Asks Tipping Ban" 1933). By the 15th, all exemptions had been revoked after worker protests and the appearance at an open hearing of the NRA board of representatives of various service worker unions, including the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance and the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union. Ed Flore, then-president of the International Union, made the threat clear and explicit: unless the board's previous ruling was reversed, "it [would] be the

cause of serious strikes in New York City and the danger of such strikes [was] imminent" ("Tips Not Wages, NRA Board Rules" 1933).

NIRA was short-lived, and while the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) established a federal minimum wage for most workers, it made no mention of tips. The question of whether or not tips were wages was not adjudicated at the federal level until a 1942 Supreme Court case, *Williams v. Jacksonville Terminal Co.,* over the earnings of railroad red caps, or luggage porters, and whether or not workers' tips could be counted toward their hourly minimum wage. *Jacksonville Terminal* set the precedent for all future tipped wage legislation, and here the FLSA's silence on the subject of tips worked to the distinct advantage of service industry employers. The court found that "the word 'wages' [had] no fixed meaning" within the FLSA, "either including or excluding gratuities" (*Williams v. Jacksonville Terminal Co* 1942). Thus, went the majority opinion, provided an employer ensured all workers earned at least the minimum wage, there was no reason why some portion of that wage could not be made up of tips (ibid).[14] *Jacksonville Terminal* also "implicitly authorized tip pools," allowing employers to assume control of tips and distribute them as they saw fit, so long as employees were notified of the practice beforehand (Meyer 2017: 1975).

Though it set the precedent for all future subminimum wage legislation, *Jacksonville Terminal*'s ruling was not formally extended to hotel and restaurant employees until a 1966 amendment to the FLSA (ibid). Throughout the 1950s the IRS had begun to more aggressively pursue cases of tax evasion on tip income, but there remained a disconnect: while tips were considered a part of the wage for the purposes of tax collection, they did not yet count as income in determining workers' Social Security benefits (Segrave 1998). So it was that this final push

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[14] Interestingly, dissenting Justice Black argued that the ruling essentially duped customers into subsidizing employers' obligation to pay fair wages, and ran counter to the spirit of the FLSA itself (*Williams v. Jacksonville Terminal Co.* 1942).

toward the institutionalization of tips as wages came, for the first time, predominantly from workers themselves. Though seemingly a reversal, this made perfect sense—employers had won their battle with the 1942 ruling, and the IRS ensured that the federal government collected its share of revenue from tip earning. All that was really left for workers was to make the best of a less-than-ideal situation. Though this final formal recognition of tips as wages materially benefitted workers by guaranteeing their actual incomes were reflected in their Social Security benefits, in the longer term this institutionalization has put an uncomfortably low ceiling on workers' wages, as we will see below.

In 1960, five service industry trade unions—the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union, the Barbers, Hairdressers and Cosmetologists International Union, the National Maritime Union, and the Seafarers International Union—formed a coalition aimed at lobbying Congress to count tips toward workers' wages in calculating Social Security benefits (Segrave 1998). Four years later, a large contingent of unionized restaurant workers planned a trip to Washington, D.C., to present their case—that tips *were* in fact wages—before the Social Security Administration (Arlen 1964). They faced sustained opposition from restaurant and hotel employers, who objected to the increased contributions to workers' Social Security funds, but after a decade of union lobbying, a tip income provision was added to the Social Security Act, taking effect in 1966 (Segrave 1998).

In that same year, a formal tip credit was established in an amendment to the FLSA. This tip credit allowed employers to begin subsidizing up to 50 percent of the hourly wage they paid to workers with earned tips, for any worker earning at least $20 a month in tips.[15] If a worker's tips did not meet the full amount of the credit, employers were still required to make up the

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[15] That threshold is now $30 a month, and workers must spend at least 80 percent of their time performing tip-earning tasks.

difference, so that every tipped worker was taking home at least the minimum wage (Kocin 1967). While there have been some subsequent changes to the FLSA, mostly regarding issues of who constitutes a tipped worker and the implementation of tip pools, relatively little has changed in the intervening years (Meyer 2017). The 50/50 tips to wages ratio more or less stuck until 1996 when, after years of lobbying from the National Restaurant Association,[16] the tipped wage was finally decoupled from the regular minimum wage and frozen in time (Allegretto and Filion 2011).

Campaigns for One Fair Wage

A century has passed since the first large-scale worker-led anti-tipping campaigns of the early 1900s, and in some ways it seems that very little has changed. In others, everything has. Today's federal subminimum (tipped) wage still stands at the measly $2.13 per hour[17] at which it was more or less locked after 1991. At the time, the regular federal minimum stood at $4.25 and the allowable tip credit—the amount of a worker's tips that could be applied toward their hourly minimum wage—amounted to half of the regular minimum. Since that time, the federal minimum wage has continued on a torturously incremental upward trajectory, last raised in 2009 to $7.25.[18] This means that with each increase of the regular minimum, the tip credit has increased, and the percentage of the minimum wage represented by the tipped wage diminished. Today, it stands at about 34 percent of the regular minimum wage. This erosion of the value of the tipped wage appears to be reflected the status of tipped workers today. While nationally, the food service sector is one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors of employment, restaurant

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[16] Under the leadership of former Republican presidential primary candidate Herman Cain.

[17] Out of curiosity, I decided to put this $2.13 wage in perspective: in 1976, the regular federal minimum wage was $2.10. In today's dollars, that would amount to $9.46. Reversing that calculus, today's subminimum wage would equal, in 1976, 47 cents.

[18] For those noticing something of a theme here, the regular minimum wage has not, of course, kept pace with inflation. To return to the 1976 figure above, today's regular minimum wage, adjusted for inflation, would then have equaled $1.61.

workers' wages have stagnated over the last two decades, and food preparation and service workers account for some of the lowest-paid workers in the country (Jayaraman 2013; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020e). Tipped workers employed in cities and states where they are subject to a tipped wage are almost twice as likely to live in poverty as are non-tipped workers (Allegretto and Cooper 2014). The concerns raised by workers and labor unions about the ramifications of tips and a tipped wage would seem to have been prescient.

The reason that researchers are now able to draw comparisons between the lots of tipped workers who are and are not subject to a tipped wage is that, while there has been little to no change at the federal level, there is a great deal of variation in state minimum and subminimum wages. In about half of the country, state governments[19] have implemented their own higher tipped wages. Further, as of 2020, seven states—Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Montana, Minnesota and Alaska—have done away with the two-tier wage system altogether.[20] These state-level legislative changes have come in response to the ongoing statewide One Fair Wage (OFW) campaigns, flagship project of the restaurant worker-centric nonprofit Restaurant Opportunity Center United (ROC United).

In a strange way, these wage campaigns, too, could almost be said to have come full circle, reminiscent of the early consumer-led anti-tipping campaigns. With little union representation of tipped workers to speak of (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020a), the OFW campaigns—and even ROC United itself—are in many ways more activist and consumer-led than were the union anti-tipping campaigns of the early 20th century. Milkman and Luce (2017) have in fact highlighted the distinct resemblance between such contemporary alt-labor and pre-

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[19] As of May of 2020, this list includes: Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, West Virginia, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Florida and Hawaii.

[20] The unincorporated territories of Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Marina Islands also require that employers pay tipped workers the full federal minimum wage.

New Deal organizing tactics. (In this way, the case of restaurant worker organizing is reminiscent of the lay of the land before the rise of those service sector unions, and it may be that the several decades long détente of the Fordist era was the real oddity.) ROC—then ROC-NY— formed in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. Its founding members included lawyer Saru Jayaraman and a group of primarily immigrant displaced workers from the Windows on the World restaurant, which had occupied the North Tower's 107th floor (Jayaraman 2013). ROC now has a nationwide presence and is a large, federated organization, which receives millions of dollars in donations from private foundations annually (Frantz and Fernandes 2018).

ROC takes a three-pronged approach to its work: it engages in direct action campaigns targeting specific employers, it attempts to reach accords with employers by advocating a "high road" to profitability and it engages in advocacy and policy work (Brady 2014). ROC's earliest efforts centered largely on hot shop organizing of workplaces to address specific grievances and campaigns directed against particular bad actor employers. It had significant successes in this capacity, and in those early years won restaurant workers roughly $5 million in back pay and legal settlements with employers (Brady 2014). These localized, employer-specific campaigns seem to be the most decidedly worker-led of ROC's actions and campaigns, and much of ROC's subsequent work has been directed at strategies to appeal to employers and consumers. It encourages restaurant owners and management to voluntarily commit to a "high road" to profitability, agreeing to certain conditions that improve wages and working conditions. In return, restaurants earn a favorable review in ROC's *Diner's Guide,* which it makes available to diners in app form (Jayaraman 2016).

Most prominent of late has been ROC's third strategy, taking aim at policy in an effort to reshape work throughout the restaurant industry—and, because the restaurant industry accounts for such a large portion of U.S. low-wage work (Chamberlain 2018), contemporary employment more generally. ROC's state-level campaigns have, over the last few years, been conducted under the banner of the One Fair Wage campaign, a bid to eliminate the tipped wage altogether. These campaigns have met with mixed success, and ROC's list of ongoing campaigns now refers not to the OFW campaign but to something called Complete Wage. ROC's website notes that the *Raise the Wage Act of 2019* (HR 582), now languishing in the Senate, "includes Complete Wage," although the directness of this connection, and the extent of ROC's involvement in the bill's drafting, remains to me entirely opaque (ROC Website, Campaigns).

ROC seems to have—and cites in its literature—some pretty compelling reasons to oppose the continuation of the tipped wage. The tipped wage appears to correlate with inordinately high rates of poverty and the food service industry has a whole, where most tipped workers labor, employs a wide swath of the country's lowest-paid workers (Chamberlain 2018). Beyond these bare facts, ROC has also drawn attention to demands and vulnerabilities particular to, or amplified by, the tipped labor process. Most prominent in ROC's materials surrounding the OFW campaigns, and contemporaneous with the rise of the #MeToo movement, has been a focus on the way that a reliance on tipped income puts workers—and in particular, although not exclusively, women—at an increased risk of workplace sexual harassment.[21] This vulnerability stems from two features that define tipped restaurant work: the informality of the tip as a wage and the performative, physical and even intimate nature of interactive service work. While this

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[21] In its research, ROC has found that 34 percent of female respondents who were formerly employed as tipped workers left their jobs after experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace. ROC's report also notes that the leisure and hospitality industries account for the largest number of sexual harassment claims (ROC 2020).

connection between the tipped labor process and risk of sexual harassment is a far more significant feature of the OFW campaigns than it has been in any historical anti-tipping campaigns, it is by no means the first time that it has been drawn. In the mid-20th century, unions representing waitresses fought the practice of tipping on the same grounds (Cobble 1991). Moreover, these claims are reminiscent of a long tradition of workers' recognition of the way in which the tipped work amplified vulnerabilities imported from beyond the workplace. In this sense, ROC, like other worker centers and so-called alt-labor organizations, utilizes strategies that Fine (2007) sees as particularly well-suited to the contemporary low-wage workforce, especially in industries with extremely low union density. ROC's work both highlights the amplification of certain oppressions (including, but not limited to, racial and gender oppressions) in tipped work *and* seeks to rally workers around their shared experience of these oppressions (Jayaraman 2013). Tapia et al (2017) refer to this as "intersectional organizing," in contrast to a more typically class-based strategy.

Bearing all of that in mind, it might come as something of a surprise that multiple of these OFW campaigns have proved ultimately unsuccessful, especially as the opposition has apparently come not only from industry but from workers themselves. In June of 2018, Washington, D.C. voters passed a ballot initiative to eliminate the tipped wage, but within three months, and in response to sustained backlash from restaurant owners *and* workers, D.C.'s city council would overturn the vote, opting to maintain the two-tiered wage system (Nirappil 2018). A similar process had unfolded in Maine the year before (Dewey 2017). In New York, where the OFW campaign seems to have settled into something of a holding pattern, the Department of Labor held a series of public hearings in 2018, taking comment on the possible elimination of the state's tipped wage. While restaurant owners and industry representatives testified at these

hearings, so too did restaurant workers—here in Syracuse, workers who testified were fairly evenly split between those for and against eliminating the tipped wage (Subminimum Wage Hearing 2018). The most recent development came in December of 2019, when Governor Cuomo's office finally announced that the tipped wage would be eliminated for "miscellaneous" industries, *excluding* restaurant workers, at the start of the new year (Governor Cuomo 2019).

This decision likely reflects the not-insignificant sway of the countermovement to the OFW campaign, in New York State and elsewhere. Interestingly, on its face, this movement in defense of the tipped wage would appear to be more overwhelmingly worker-led than are ROC's efforts. In addition to those workers who testified at hearings in New York State and City Council meetings in Washington, D.C., numerous opinion pieces have been published by service workers, appealing to the public to "Save Our Tips." As of December of 2019, the closed Facebook group Supporters of the Tip Credit in NY had 14,440 members. Early in the year a petition circulated throughout the group, asking for the signatures of tipped restaurant workers who support the "tip credit" to present to state lawmakers, and affirming: "The current tipped wage system works well for us" (Supporters 2019).

Upon closer examination, the class character of the so-called "Save Our Tips" movement becomes somewhat more complex. Prominent among the voices in opposition to the OFW campaigns in Maine, D.C. and New York were a small group of restaurant owners and workers, the Restaurant Workers of America (RWA), who published numerous opinion pieces and gave interviews to the press. Members of the RWA were actively involved with the reinstatement of the tipped wage in Maine. Interestingly, two members of the RWA's board of directors, server Joshua Chaisson and restaurant owner Wendyll Caisse, appear to have made the trip from Maine to New York in order to attend, and provide testimony at, the hearings in Manhattan, Albany,

Syracuse and Farmingdale (RWA "Board of directors"; Subminimum Wage Hearing 2018). The

RWA, on its website, refers to itself as an "employee advocacy organization," but investigations

into the organization's background have made clear that it has direct financial ties to the National

Restaurant Association (Thielman 2018). Washington, D.C.'s "Save Our Tips" campaign was

the brainchild of former Trump campaign consultants Lincoln Strategy Group. Its manager and

co-founder, Nathan Sproul, has previously been accused of mounting "fake grassroots"

campaigns, or astroturfing, and other of Sproul's companies have been linked to election

tampering (Fang and Jilani 2018).

That said, ROC could likewise be—and, in fact, has been—criticized for its closeness to

industry. On its website ROC has membership options for customers and employers, along with

workers, and tends to focus much of its attention on convincing employers to take the "high

road," making the argument that doing so serves to increase profits (Jayaraman 2011). Much of

ROC's approach in the OFW campaign has centered around publications targeted at consumers

and voters, rather than industry workers (Alkon 2014). And as Frantz and Fernandes (2018)

argue, the organization has become increasingly dependent upon grants from private foundations

like the Ford Foundation, and has come to assimilate these foundations' corporate ethos. So

while some claim that ROC represents a confrontational class politics (Sbicca 2017), Frantz and

Fernandes argue that ROC now runs more like a business, and that rather than being worker-led,

it is dominated by a small professional staff composed largely of non-restaurant workers, and

relies on market-based strategies. In a further illustration of its broader political ties, a recent

communication from ROC advertised an upcoming event on service worker relief funds during

the coronavirus epidemic, featuring former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Clinton's anti-

worker positions are many and varied, but include support for the North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) and, during her time in the Senate, a history of voting to advance the interests of finance, agribusiness and big oil over those of working people—including, of course, the massive 2008 bank bailout (Geier 2016).

Conclusion

The story that I have tried to relate in these pages, the origin of this strange two-tier wage system, is one of ongoing struggle—struggle wherein the wage, as Mann (2007) argues, is a site of political and cultural contest between workers and capital. Over more than a century of tipped work, the terrain of this struggle has shifted, as has its class character. So, too, have allegiances between the worker, employer and customer—the triad Leidner (1996) termed the "service triangle". With the inception of tipping arose the earliest anti-tipping campaigns. And while the employer's role in promoting tip earning did not go entirely unrecognized, such campaigns tended to pit customers against the apparently tyrannical, demanding workers, even as service industry employers seized upon the tip to depress wages and the practice of tipping spread more or less unabated across U.S. service industries. Mid-century anti-tipping and anti-tipped wage campaigns were mounted by coalitions of organized service industry workers, who sought to draw attention to the way that this wage relation weakened the position of workers relative to capital and ultimately provided a massive subsidy to employers. While early tip abolitionists complained of the "outstretched" or "itching palm" of the service worker, one wonders, in the end, whose palms have really been so outstretched.

Tipped work also, as historical and contemporary organizers have emphasized, amplifies the oppressions of particular populations of workers. Racial and gender hierarchies in service work are not, of course, merely happenstance, or a byproduct of the labor process. As Glenn

(1996: 134) argues, with the expansion of the service sector, and thus increasing commodification of socially reproductive labor, hierarchies historically constructed around that reproductive labor have merely "change[d] form, becoming institutionalized within organizational structures." This change of form is viscerally demonstrated in the experience of black Pullman Porters, and explicitly articulated in BSCP organizers' fight against tipping and tipped wages.

While these claims have not disappeared, their force seems to have dulled with the institutionalization, and then normalization, of the tipped wage and tipped work. In my experience talking to workers, most will readily acknowledge that tipped work amplifies the vulnerabilities of particular workers and leaves them unduly exposed to customer prejudice, whether that be over race, gender, sexuality or some other more intangible element of a worker's identity. Tipped workers will also typically readily admit that in turn, and oftentimes in an effort to avoid being subject to such prejudice, they will profile customers through superficial judgements about their class, race, age, nationality, et cetera.

Somewhat less commonly, though not *un*commonly, workers will acknowledge both that tipped work is itself demeaning and that certain workers (be they attractive, young, white, charismatic, female, unusually memorious) will unfairly earn more in tips than will others. And yet, these same workers will typically conclude their assessments with a shrug and something to the effect of, "That's just the way things are," or, "That's the job." Amidst this tacit acceptance, it is largely now nonprofit organizations like ROC that highlight these super-exploitative qualities of tipped work, with the more modest aim of eliminating the tipped wage, and not tipping itself. These contemporary campaigns against the tipped wage could be construed as consumer-led, aiming to rally public support and deploying largely electoral tactics, hewing

closely to what McAlevey (2016) calls an "Advocacy Model." Anti-tipped wage campaigns have also unfolded in the absence of any large-scale, worker-led organizing—an unfortunate feature of the landscape of contemporary employment, wherein restaurant service workers are, by and large, not represented by unions.

A final point that I want to make here regards the substance and outcome of the struggle between employers and workers described in this chapter. On a very fundamental level, this struggle has been over the definition of the wage of tipped workers and whether or not that definition includes the tip. Since the Supreme Court's ruling in *Jacksonville Terminal,* and as further evidenced in the institution of the federal tipped subminimum wage, the official stance of the U.S. Government has been that the tip *is* a part of the wage. As such, the wage of these tipped workers, hazy and nebulous though it may be, is a figure that includes the base wage and a projection of what that worker can expect to receive hourly in tips. While it is ultimately the employer's legal responsibility to ensure that through this combined income the tipped worker earns at least the regional, state or federal minimum wage per hour, in practice the two-tiered system requires that workers appeal directly to customers for a significant portion—even the bulk—of their incomes. As such, in these service interactions the customer assumes the role of secondary, although entirely unregulated, employer.

But how do we understand the wage as a site of struggle, through which working people can "challenge the givenness of their place in the capitalist hierarchy" (Mann 2007: 167), under such a regime? For in the restaurant industry we find a peculiar situation, one in which relatively high-earning and low-earning workers may in fact be paid identical hourly wages from their employers, the vast disparities in their incomes owing entirely to the difference in their earned tips. In this employment relation (unlike in more ordinary forms of wage labor) there is no real

terrain of struggle between workers and customers, as there is between workers and capitalists, through which the tip as a wage can be antagonistically determined (Marx 1932). Yes, the tipped portion of the wage is still historically and socially determined (Marx 1867/1990), in the sense that there may be a broad cultural consensus around appropriate tip amounts. But at the same time, it is very much not, because there is no contract, framework or other means through which that consensus can be enforced, and so in each individual interaction the customer can choose to ignore it.[22] And social consensus or no, customers make highly individualized assessments in calculating the tip, inflected by the identity and persona of the specific employee with whom they interact. Customers are *not* employers, and cannot be regulated as such. Moreover, they do not think of themselves as employers in the moment they determine the sum of the gratuity.

Class war is, of course, always being waged, and restaurant industry employers do not appear to lack for organization or have any misconceptions about the nature of their class interests. One does well to remember that even as unionization rates among service workers decreased and their battles over tips and wages faded into the distant past, the restaurant industry lobby continued its quest for surplus value through wage suppression, and successfully fought to freeze the tipped wage at its 1991 level. In the chapter that follows, I will explore the way that this tipped wage has come to define a particular kind of work, and the way that it functions in the broader orchestration of workplace relations and consistent generation of profit in the restaurant.

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[22] This element of the tip is, I would argue, categorically different from the idea that one bad apple employer paying below-average wages does not disprove the historical and social determination of the value of labor power. The value of the tip can neither be increased through militant organizing nor enforced through regulatory oversight. It cannot even be anticipated, because it takes form only after the service labor itself has already been performed.

Chapter 3 High Risk, Low Pay: The Tip Work Game

As the night winds down and the restaurant begins to empty out, the last shoppers slouching from the mall weighted down with bags, servers like to cluster around the host stand and talk about their tips. Sometimes they come to crow over an unexpected windfall. A large party is rude and querulous but one of its members repents, tipping generously to make up for the bad behavior. Someone gets drunk and may or may not recognize the denomination of crumpled bill they leave behind. More often, the servers come to complain when they are stiffed, when, despite every effort, a customer signs the bill leaving only a pittance, or no tip at all. We, the hosts, look on with mild interest and halfheartedly commiserate. We are paid by the hour, minimum wage or just above it. These wild fluctuations, the triumphs and the disappointments, have nothing to do with us. There are some things that we all seem to be able to agree on though, and these usually revolve around the way customers conduct themselves as we guide them to their tables and bring them the things they desire.

"Everyone should have to work in a service or retail job, at least for like, a week," says Jane, counting her tips as Miroki and I straighten up the host stand at the end of the night.

"So they know how to act!" chimes in Lisa as Miroki gives an exaggerated nod in agreement.

Lisa had a twelve-top tonight, a group of young women, extraordinarily tall basketball players, celebrating a birthday party. She opted to split the table with Jane, as often servers would do in anticipation of a both a large check and too much work. The table was awful, they tell us—ignoring one another, staring at their phones, demanding substitutions and a check split twelve ways. The servers tell us how they did everything they could to create something of a celebratory atmosphere, attending to every small whim and request, to no avail. "They weren't

even having a good time!" Lisa says. Down at the stand, we noticed this too. Miroki had even tried to liven things up by singing along with them from across the restaurant as Jane cheerfully carried out the cake. And then, to top it all off, when the twelve individual checks are tallied the tip, which Lisa and Jane will split down the middle, comes to only 10 percent. Both servers are incensed and seem even a little shocked. They have just spent hours, and the better part of a shift, attending to the needs of this sullen group, who occupied most of the tables in both servers' sections, and are left with only half the earnings they ordinarily expect. They vent their frustrations to us and then trudge back into the restaurant to finish up closing tasks. There is, after all, nothing more that they can do.

Here seemed to be a perfect encapsulation of the problem with tipped work, the fundamental gamble that workers took with each table and each shift. While we all acknowledged a fairly clear hierarchy of skill among the servers—loosely commensurate with experience—anyone, it appeared, could get stiffed. Sure, it happened to Jane and Lisa, two young women contemptuously mocked by support staff for their inelegant performance of service. But it happened, too, to Robyn, who at four years was considered a seasoned veteran of the Danny's dining room. It was moments like these, especially in the early weeks I spent in the host position at Danny's, that seemed to me so fundamentally perplexing. In essence, Jane and Lisa were complaining about something that your average American probably does not think happens in the United States today: they did their jobs, even choosing to exert more than the average amount of energy on this large table, and yet they were not paid—at least, not what they considered to be the fair and expected rate for their services.

As I listened to their disappointment, I was left to wonder, how was it that everything was so arranged in this workplace that tipped workers would fulfill, or even *exceed,* the requirements

of their work, the sale and provision of food unfolding without a hitch, and yet those workers

were left in the lurch? Or, to put it more succinctly, how do employers manage to elicit workers'

effort when those workers are granted no guarantee of a full and livable wage?[23] In an effort to

begin to answer that question, the focus of this chapter will be an examination of work for tips,

both as it describes a particular service labor process and operates within the broader workplace

of the restaurant.

Part of that discussion will involve an explication of how this work can be understood as

a particular iteration of service work game, one that elicits the consistent effort of workers and

that is also especially well-suited to the demands of restaurant service work. First and foremost,

before moving onto that examination of tipped work in particular, I will devote the next several

pages to some elaboration on the state of work in the contemporary, post-Fordist service

workplace, and how theorists typically understand service, as distinct from non-service, work. As

is often flippantly observed, we now live in a service economy: as of 2018, only 12.8 percent of

total U.S. employment was in goods-producing industries, while service-producing jobs

accounted for a whopping 80.2 percent of total employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

2020f).

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[23] Some might argue here that the "full wage" of the tipped worker is actually the minimum wage, the worker's base wage plus the tip credit—whether that credit comes in the form of the tip or is ultimately made up by the employer. Thus, this wage would in fact be guaranteed—or at least, it *should* be. Continuing from an argument I made in the conclusion of the last chapter, I am working from the assumption that that is not the case. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Jacksonville Terminal* determined that the wage of the tipped worker included both hourly wages *and* the tip itself. In this sense, an ordinarily uncomplicated concept like a full or normal wage becomes pretty abstruse, as it is impossible to say with any certainty what the tip will be before it has been given, and there is enormous variation in tip earnings between different workers and establishments. The full wage each worker expects to earn per hour thus ends up being something nebulous and inconsistent—because, of course, it is not guaranteed (save in the case of an automatic gratuity)—and may also vary from worker to worker, even within one workplace. Most of the tipped workers with whom I spoke did, however, have a fairly good idea of their average hourly tip earnings, and so in that sense the workers' wage could be said to represent the base wage of $7.50 per hour combined with an average of their tip earnings over some period of time, not dependent on any one service interaction. But even by this definition, the low or nonexistent tip still represents a specific and poorly or *un*remunerated instance of service labor, *and* a drag on a worker's overall tip average. When the offending party is a large group taking up multiple tables, and lingering in the restaurant for multiple hours, the ramifications of this lost tip are all the more profound.

In this chapter, I highlight two qualities of interactive service work of particular relevance: the intimacy of the service encounter and the unpredictability introduced by customers into the workplace. These qualities can be construed as problems posed to the service employer, and in the pages that follow we will see how the tip work game functions to alleviate these problems. It elicits a great deal of effort from workers—both generally and particularly, in the form of individually-tailored service. So, too, does it ensure that the element of unpredictability, imported into the workplace with each new customer, is primarily absorbed by workers themselves. This latter effect occurs in large part at the level of the individual service interaction where, through the tip, the responsibility, reward, and risk of the service encounter become the province of the server. But, as we will see, that burden of managing that unpredictability is also diffused throughout the broader network of workplace relations. Conflicts typically emerge and are mediated at the level of interactions between workers, rarely escalating to a level requiring managerial intervention.

One thing is clear about the tipped wage: it is an enormous boon to restaurant industry employers. It would seem to represent a real coup in the capitalist's ongoing quest to reduce their expenditure on labor, or variable capital, to an absolute minimum. After all, the food service employer is perfectly within their rights to employ workers at an hourly wage so low as to seem almost ridiculous.[24] But there is a trick within the tipped wage, one not immediately apparent to the casual onlooker, but nonetheless anticipated by those, like the worker organizers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, among its earliest recipients. With a tipped wage comes the necessity of tip-earning, and with that tip-earning comes a particular organization and type of

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[24] And to put that in perspective, a restaurant employer in Syracuse, New York can pay tipped workers an hourly wage just sufficient to purchase a single Big Mac and soda. After two hours of work at this wage, that worker might be able to use it to purchase a movie ticket. Or, perhaps more significantly, many of my Danny's coworkers made frequent reference to the fact that even after the five or so hours of a typical shift, this wage quite often failed to cover the cost of their Uber rides to and from work. Because, of course, while Syracuse is what you might call a "driving city," many of my coworkers could not afford cars.

work. So beyond depressing wages outright, how does the tipped wage, and thus work for tips, secure the kind of work employers require in the restaurant? How does tipped work feature in the smooth handling of customers, the orchestration of the workplace, the seamless (as possible) extraction of surplus value in the restaurant?

Flexibilized, Contingent, Precarious

However much contemporary tip work games might seem to recall games of "making out", the 21st century restaurant is certainly a different beast than was the mid-20th century factory. Burawoy (1979) saw at Allied the ascendency of what he called a hegemonic managerial, or factory, regime. In those decades following the reforms of the New Deal era, workers and capital had reached something of a détente, in which employers made concessions of livable wages and benefits in response to crises of overproduction. Such concessions created the conditions for consent on the shop floor, encouraging workers' willing cooperation, and so Burawoy (1979) observed a labor process in which management could anticipate workers' consistent effort without having to exert overt control over every stage of the labor process.

Interestingly, there is a way in which food service workers can be said to have been excluded from even the modest gains of the New Deal era—within two years of the passing of the FLSA, *Jacksonville Terminal* set a precedent for the codification of tips as wages, and from that point forward grossly deflated wages became an industry norm. Further, the conditions of low wage service work today reflect broader economic shifts and restructuring. The neoliberal project's curtailment of state regulation has seen a reorganization of work, and general roll back of Fordist-era accords between labor and capital, a trumpeting of the import of corporate

leanness and flexibility and castigation of organized labor as an intractable vestige of the past

(Harvey 2005).

For the worker, flexibility generally amounts to irregular scheduling, vague job

descriptions and short-term employment contracts. While the Fordist era had seen the expansion

of unions across the economy and, in the 1940s and '50s, into food service work (Cobble 1991),

in these sectors, as in all others, U.S. unionization rates have declined dramatically from their

mid-century peak (Rosenfeld 2014). The attack on labor and preoccupation with corporate

leanness have led, at the industry level, to a fissuring of the contemporary workplace. Employers

focus on core competencies and shed employment to outside contractors. Subcontracting

arrangements allow employers to effectively circumvent employment law; workers and their

advocates have a difficult time holding employers accountable for workplace violations when

they do not know who those employers are (Weil 2014).

This trend toward subcontracting and a reliance on temporary workers, the outgrowth of

the mid-20th century temp industry (Hatton 2011), is evident in food service and in other related

informal low-wage jobs—the delivery app workers constantly ferrying food in and out of the

restaurants, and drivers ferrying the workers and customers. So too has this era seen a deliberate

splintering of the corporate enterprise, which in the food service industry has meant a rise in

restaurant franchising arrangements (Weil 2014). Restructured, flexibilized, fissured workplaces

are, in turn, more difficult to organize than were the large, mid-century U.S. factories (Rosenfeld

2014). Workers who cannot identify their employers, who are scattered across many smaller

workplaces or across vast distances, are hard to unify around shared class interests. Standing

(2011) goes so far as to refer to the new class of workers formed by this reorganization of work

as the *precariat,* characterized by instability and extreme precariousness in work and, in turn,

living conditions. So what does this all mean for the conditions low-wage workers face in both workplace and labor market today? Some (Griesbach et al 2019) see in the extremely flexibilized work of the gig economy a return to what Burawoy (1979, 1985) termed *market despotism,* a regime characterized by direct coercion and subjection to the "whip" of the labor market. Likewise, Gandini (2019) sees in the intense quantification of platform work a strengthening of overt and micro-managerial control of workers.

Similar processes are at work in the large chain contemporary chain restaurant. While Sherman (2007) highlights the intangible, and thus unquantifiable, nature of much of what constitutes service work, my own observations at Danny's confirmed a pervasive effort to quantify the unquantifiable: nascent technologies, like the algorithmic table management software whose data formed the weekly server leaderboard, quietly record and measure the minute transactions of the service encounter. Studying other low-wage service workplaces, researchers have also described the prevalence of direct surveillance and even criminalization of workers (Vargas 2017; Van Oort 2019) and indirect surveillance through mechanisms like customer feedback and ratings (Fuller and Smith 1991; Leidner 1993). In a seeming Taylorist revival, some restaurants are now repurposing extant surveillance software to closely monitor workers' every action on the job (Matsakis 2019), and low-wage employers utilize algorithmic platforms to elicit constant customer feedback and generally collect a massive amount of extremely granular data about workers (Mateescu and Nguyen 2019).

Erickson's (2004b) emphasis on the performative nature of restaurant service work highlights another, and even more straightforward, avenue for surveillance and control. In the restaurant's front-of-house, nearly everything a worker does is on full display to both customers and management, rendering even something as simple as a restroom trip or drink of water

inordinately stressful. By contrast, Sallaz (2002, 2015) argues that while much of the literature on service work has tended to presume this panopticon environment, in his studies of call center operators and casino dealers questions of control and autonomy are more complex. Management may leave workers to their own devices, relying on outside pressures and workers' anxieties to drive productivity, or selectively exert and remove direct control over the labor process as it serves the company's interests to do so. Unable to elicit the consent of these workers but requiring their effort, the call center employer, Sallaz (2015) argues, instead draws on "normative orders" from beyond the workplace—in this case, workers' desire to communicate competently and pleasantly in their telephonic conversations with customers.

My own observations in the field at Danny's revealed a rather complex, and even muddied, situation. While all front-of-house workers at Danny's were subject to some of the same scrutiny and managed by the same people, distinct labor processes seemed to entail varied prevalence of consent (through work games) and direct coercion. Any worker could be issued a "write up," a document formally acknowledging a workers' wrongdoing and that the worker would be compelled to sign, but rarely did this occur, and at no point during my fieldwork was anyone fired from Danny's. Workers could also be reprimanded in other small ways—the offer of a break might be mysteriously denied or, as I will discuss at length below, a worker might be subject to punitive scheduling.[25] Direct subjection to the labor market, too, appears to function on a sliding scale amongst contemporary low-wage service industries. While restaurant workers are somewhat more buffered from the "whip" than are gig workers, my own experience attests to workers' acute awareness of their own precarious status, that they were at all times only one word or misstep from rejoining the ranks of the unemployed.

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[25] There were, however, more occasional bizarre examples of punitive measures, like the time a new takeout employee who could not seem to grasp his job was told, by our GM Dale, to spend half an hour standing in a corner of the restaurant, face to the wall.

That said, and as will be detailed throughout this chapter, servers generally attested to the seeming invisibility of management on the dining room floor, and the self-management of the tip work game. Hosts, the only hourly front-of-house workers, were subject to the greatest amount of direct scrutiny and management. Often, a manager would spend a busy shift parked just behind the stand, peering over our shoulders, issuing moment-by-moment directions, commands and censure, or even taking over handling of a tricky customer. This would seem to indicate a level of inconsistency in the restaurant, that perhaps various labor niches accord more or less closely with a more explicitly coercive, or hegemonic, organization of work.

This is further complicated by the ways that employers can in fact control for consent in the workplace through the recruitment process (Halpin and Smith 2019), thus screening workers and sorting them into particular positions in the workplace. This sort of recruitment, possibly amounting to a controlling for consent, took a very strange form at Danny's: during my hiring interview, the front-of-house manager, Valerie, concluded our talk by telling me, "We're like a family here." When I gave her only a vaguely affirmative response, she clarified, explaining that no, they were like an *actual* family, as a huge proportion of the staff were actually related to one another. Later, I would learn from Miroki that workers were offered a substantial recruitment bonus for bringing in friends and relatives. In the pages that follow, we will see how these intertwining mechanisms of direct control and the indirect eliciting of effort operate in the restaurant, in the tipped and non-tipped positions of the front-of-house.

Stepping into the Service Theater

In October of 2019—several months behind schedule owing to a spectacularly-timed stress fracture, and still sporting a hideous and seemingly Victorian ankle brace—I was finally ready to

go out and find a job. My first (and, as it turned out, *only*) stop was Destiny USA, the vast

shopping mall perched on the south shore of Syracuse's malodorous Onondaga Lake. I pulled

into the parking lot armed with a neat stack of newly-minted resumes and filled with a deep and

familiar sense of dread. I went over talking points as I made my way through the parking lot and

the automatic doors and carried a handwritten list of references with phone numbers and my own

pen, so that I would look prepared. When I left the mall two hours later, I had been offered and

accepted a job as a host at the second restaurant to which I applied—what I'll here call Danny's,

a large multinational chain whose moody corporate décor rendered it virtually indistinguishable

from every other Destiny establishment. Much to my chagrin, the morning of resume-making

turned out to have been time wasted. Nor would Dale, my new manager, ever bother to contact

any of my references. When I filled in the company's standard online job application in a back

corner booth, Dale told me to just skip through the personal information, and when the system

prompted me for a resume he waved a hand impatiently saying, somewhat mysteriously, "Don't

beat yourself up about the resume."

    It had been a while since I had last worked a service job, and I suppose had forgotten just

what exactly this work was, and what sorts of qualifications were likely to get me in the door at

Danny's. When I met Dale at the front of the restaurant and he asked me what position I was

interested in, I'd opted for deliberate vagueness, saying only, "Oh, front-of-house, whatever

you're hiring for right now." I wanted to see what job he would shuffle me into based on a

cursory evaluation of my person and experience. I had made some small effort to look the part of

a service professional, but otherwise wanted to know, in other words, where Dale would decide

that I belonged, according to what Williams and Connell (2010) call "the logic of aesthetic

labor." This aesthetic labor is essentially the expression in the workplace of a worker's deeply

embodied *habitus*, "the systems of dispositions…characteristic of the different classes and class fractions" (Bourdieu 1984: 6). Habitus in this sense can encompass tastes, ways of speaking, styles of dress, modes of comportment. In seeking workers to perform aesthetic labor, hiring managers thus attempt to match habitus with brand, or the constraints of particular positions. In my case, this meant that Dale made the swift determination that I would be bound for the host stand—not, to me, especially surprising. It was a move I had anticipated based on the constellation of attributes I knew that I brought to the interview as a neatly dressed, young(ish), reasonably articulate white woman with precious few hard skills relevant to the restaurant.

After all, the host job was considered, at least by management, to be a more-or-less low skill position, and (along with the busser job) entry level for the front-of-house. Dale really hammered this point home as we spoke, stressing that hosts quickly grew bored of the work and had a "short lifespan"—a comment that was briefly terrifying, until he explained that he meant they either moved up or moved on. If I had any doubts about the relevance of aesthetic labor to my hiring, they were certainly assuaged by the end of our conversation. After a short interview consisting of a handful of questions about my life that barely touched on my work history and some lengthier reminiscence of Dale's military service, he offered me the job and the opinion that I was "a great fit, culturally." As to compensation, Dale told me he paid people "what they're worth" and offered me the rather astonishing $14 an hour. I would later learn that I was the most highly-paid of the hosts, and by a pretty wide margin.

I thought about why this might have been the case constantly, especially in moments when my own ineptitude compared to that of my coworkers (some of whom had spent years as hosts earning just cents above minimum wage) was glaringly obvious. Because I will never have access to exactly what Dale was thinking, I will just touch on it briefly. For one thing, I was an

oddity at Danny's—nearly a decade older than the other hosts and working on a master's, while most of my coworkers were partway through bachelor's or associate's degrees. My work history was also unusual, as I had several years of food service experience—not as a host or server but in catering and coffee—and had also spent years in agriculture. Dale also dangled the possibility of training me for a management position. This was never to be mentioned again, and so I left my months at the host stand never to know if this had simply been meant as an enticement, or if Dale had really considered it for a time. Lastly, there was Dale's own explanation: "If I offered you any less, you'd just go and get a job that paid more somewhere else." At the very least, this seemed to indicate that Dale wanted me to work there, as did the fact that he'd offered me the job within an hour and a half of me walking in the door—having not examined my resume, but closely examined my person.

As Williams and Connell (2010) suggest, aesthetic labor ultimately serves to reproduce, and even exacerbate, existing social inequalities, as hiring managers' perceptions about a prospective worker's class, race and gender all feature in that assessment of the "fit". And so I found it striking, if not all that surprising, when I learned that another employee had been hired on that same day, and shuffled into the busser job as quickly as I'd been made a host. When I returned to Danny's the next night for training, I met Edward, a Native American man who I guessed to be a few years older than I was, in his mid- to late-30s. Like me, Edward had shown up ready to take any job he was offered, but unlike me, he had multiple decades of service industry experience under his belt. Those decades showed—we weren't supposed to be on the floor that night, weren't even being paid for the training, but Edward had shown up dressed in perfect accordance with the uniform policy. He'd asked his friend Justine, already a Danny's busser, what to wear. Moreover, even his body reflected a lifetime of conditioning himself to

these jobs. Dale left us to parse the company's tattoo policy, and Edward showed me how carefully his own tattoos toed this line: nothing could show above the neck, we read, and he tugged down his collar to show me how the ink stopped just a hair below the line of his shirt. The backs of his hands were heavily decorated but, he told me, nothing there could cause offense. "Hands are for memorials," he said, smiling, and showing me a delicately twining red rose.

Frankly, I found it astonishing that Edward had been hired on as a busser—if anything, the only position lowlier than the host.[26] Beyond his qualifications, it seemed to me that of the two of us Edward was the one actually *trying* to do the work of aesthetic labor and this, he told me, was because he was really hoping to work as a server, as he had done for many years. He seemed a little envious even of my hosting job—he'd been given a choice, but only between bussing and working a menial kitchen position. Hosting had never even been on the table. Thus it was clear that this aesthetic labor, or Dale's assessment of habitus, was a primary means through which the restaurant was organized and through which Danny's workers were stratified along lines of class, gender and race. I would later learn that while the bussers and kitchen staff were largely men, and the servers split roughly down the middle, all but one of the Danny's hosts were young women.

In server and host positions—highly interactive service jobs requiring constant interface with customers—management also draws on what Hochschild (1983) termed "emotional labor." In such work, and particularly in industries where companies have difficulty distinguishing themselves to their customers save through the performance of "good service," management may

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[26] As a busser, Edward was paid just over half of what I was paid by the hour. This wage was meagerly supplemented by "tip outs" from servers, and Danny's bussers never seemed to be sure that they were actually making the minimum wage. Ultimately, Edward would quit after only a few weeks of work, finding that at the busser wage he was unable to justify the cost of transportation to and from work—a bitter irony, as he'd gotten the job to begin with in hopes of being able to purchase a working car.

extend its sphere of control to the emotional experience, or at least outward emotional display, of individual workers. Skilled emotions management is often attributed to female workers, and so such "high-touch" jobs are also typically highly gendered, as Hochschild found in her study of flight attendants. Erickson (2004b) affirms the significance of this emotional labor in the restaurant, and finds that both managers and customers state a preference for female servers, who they perceive as being more adept at managing their own emotions, and the emotions of customers, in the workplace.

These qualities are some of the ways in which theorists have described the centrality of workers' identities to the service, as opposed to manufacturing, labor process. In the restaurant, as in many other workplaces, workers' bodies are perpetually on display—a fact that leads Erickson (2004a) to argue that restaurant service work *cannot* be studied in the same way that factory work has been. In this sense, Sherman (2007) suggests a move from the shop floor to the "service theater," emphasizing the performative nature of service work in a workplace that is at once the site of production and consumption.

A Lopsided Triangle

All of this leads to the rather glaringly obvious fundamental quality that distinguishes service from manufacturing work: the incursion of the customer into the workplace. Particularly in so-called front line, highly interactive service jobs like those in the restaurant's front-of-house, the customer becomes as central to the structure of the labor process as are the manager and worker, leading Leidner (1996) to suggest the "service triangle" formulation. And while in Leidner's conception allegiances are always shifting, the geometry of this formation has also been critiqued, as the power relations pervading the workplace are by no means equivalently allocated

between these three parties (Bélanger and Edwards 2013), nor are the points of the triangle themselves entirely monolithic (Bolton and Houlihan 2010). Considering the implications of these power dynamics, Fuller and Smith (1991) argue that management can essentially delegate the work of controlling workers to the customer through things like customer feedback.[27] Such methods have the effect of simultaneously extending and obscuring management's ability to surveil and control employees.

Customers are not, however, only a boon in to management's ongoing quest for control in the workplace. As many have noted, customers also introduce into the labor process a degree of unpredictability surpassing that found in most non-interactive work. Sherman (2011) suggests that this customer-generated unpredictability in fact reverberates throughout the workplace, even extending to back-of-house workers in non-interactive service jobs whose labor is not directly observed. This she calls a "continuum of interactivity," one that mirrors the varying degrees of unpredictability found in manufacturing work, from piece-rate factory work on (Sherman 2011, 30). In the following section, and throughout the rest of this chapter, we will explore the strategies that workers devise to deal with this unpredictability. So too will we see how tipped work, conceived here as the tip work game, is an especially apt means of organizing this unpredictable, and highly individualized work of service. There is some precedent (see Sherman 2007; Sallaz 2002, 2009) for this theorizing of tipped work as a particular form of service work game, as I will detail below, but Lopez (2010) argues that even these accounts underplay the significance of the fact that in the service game, the unpredictability of machine output has been entirely replaced by the unpredictability of customers. To this I would add that the

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[27] Or, in the case of academia, student evaluations. I thank E.L.W. for this aside, found buried in notes from an early round of feedback.

unpredictability of the customer is not only a feature of the work game, but also a problem for the house (the employer)—one that is explicitly managed through the tip work game.

The Tip Work Game

Beyond its status as a wage, the tip also defines a particular labor process, one that operates within the broader realm of the service workplace. This already seems to be suggested by tipped workers' own ideas about what they think constitutes their work. Such descriptions also point to a certain vanishing act within the service triangle, an already apparent hallmark of the work game. In the classical work game formulation, game play itself obscures the rules of the game, the hand—and control—of management. Similarly, tipped work appears to redirect workers' attention from their objective relationship to management, from the employer-provided wage and from their status as wage workers altogether.

There is some precedent for this conceptualization of tipped work as a work game. Notably, Sherman (2007) and Sallaz (2002, 2009) have theorized tipped work as such—in luxury hotels and on the floor of casinos, respectively—elaborating on the work game as a managerial strategy and adapting it to suit the service context. Las Vegas casino dealers in Sallaz's (2002, 2009) ethnographic study profile their customers as "Georges"[28] or "stiffs," and manage them accordingly. Georges are those deemed likely to tip well, and as such dealers extend them every courtesy. Stiffs (a pretty self-explanatory appellation) are treated with disdain, and encouraged to leave the game altogether. While workers are allowed to exert some agency over their management of ordinary, "low roller" clientele, as soon as a "high roller" enters the scene the pit

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[28] The rare close reader might notice here that this is the second "George" to emerge in the course of this thesis, though the two are apparently entirely unrelated. The big-tipping George of the casino is a nod to the president whose face adorns the one dollar bill.

boss swoops in, directly managing the interaction between worker and customer. In this way, the intermittent autonomy of workers ultimately demonstrates management's overarching control over the labor process. Individual workers maneuver within that system and "adopt an entrepreneurial identity," (Sallaz 2009: 61) but never in a way that directly threatens the house or its profits. This theme of the connection between the tip work game and the cultivation and development of entrepreneurialism is of constant significance on the dining room floor, and one to which I will return throughout these chapters.

These games of entrepreneurship function to obscure power and control on the casino floor, and "[m]uch as clients misrecognize the statistical reality of the gambling transaction, so do dealers their own agency" (ibid). This game of managing Stiffs and Georges provides workers the opportunity to exercise a degree of autonomy. In playing, however, workers' interactions with customers unfold in exactly the way that management requires. Further, it is clear that workers have no *real* control, as the house may grant and rescind this autonomy as it sees fit. Sallaz writes that one of the effects of these tipping games is that dealers feel themselves at odds with the casino. In the back and forth between dealers' self-management and the pit bosses' intercession, dealers and the house are typically at cross purposes, and allowing workers to elicit tips at times "costs…the firm" (Sallaz 2002: 421). In Sherman's (2007) hotel study, tip earning is also something that happens at the margins of work, at times even portrayed as a semi-illicit activity only tolerated by management. (It is also extremely unlikely that the workers in these studies, especially the unionized hotel workers about whom Sherman writes, are paid the subminimum wage by their employers.)

In this sense, these formulations of the tip work game seem somewhat ill suited to the restaurant. Tip earning, for Sallaz's (2002, 2009) dealers, actually serves to put workers at odds

with the house, even as the control of management is largely obscured. When, in the case of the high roller, the power of the house is reasserted, the tip work game is temporarily suspended. Instances of such suspensions are extremely rare among restaurant servers, and typically manifest only when management directs workers to undertake non-tip-earning activities ("side work" or opening and closing duties). Such tasks might include rolling napkins, cleaning or even training a new employee. While such redirections do regularly happen in the restaurant, they are generally anticipated and, moreover, subject to limitations—or at least, they are supposed to be. At present, federal law requires that categorically tipped workers are subject to an 80/20 rule, indicating that at least 80 percent of the tipped worker's time over the course of a shift must be dedicated to tip-earning activities.[29] So then (at least under ideal circumstances) tip earning, for the restaurant server, encompasses the near-entirety of the labor process. This also highlights a way in which I ultimately find the work game to be a deeply unsatisfying way to understand tipped restaurant work, no matter how neatly the model may fit, and it strikes me as a little unhinged to describe tip earning, the stakes of which are literally one's livelihood, as a game.

Further, and also unlike in Sherman (2007) and Sallaz's (2002, 2009) studies, restaurant tip earning *itself* accords almost entirely with the aims of management, as in the restaurant a server's tips represent a straightforward percentage of sales. Only in the rare case, such as when a tipped worker might attempt to bend the rules to curry favor with a customer, does tip earning threaten the directives of local and corporate management: to make sales and move customers smoothly, pleasantly and swiftly through the restaurant. As we will see later on in this chapter,

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[29] This is not to say, of course, that employers do not still flout the 80/20 rule. Danny's, and many other similar restaurants, have been repeatedly plagued by lawsuits from groups of workers claiming that their employers consistently require them to spend far more than 20 percent of their time on non-tipped work.

even these rare threats are tempered by the multiple curbs to workers' actual autonomy on the dining room floor.

What's in a Tip?

While it may yet be difficult to conceive of what workers might like about working for tips, it is not so hard to grasp the preference from a managerial perspective. In a quite straightforward way, the institutionalization of a tipped wage allows employers in the restaurant industry to reduce the cost of labor, variable capital, to something close to its barest minimum.[30] This reduction of the employer provided wage is so extreme ($2.15 federally and $7.50 in New York State at the time of the start of this study, although that was raised to $7.85 in December of 2019) that it is typical for tipped restaurant workers to describe their "hourly" as something merely pro forma, not their *actual* wage.

"My hourly rate stays the same no matter what, but I'm not working off my hourly," Robyn, one of my former Danny's coworkers told me in a long conversation over margaritas. "I'm working off tips." This was something I heard from servers time and again. Jack, another career server, described base wages as essentially pocket money: "You would spend that as soon as you left," he told me. "Stop at a gas station for a Gatorade and, you know…I've never even budgeted that into anything I do. It's just extra money." This dismissal of the significance of base wages was confirmed, too, in surveys of New York State food service workers. In a pool of 95 respondents, all tipped workers paid the subminimum wage, 53 respondents, or 56 percent of those surveyed, either incorrectly reported the tipped wage or said they had no idea what it was. As Jack put it, "I get it direct deposited and I don't ever see it. I don't ever notice it, open it up. It

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[30] Workers on some small farms, which are exempt from coverage under the FLSA, and incarcerated laborers would represent even more extreme deflations of the cost of labor power.

just goes into my bank account…I've found, in the restaurant experience that I have, if you're worried about your paycheck, then you shouldn't be in the restaurant business, because you're just working on tips."

The notion that servers "work for the tip," and only the tip, contributes to the overall sense of personal responsibility and autonomy pervading workers' characterization of their work, a theme to which I will return throughout these chapters. I would often hear workers describe their work in just this way: "It's your responsibility," said Alex, who recently returned to waiting tables. Some would go so far as to characterize their employment as management *allowing* them to work, not compelling or requiring them to do so. This was something I found frankly surprising—it's rhetoric that pervades the professional sphere, but around the earning of tips it seems that employers have been especially adept at cultivating a similar entrepreneurial ethos among low-wage service workers.

This attitude was sometimes belied in moments of stress and bad business. About halfway through my tenure at Danny's, we had an especially eventful weekend at the mall. First, on Friday evening, there was a shooting in the food court. This was followed on Sunday by a stabbing outside of the bowling alley and arcade. Business dropped off precipitously and immediately, and never seemed to fully recover. This meant many things at the mall—most notably, a significant increase in police and security presence. For the servers, it meant more cuts, fewer shifts and fewer tables when they did work. On a particularly slow morning, a couple of days after the stabbing incident, Marni, a full-time Danny's server in her early 20s, came to up to hang out with me at the host stand. She looked dejected, and told me that she had not worked much lately. She had been sick, and then had been called off a shift, as were many servers that week. She was glad to be in, she told me, although she was not at all sure she would actually

earn enough to cover the cost of her Uber ride to and from the mall. "At least I'm making my hourly," she said with a sigh, and I realized the implication was that for several hours of the shift, Marni had *only* been making her hourly. Much of the time, or even most of the time, servers might dismiss the base wage. But, inevitably, there would be times when the tip failed to materialize, and at such times the significance of the employer-provided wage was bleakly reasserted.

Strategies of Speed and "Good Service"

Beyond reducing the actual cost of labor, tipped work also, as is typical of the work game, elicits effort. This functions on the one hand at the individual level, as servers attempt to skillfully and efficiently manage their sections in order to maximize their total tip earnings. Servers do this primarily through two means, the first of which is maximizing the amount the tip through the skillful performance of service in their interactions with particular customers and tables. "I pride myself on being very personable and giving good service," explained Gia, a part-time server at a restaurant catering to Syracuse's wealthy suburbanites. "It's something I prioritize, I think I do really well, and I don't think that there's an issue with it, or that I'm lacking in that area."

As Miroki, a Danny's host and keen observer with little patience for the servers, put it, "If the company was paying you, I highly doubt some of these servers would kiss their table's asses like they do now. Some servers just do any bitty thing." He put on a high, falsetto voice, and continued:

> "Oh, no, I know my table so well. They don't want green onions in the chicken. Oh, no, don't do that!" The managers probably look at that table fifty-six as dollar signs. And you better take care of that dollar sign, because if the dollar sign doesn't leave with the money we want it to leave, then—well, there's not much they can do, but they're just going to be a little upset. But if they're like, "Oh my god, your server was wonderful. We're definitely coming back," and they see those dollar signs coming back in…

Here there is evident a direct through line between workers' commitment to "good service," the fact that a server's wage comes largely from the customers and management's prevailing need for workers to go above and beyond in their performance of service. As Sallaz (2002) observes, one of the primary reasons why the tip work game remains appealing to employers is that it "spontaneously generates customized service provision" (421). It is, in this sense, an especially neat and effective way to elicit a maximum amount of service labor from workers for a minimum expenditure.

The second tactic servers typically deploy to maximize earnings—and which, like the service performance, compels them to work harder—centers around time, servers attempting to manage their tables so as to maximize the number of seatings in their section of the course of a shift. Servers at Danny's attempted this by swiftly attending to their customers, and also simply through the pace with which they carried out tasks around the restaurant. From the host stand, we could watch them in panorama, darting across the dining room with a rapid and slightly inhuman grace. The more experienced servers demonstrated a confident, economical physicality to which I often found myself comparing my own clumsiness on the floor. They careened around under their massive trays yelling, "Corner!" and unfolding slings with deft one-handed motions, and I could only comically throw myself out of the way.

Managing the section also meant rapidly cleaning and re-setting tables so as to "flip" or "turn over" as many tables as possible, and minimize the chance of being skipped in the rotation. ("Rotation" here refers both to the servers' abstract idea of the order in which they believed they should be assigned tables and the actual paper chart that hosts created, and to which hosts referred, in order to allocate tables, based upon the arrival time of each individual server.) Managing the section could also mean hassling other workers who, if they were slow or out of

sync, could throw a spanner in the works. Servers would antagonize support staff (typically hosts, runners and bussers) whenever they perceived a threat to the swift delivery of food to and clearing, setting and seating of their tables.

At Danny's, it was the bussers—whose task it was to linger in the wings of the restaurant, swooping in to clear and re-set tables whenever and wherever they were most needed—that were the prime subjects of servers' ire. Servers typically complained that bussers were slow, that they were absent or delinquent and that they failed to fairly allocate their services across various servers' sections. Beyond simply commanding or complaining about them, servers also had a direct means by which they could censure the bussers and runners: the tip out, the portion of their own tips that they doled out to these other workers at the end of a shift. While there might have been a general consensus around appropriate tip outs, it was also clear that at Danny's there was no hard and fast rule, and so the tip out was largely left to the server's own discretion. As such, it functioned as tip work in miniature, a means by which one group of workers could attempt to manage another. Notably, at Danny's the bussers and runners (unlike the hosts) were paid the tipped wage. As such, tip outs were a real source of preoccupation—not only for the tipped out workers, but for management, who in the absence of the tip out would be required to shell out an additional $3.30[31] per worker, per hour.

In the kitchen, where servers had no real power to wield through monetary compulsion, they seemed primarily to attempt to make themselves slightly irritating. When I went back into the kitchen to fill a cup of water from the well (the hosts were only really allowed to go back to the kitchen for this purpose or to retrieve cleaning supplies) I would see them hovering near the line, watching the kitchen staff, who studiously ignored them. The servers' complaints about the

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[31] In New York State (excluding New York City and Long Island), in 2019.

pace of food production in the kitchen were a constant refrain, and it was not uncommon to find an irritated server lingering at the server station, arms crossed, muttering about how "the kitchen is really fucking up tonight."

The application of these strategies appeared to differ between types of establishments and restaurant sectors, and servers can utilize both of these strategies or emphasize one over the other. Generally speaking, I found that those servers who I interviewed that worked in the fine dining sector, like Gia (quoted above), tended to place more of an emphasis on the performance of "good service." By contrast, Danny's servers tended to take a more abstemious attitude toward customers, preferring to speed through tables as efficiently as possible over the course of a shift. When I asked her about discrepancies between servers' earnings, longtime Danny's server Robyn described her preference for this tactic:

> Robyn: I'm not going to lie to you. I'm one of the servers that earn a lot more. I mean, well over a thousand dollars last week. I can guarantee you not half of them did that…But also, I'm willing to come in early. I'm willing to stay late. I bus my own tables. I don't wait for a busser to do it.
>
> Hanna: Which makes a big difference.
>
> R: Especially on a Friday or Saturday night, when you're trying to flip tables, it makes a huge difference.
>
> H: So you're just seating that many more people over the course of the night.
>
> R: Exactly. That's why I also like this restaurant. When I worked in Fayetteville it was wine and dine, so it's like, you want to get that $17 glass of wine. At this restaurant it does not matter.
>
> H: You'd rather just focus on being able to turn tables over faster?
>
> R: Yeah, because here, you get four tables. At other restaurants you get three. So if I get four tables, and all the checks are $50, and I turn it in 45 minutes, that is $40 an hour. When you work at a different restaurant—granted, the check is $200, but they were there for three hours, so it doesn't even out. I like the fast turnover, shorter interactions.

She told me about some friends of hers who worked at a much higher-priced restaurant, also in the mall, and where she herself would never want to be employed. "They get $600 checks," she said. "One person paid for it and doesn't tip, because that check was $600. I'd much rather deal with these people. Yeah, their check was $40. They left $5. It doesn't matter. I have three other tables." I asked Robyn then if she saw this as a way of minimizing the uncertainty of her tables, and she excitedly concurred, saying, "Yes, exactly. So it's not as risky." This situation was further complicated by the fact that on most, though not all, shifts one or a handful of bussers would be roving around the dining room tending to dirtied tables to assist the servers. Robyn's willingness to "buss [her] own" tables translates to a willingness to take on more of the work that would ordinarily be performed by bussers. In turn, such willing exertions might influence a server's calculation of the tip out—as I will discuss later in this chapter and in chapter four.

Robyn preferred work at Danny's, she said, to a more expensive restaurant—like the suburban steakhouse where she had worked in the past. As she saw it, a higher volume of customers with smaller average check sizes decreased the level of risk in her tip earnings. She saw getting stiffed as an inevitability, but one that could be managed by lowering the stakes of each individual interaction. This made her income more predictable, she told me, and while she might experience minor fluctuation in her earnings between shifts, typically these discrepancies were minimal to nonexistent once averaged out over the course of a week or month.[32]

Servers would also, at times, deliberate *slow* the turning of tables in an effort to exert some control over the pace of work, possibly in order to be able to continue to focus on service customization, rather than just speeding through tables. Servers might deliberately neglect to clean tables in their section, so that they could not immediately be allocated additional

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[32] Robyn also appeared to keep very careful track of her income between shifts, weeks, months and annually, and told me proudly that she had earned $42,000 the year before our interview working, on average, 25-hour weeks.

customers, or even instruct the hosts (to our great annoyance) to skip them in the rotation for a period of time. This prompted complex responses from management. Sometimes a manager would appear to take pity on a harried server and would encourage the hosts not to give them any new tables for a time. Sometimes, when the restaurant was particularly busy, a manager (usually Dale) might come out front and begin micromanaging, hounding the bussers and tasking other workers (including hosts) with helping to clear and reset the tables. At other times, managers appeared to grow frustrated with servers' emphasis on service customization over speed, and would encourage hosts to censure specific servers by skipping them in the rotation, even if they had tables available.

The effort that tip work games elicit from workers then has multiple meanings at once. Service customization and intense time management of sections both facilitate the seamless generation of profits for the restaurant. While, in making this effort, the tipped worker may directly intend to maximize their tip earnings, indirectly (and perhaps most significantly) this work is that of maximizing sales over the course of a shift. Here, again, it is important to highlight the near-complete accord of the aims of worker and management, as tips are calculated as a direct percentage of the sale. All of this labor performed by workers in an effort to maximize their earnings and exert some degree of control over the pace and substance of their work amount to strategies to manage and even minimize the unpredictability and risk that customers represent in the labor process. I will recall here Lopez's (2010) observation that this particular kind of risk is undertheorized in the tip work game. I would also argue that this unpredictability, stemming from the fact that each new service interaction introduces a novel and idiosyncratic participant to the labor process, poses a constant challenge to restaurant, to management's mandate to oversee a steady flow of profits at a bare minimum expenditure on labor.

In this sense, it seems that the tip work game functions rather ingeniously. Through it, the unpredictability and risk of the customer is managed, and in large part borne, by the workers themselves—and at relatively little cost to the employer. This is also an effect that can be observed across the restaurant. Just as the tip game conditions workers to manage customer unpredictability, so too does it play a role in managing the unpredictability that ricochets throughout the workplace, helping to ensure the smooth operation of multiple overlapping, though sometimes conflicting, labor processes.

The Hive of Workplace Relations

As we will now see, tip work games not only elicit effort and define the labor process at the level of the individual worker, but also define relationships between workers engaged in the same labor process, or distinct labor processes, across the restaurant. To this end, management has at its disposal multiple variations of tipped wage structure, which can be selected or tailored to suit the constraints and conditions of a particular workplace. Some ethnographic studies of the restaurant (see Gatta 2009a, Wilson 2019a) have described the effect that different wage and tipping structures have on workplace dynamics, or relations in production, though these studies do not usually devote much—if any—attention to the active role of management in selecting these tipping structures to strategically maximize the extraction of surplus value.

Most broadly, restaurants fall under the categories of the pooled and the non-pooled house. In the pooled house, all tips are collected and divided evenly amongst workers, or based on complex points systems. In the non-pooled house, workers may keep the whole of their tips, or management may dictate (or strongly suggest) that workers "tip out" a certain percentage of their tips to support staff workers who have minimal, or no, direct interaction with customers.

Gatta (2009b) finds that these tipping structures make the restaurant an extremely stratified workplace, one in which workers are pitted against one another, facilitating some alliances and preventing others. As workplaces, restaurants tend to be both spatially and hierarchically gendered and racialized. People of color are disproportionately represented in un-tipped back-of house positions, and men are more likely than women to occupy managerial positions (Sachs et al 2010). Tips, Wilson (2019a) argues, accentuate extant divisions and hierarchies in the workplace, particularly the class and racial divides between front-of-house and back-of-house workers. Tipped and un-tipped workers are often at cross purposes, as their mode of income and the requirements of their job at times suggest opposite courses of action.

Tipped work also elicits effort by fueling competition between workers, as is typical of work games, or, by contrast, through the pressure of mutual dependence. Which compulsion predominates depends on the tip structure selected by management in a particular workplace. Several of the workers I interviewed worked, either at the time of the interview or in the past, in restaurants that utilized tip pools of one kind or another. Typically in these systems, all tips would be collected and pooled by management and then distributed by various schemes. Often, tips were distributed in accordance with points systems, in which different positions or workers were allotted points that corresponded to dollar amounts, and that fluctuated depending upon the total tips grossed per shift. There are many variations of such systems—in the way that points are allocated, who is included in the pool and when and how tips are averaged and distributed.

As such, management has at its disposal numerous ways of managing the particular risks inherent in and constraints of the restaurant in question. While I would not go so far as to assume that every restaurant's tipping structure reflects an extremely premeditated plan, implemented by some Machiavellian manager, I do not think that it is too much of a stretch to consider the

likelihood that elements of what form these structures are quite deliberate. Though this study

gave me only minimal insight into the innerworkings of management at Danny's, I did note the

following after my initial hiring interview with the Danny's general manager:

> *Dale thinks it's good not to have hosts in the pool, although so many other places do. I ask why, and he says it makes people start to get jealous and causes tensions. It's better, he says, just to pay people "what they are worth."*

This followed my inquiry as to why hosts were not tipped out at Danny's, as they are at many

other restaurants, and Dale seemed to indicate that he had made this rather unusual decision on

his own. (I did not press him on it at the time, but I later wondered what Dale then thought of

"worth" of the servers, who he paid the flat rate of $7.50 per hour, regardless of their skill or

experience.) On the whole, this assessment seemed to suggest a fairly explicit awareness of the

way that these minute calibrations of tip sharing and wage structures translated into very real

workplace relations.

The Pooled House

Pooled houses tend to decrease competition between workers and increase the intra-workplace

pressure to perform—exerted in large part by one's peers. In this sense, multiple servers I

interviewed used the phrase "team environment" to describe the feel of the pooled house—

leaving me to wonder whether some element of management speak was being reflected in their

language. "People aren't competing over tables," said Gia, whose employer utilizes a pooling

system. "If, during dinner, I'm at one of my tables and my food for a different table is ready in

the window, whoever's in the kitchen at that time will go bring it to that table." This collectivism

even extends to the way workers describe their earnings, and as Gia put it, "If you are cashing

out a bill and you comment that the tip is really good, everyone else gets excited too…We talk about it like it's our money. There's that kind of mentality to it."

The flip side of this cooperative atmosphere is a pressure to perform as part of a team, someone upon whom every worker depends for their earnings. This pressure could take the form of gentle ribbing about one's effort, skill, or even personal appearance. Alex, who had recently left a restaurant where tips were pooled, recounted that a former coworker had once said to her, in exasperation, "Ugh! You can't wear a sports bra! That's why you've been having bad weeks." She continued, reflecting on the lengths to which she would and would not go in service of collective tip earning:

> People will be puttin' on their push up bras like, 'It's for the tip pool.' And I kind of made a decision. You have to draw your own lines with that stuff…It's weird. I'm comfortable with putting on a face that's a little more made up in the conventional way than I'm used to. I'm comfortable even with having rapport with the table. The line between rapport and flirting, I guess, is kind of thin.

While tipped wage abolitionists often draw a direct connection between the isolated, tip-dependent server and vulnerability to workplace sexual harassment, here the interdependence of the pooled house seems also to contain the danger of such forms of harassment and self-exploitation. And unlike in the non-pooled house, where workers have little investment in one another's comportment, here Alex describes a (mostly good natured) interaction with another worker that is, at the least, sexually suggestive. This is an especially salient thing to note in light of the contemporary debates over the tipped wage, as tip pooling is generally thought to be more common in restaurants that do not avail themselves of the tip credit.

Beyond these relationships between servers, workers also described an experience of cooperation that extended beyond the dining room in restaurants where back-of-house staff were included in the tip pool. Alex, whose last employer had utilized such a system, said,

> The kitchen was more willing to work with us when we had difficult tables that wanted annoying things. They were less likely to blame us, or be tense, or make it hard on us, because they understood that if they did this annoying thing that the table wanted, they were probably going to get some return on it as well, not just me. Why go out of their way and ruin their flow, and they're not going to see any difference for that?

When traditionally non-tipped workers saw "some return" through the extension of the tip pool to the back-of-house, tip earning became a priority, where it would not otherwise have been. In this way, the most inclusive form of the tip pool arrangement appears to translate to a workplace where cooperation is maximized and conflict between workers minimized, as it brings the objectives of workers engaged in distinct labor processes into much closer alignment. Alex, for one, missed that atmosphere, where she said there was, "a lot more cohesiveness, and the feeling of folks and the way they related in the workplace was great."

By contrast, some servers cited specific concerns with sharing tips beyond the dining room. These objections largely centered around the de-linking of the tip from the concrete performance of service labor—an association that, as described above, servers tend to fetishize. When I asked Robyn about what she thought of pooling arrangements, with which she had no personal experience, she replied:

> The kitchen would get it, the dishwashers would get it, and honestly, I don't think that's fair, because I worked for that too. Granted, they should get paid what they're qualified to do. A dishwasher is usually someone that got out of prison, that stabbed somebody. They probably shouldn't be interacting with people and trying to get people to come back. I have regulars that come to see me because I'm a successful person, and they see the money they give me doesn't go to drugs…I have somebody that comes in and leaves me $50 every week, just because. They just want to see me. But I should not give my money to [the back-of-house], because they just want to see me.

For workers who see the tip as a representation of their own performance of the work of service and, as we will see in the next chapter, in many ways an affirmation of skill and worth, the very idea that tips could be shared beyond the dining room floor is something of an affront. Not only would the tips they earned, and thus their particular labor, be averaged out across the shift's

roster of servers, but it would accrue to those who performed no service labor at all. In a sense then, not only would the individual worker's specific exertion of service labor form part of an amorphous mass, but the very import of "good service" would itself be diminished.

At times, too, the interdependence of the tip pool produces something quite the opposite of good natured collaboration, and close scrutiny of coworkers fosters resentment. "I've worked with people who I feel like don't have the same work ethic as me, and I might get annoyed that I'm busting my ass and I know they're going to get a lot of my money," reflected Gia, even after she had just described how much she appreciated the pool. Interestingly, I rarely heard mention of these sorts of frustrations directed at peers in the non-pooled house. There, as was certainly the case at Danny's, workers' ire was typically directed at those engaged in distinct, though mutually interdependent, labor processes—the kitchen and support staff.

The Non-Pooled House

Several of the servers I interviewed expressed a distinct preference for non-pooled houses for just this reason, usually citing concerns over what was and was not *fair*. "I think if you tip pool it breeds people to be very lazy," said Jack, the oldest and, at 25 years, most experienced of the servers to whom I spoke. "I think it's unfair," he continued.

> I'm a better server than I lot of other servers and I don't want to work for them…And if we work next to each other and every night we talk about what we're getting tipped out and whatever else, and we're even, I have no problem working with you. But just to be forced to work with somebody else just because—I think it's not good.

His sense of the favorability of the pool was premised on who exactly one ended up yoked to, and how skilled they might or might not be—things typically outside of the control of servers, who do not get to choose their coworkers. In the non-pooled house, like where Jack worked, competition between servers, or even outright hostility, predominated. "It's cutthroat on the floor,

especially in a restaurant like this," he told me. After many years as a server, Jack had worked his

way into a coveted position in one of Syracuse's more expensive restaurants—one that,

incidentally, I learned was notorious for its fiercely competitive staff and ruthless conditions.

Another server I interviewed, Kyle, had been hired there to work the lunch shift but had not been

able to stick it out for more than a month and a half. "Man, they were so cutthroat," he said,

unknowingly echoing Jack. "I was like, this is not worth the stress…I'd rather not be working."

At this restaurant, it seemed, workplace relations between the staff of servers were largely

defined by constraints and objectives of tip earning. Notably, Jack's workplace was the highest

priced restaurant at which any of the people I interviewed in this project had worked. Because

average checks were so much higher than at a restaurant like Danny's, so too were the stakes

raised, much as Robyn observed when she described her preference for the more moderately

priced, family restaurant. "You know, I like most of the people I work with," Jack went on,

leaning in somewhat conspiratorially.

> But there are some people that are super greedy…I like to spread the wealth, whereas
> some people like to hoard the wealth. So to work with strong personalities, you have to
> be a strong personality, I feel, because if you're a weak personality you will get taken
> advantage of, one hundred percent, and you will make $100 to $200 less than that person.
> So you have to stand on your toes and make sure the people around you understand that
> you can't just come up and steal a table.

"How do you do that?" I asked him. "How do you project that to other people?"

Jack laughed. "Uh, how I project that is, 'Stop stealing my tables'." Tipped workers at this

restaurant do not depend on one another to secure their earnings and in fact, at least by Jack's

reckoning, actually pose a real threat to one another's success on the floor. Workers are engaged

in constant territorial skirmishes, attempting to eke out additional tips by encroaching on tables

and poaching customers. Of course, servers can only maximize their earnings by these means at

the expense of their coworkers, and thus Jack cultivated an aggressive, imposing posture on the floor to discourage those sorts of advances.

In this sense, I would describe the tip structure employed by these restaurants as *maximally* divisive, simultaneously producing a corrosive relationship of judgement and resentment between servers and support staff and hyper-individualization among the servers. This heightened the conviction among workers that tips represented a recognition of individual effort or merit, which accrued to those most deserving. Even Robyn, who acknowledged the ever-present risk and randomness of the tip, also told me that she believed she earned more than other workers because of qualities that she possessed and others did not: "People interact with me and realize I am educated. Granted, I don't have a degree yet, but they see that, and I feel like they do tip me more."

The Gamemaster's Choice

Overall, decisions over whether or not to utilize tip pools involve significant trade-offs for the employer. Tip pooling might encourage cooperation and even compel certain kinds of effort, thus minimizing the need for the direct oversight and management of workers. In that cooperative labor process, though, also lies a threat—of reduced managerial control and of collective action by workers. Strikingly, only Alex, of all the workers with whom I spoke in the course of this project, had any firsthand experience of collective organizing in the workplace. At her previous job, a pooled house including both front-of-house and back-of-house staff, workers had banded together and conducted a button-wearing campaign to demand the censure of a manager who had harassed a worker in the kitchen with a racial slur. As a result of the campaign, the restaurant's

general manager grudgingly agreed to hold a meeting with the workers, ultimately demoting the offending manager.

It seems, then, that there is a fairly direct connection between the wage structure in these workplaces and likelihood that solidarity between, and collective action on the part of, workers could pose any threat to management. It was not, perhaps, surprising then that Danny's, an international chain whose organizational structure is replicated around the globe, would deploy what struck me as the *most* divisive wage system. Yes, it meant that more direct intervention might be required from managers, but so too would it obviate the more costly threat of worker unionization—a threat that has become more concrete in the food service sector in recent years.[33]

One particularly poignant example I found of this divisive atmosphere was the general antipathy of hourly workers at Danny's to the servers—not at the individual level, but as a privileged stratum of workers. This extended to an outright conviction that servers' base wage should not increase, not because it would threaten their tips, but because it would be unfair for servers to earn any more than they already did. Miroki put it succinctly, as we debated the merits of a legislative change:

> I know servers can make like, 400 bucks when they're a double[34]. Why should your wage go up? First of all, I think it's super weird as it is. So you make that much money as a tipped worker, and us hosts just still make the same money we make. But without us, you wouldn't get those tables to begin with. We could blatantly skip you. We could do so much to make you have a really horrible time. And you're still over there making $400, and we're just chillin', making our set wage that we got. So that's how I feel like it is. I'm a little half and half on the "up the tip" part.

It does not seem like too great a stretch to imagine that these sentiments, and really the absolute lack of anything approaching solidarity between different kinds of workers in a restaurant like

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[33] To name a few examples: the Fight for $15 campaign (Luce 2015), IWW's organizing of fast food workers in the Pacific Northwest (Burley 2018) and the nascent Tartine Union in San Francisco, which recently voted to join the ILWU (Press 2020).
[34] Having talked with a lot of Danny's servers about their earnings, I seriously question this estimation, and told Miroki as much. He conceded that it *might* have been a bit of an overstatement.

Danny's, might contribute to the challenge of rallying industry workers around campaigns like

One Fair Wage. After all, tipped workers only constitute a portion of the workers in any given

restaurant (unless it is the rare establishment pooling and dividing tips between all workers)—

and often, as is the case at Danny's, they are far from the lowest-earning workers in the

workplace.

The "Huge, Crazy Algorithm"

How, then, do workers perceive and experience this work of service that is embodied in the tip?

For one thing, for servers this work—more so than anything else they did in the course of a

shift—occupied the bulk of their time and, most significantly, mental energy. This was not only

labor that workers performed in the moment, in the act of taking an order or delivering a dish,

but in the moments leading up to those actions. Much of this labor would be performed before a

worker even left home, and involved deliberate and sometimes elaborate grooming and dressing

both in accordance with workplace dress codes and to evoke particular responses from

customers. It is this aesthetic labor (Williams and Connell 2010) upon which employers draw in

selecting servers during the hiring process, and which workers continue to perform in service of

successful tip earning on the floor. In interviews, it seemed clear that women servers were

particularly likely to acknowledge the significance of aesthetic labor—the selection of outfit,

styling of hair, even choice of underwear all premeditated to suit the constraints of the job. As

Robyn put it rather blithely, "If I don't wear makeup to work I get terrible results."

Beyond physical appearance, there is also the labor of cultivating a certain demeanor or

affect, of embodying the persona of the server, labor that is not simply performed once, but that

must continue on indefinitely. Servers take painstaking effort in that performance of good service

to size up each table and customer in order to tailor their performance of service for maximum effect. Much of this effort falls under the rubric of what would be described as emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), and in attending to and attempting to manage customers in the service interaction, workers strive to calibrate their own display of emotions in order to evoke, in turn, a particular emotional effect in the customer. Both aesthetic and emotional labor feature significantly in the gendering of such interactive service work, as customers, employers and workers themselves hold distinct expectations of male and female service workers. So too do employers and customers typically perceive female servers as the more adept emotional managers (Erickson 2004b).

Accounts of how workers actually *feel* about work that draws so heavily upon workers' own identities, their physical bodies and internal worlds, are varied, and even contradictory (Korczynski 2009). For Hochschild (1983), the requirements of emotions management on the job created dissonances between workers' actual feelings and those they had to deploy in their handling of customers. This produced an experience of alienation much like—although perhaps more psychically distressing than—the alienation of the worker from the products of their labor (Hochschild 1983; Marx 1867/1990). By contrast, Erickson (2004b) argues that this emotional labor can provide a sense of meaning and satisfaction for workers, who strategically "invest" in and "detach" from their customers. This observation mirrors the two strategies for customer management and tip maximization described in chapter three, the strategic emphasis on quantity or quality of service.

Not fully captured in these accounts is the sheer amount of work that goes into the calibration of the service encounter, the evaluations workers must be constantly making in the customization of service and weighing the risks and rewards of this investment or detachment.

For tipped workers, there is an enormous amount of *labor* that goes into attempts to predict customer behaviors and preferences, and thus gauge what type of, and how much, service labor to expend. Alex, with years of fine dining service work under her belt, described this work in all its exhausting detail, and the way that this labor of service calibration can at times even require workers to carefully weigh the likelihood of—and their own willingness to tolerate— sexual harassment from customers:

> I make a decision about the kind of friendly I'm going to be. It's like a huge, crazy algorithm. It always is, when you're—if you're busy, or whatever. It's like, am I going to be curt and short? Am I going to make eye contact, and smile, and be like, you're nice, I'm nice…

Here Alex stopped and sighed, prompting me to ask her about the goal of all of this work, if she saw the ultimate aim as the maximizing of her tips. "Yeah, frankly," she said,

> Yeah, because you don't want to. In any interaction, even if you're not a server, in the world, when you feel intimidated by a guy like that, or uncomfortable, you're always doing math about, what can I do to not provoke this person, but avoid feeling uncomfortable? It's intensified when there's money involved, because you don't just need them to not harass you. You need them to give you money.

The "huge, crazy algorithm" that Alex describes here in fact makes the tipped worker responsible not only for the management of their own and the customers' emotions, but even places on the worker the onus of managing the behavior of potential harassers.

This work of service customization is, ultimately, the work of dealing with that unpredictability of the customer (an unpredictability that, somewhat horrifically, includes the possibility that the customer may decide to sexually harass you). It may well be the case that, from the perspective of the employer, the tip "spontaneously generates customized service provision" (Sallaz 2002: 421), but what we can see from accounts like Alex's is that it is only from the *outside* that this service customization appears spontaneous. And while this work is enormously taxing, and a constant effort for the tipped worker, it is also work that only really

finds representation in the tip—tipped workers (rightly, I would suggest) see this work as more than could possibly be justified by a $7.50, or even a $15, hourly wage.

Workers that I spoke to in the course of this study professed extremely heterogenous ideas about this intimate, interactive work of service provision, in which their identities and emotions featured so prominently. My pool of interviewees was quite small, but I found that across the board servers at higher priced restaurants in the fine dining sector tended to attribute greater significance to this special work of good service, the extreme preoccupation with and attention to the customer. Likewise, servers at Danny's and tipped workers who only performed counter service tended to emphasize volume over service quality, a strategy aimed at diminishing the risk of being stiffed.

Some servers, acknowledging the comparative risks and rewards of working at these various types of restaurants, consciously opted for workplaces in which the importance of "good," or extremely personalized and attentive, service was diminished. Such was Robyn's perspective, when she described her preference for working at the affordable, casual Danny's over a high-priced steakhouse in a wealthy and predominantly white suburb. She preferred work at the mall, she told me, where the class composition of patrons more closely resembled that of the workers, and where she could focus on speed and competence rather than highly-personalized service provision.

Customer Profiling as Risk Management

Research on customer tipping practices would, in fact, suggest that such algorithms are pretty well justified. In a 2008 study of diners' tipping practices, Lynn et al confirm the findings of an earlier study on taxicab rider tipping (Ayres et al 2005): white customers *and* black customers

leave larger tips for white servers, on average, than they do for black servers. This pattern bears out in the average incomes of servers of different races and ethnicities, and it is clear that on average, white servers earn more per hour in tips than do black and Latino servers (Dixon 2008). Here, again, we can recall Lopez's (2010) attention to the undertheorizing of customer-generated unpredictability in service work games: while Sherman (2007) suggests that workers' identities, imported to the workplace, are at least somewhat significant to their shop floor consent and resistance, analysis of service games does not typically extend to consideration of the significance of race, gender and other ascriptive differences to shop floor (or service theater) unpredictability. Unpredictable customers are—after all, and unlike machines—people, each with their own unknowable beliefs, prejudices, states of mind, preferences, et cetera.

While the calibration of service work largely involves decisions about the aesthetic and emotional labor described above, so too can it amount to a profiling of customers based on cursory judgements about their appearance and demeanor, and what these qualities might foretell about their future conduct. In the last chapter, I discussed some of the techniques—like opting for service maximization or attempting to accelerate the turning of tables—that servers employ in an attempt to minimize risk in the service interaction. To that end, profiling serves the purpose of allowing workers to gauge the amount and type of effort, of service labor, to exert on a table, based on an assessment of the likelihood that that table might leave a good tip.

Tipped workers that I interviewed were fairly transparent, although not entirely in agreement, about profiling behavior. Alex, a 31-year-old white server, put it bluntly: "Um, yeah, there's a lot of racial profiling that happens." She elaborated, describing the queues that, in her years in the service industry, suggested a generous tipper:

> So if they are white and not foreign and appear to be older than 35, but younger
> than 60…You get a lot more information after the first interaction. You kind of

know, I think, for 80 percent of the time…If they make eye contact with you when you're talking, that's a good sign…If they don't have kids—that's terrible, but if you see kids, you're like, fuck.

Gia, also a 31-year-old white server, expressed the conviction that obviously American customers ("every country has its own tipping traditions") and those without children made for better tippers and customers. Most often, servers told me that they believed that upper middle class or wealthy white customers were the most likely to observe the standards of restaurant behavior and to tip well. When I put the question to Kyle, a 34-year-old Caucasian server employed at a busy high end restaurant downtown, his response was kneejerk: "Oh, white people." He went on to clarify that he meant, "Just middle America…upper-upper white class." On the other hand, some, like Robyn, a Native American Danny's server, contested generalizations about customer tipping and race, and so insisted that her treatment of customers was more uniform. "Don't get me wrong," she said. "If I see youths that are darker skinned, chances are they're not going to tip me—but the same thing with youths that have light skin. You know what I mean? So I can't judge either one, because I think both are not going to tip me." Starting to laugh, she concluded, "So I'm going to treat them equally."

Studies of tipped restaurant workers seem, however, to confirm the latter assessments. When surveyed, many servers admit to profiling customers based on their race or ethnicity, as they believe that a customers' race accords with their propensity to tip or how "difficult" they might be. Servers also concede that their perceptions of a customers' race often affect the service they provide, and that they will even employ explicit strategies to avoid waiting on people of color, or offload these customers to other workers[35] (Brewster and Rusche 2012; Brewster et al

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[35] Racial profiling might also occur for reasons unrelated to the tip. During a phone call in the early weeks of the coronavirus stay-at-home order in New York State, Danny's server Kim described how on her final shift at the restaurant before it shifted to take-out only, one of her coworkers had refused to serve any Asian customers or customers who appeared to be coughing: "I had three Asian tables back-to-back-to-back that she didn't want to take because of that."

2014). These findings are further complicated by the fact that other studies have found that customers' tipping habits do, in fact, correlate with race or ethnicity (see for example Lynn 2008).

Black customers and white customers also tend to report very different experiences with their servers in full-service restaurants, even if that service appears quite similar to an outsider, or from the perspective of the server (Brewster et al 2014). Brewster et al suggest that this may be attributable to the type of emotional labor being exerted by servers toward different customers, and that when waiting on people of color, servers may engage in more "surface acting"—as Erickson (2004b) puts it, "detaching" from their customers, rather than "investing" in them. The authors note that what some have construed as a positive avenue for workers' agency (see Gatta 2002 and Erickson 2004b) has the paradoxical consequence of producing "racial discrimination in service delivery" (Brewster et al 2014: 22).

Overall, this points to another aspect, and even *product,* of service labor in the tip work game: the work of service customization appears to perpetuate, and even amplify, discrimination and relations of inequality in the workplace. For Burawoy (1979), racial and other ascriptive hierarchies have their primary effect on the labor market, in determining the roles into which particular workers are sorted. This sorting of workers into different types of establishments, with huge discrepancies in average check size, likely accounts for some of the racial disparity in average tip earnings. But in the tip work game, ascriptive hierarchies appear to feature in, and influence, the labor process itself. Unpredictability here stems not only from the presence of the customer, but from the interaction between customer and worker. These relationships are not static, and are always mediated by the identities and imported biases of each party.

The calculations and vulnerability of the service interaction, described by Alex above, stem in large part from the specific kind of unpredictability found in service, and thus tip, games. As much of the above studies demonstrate, this unpredictability has much to do with the unknowability of biases that customers bring with them into the restaurant. In playing service games, workers do attempt to predict these biases, and as such restaurant service game play elicits consent to navigate the vicissitudes of workers' and customers' positions relative to racial, gender and other ascriptive hierarchies that permeate the workplace, though they may emanate from beyond the point of production.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate some of the ways in which tipped work operates in the workplace, both to shed the management of risk to employees and in coordination with multiple other distinct, but intertwined, restaurant labor processes. Successfully handling the customer—selling and providing them the two primary products of the restaurant, food and service—requires a vast amount of work, and work of very particular kinds. It means the work of service customization: managing customers individually by anticipating and attending to their whims and desires. It also means the work of service maximization: managing customers as an aggregate, controlling their flow through the restaurant and the pace of their consumption. As we have seen, the tip work game is an especially adept means of making this unpredictability—the customers themselves—the purview of the worker. In the restaurant, the server assumes the responsibility, risk and—if they are lucky—reward that this unpredictability entails.

So too is restaurant service work highly interactive in quite another way: it necessitates the careful orchestration of multiple different workers in different parts of the restaurant,

working in tandem, and at an extremely fast pace. Of course, the restaurant is not unique in this regard, but what *is* somewhat unusual is the way in which tip-earning and non-tip-earning labor processes interact, and the way these distinct pay structures (and, even, distinct "employers") sometimes put these workers directly at odds. In the pooled house, tip earning is a collective enterprise, encouraging efficiency through collaboration and a mutualistic pressure to perform. Contained in that cooperative atmosphere is the threat of solidarity among workers and a challenge to managerial control. Workers in pooled houses might, then, be more likely to organize to demand wage increases. On the other hand, tip pooling or sharing arrangements might themselves become more common with the elimination of subminimum wages, as the rules governing tip sharing are much less rigid in workplaces where all workers earn at least the minimum wage per hour.

In the non-pooled house, individual responsibility and ownership of the tip are paramount. Competition between workers predominates over cooperation, sometimes to the detriment of the smooth functioning of the workplace. Nevertheless, management may implement additional strategies, like the Danny's leaderboard system, to spur this competition and thus elicit increased effort from tipped workers. Though responsibility and entrepreneurialism are encouraged, autonomy is always kept in check. While the effort making tips, like that of "making out" in the piece-rate system, absorbs workers' attention and compels workers to work harder and faster, also like Burawoy's (1979) work games it is a managerial strategy. Tipping systems are clearly not happenstance, and neither can they be said to be endogenous, somehow arising organically out of the ordinary course of operations in the restaurant. Especially in the large chain restaurant like Danny's, whose structure is replicated across the suburban American landscape (and even abroad), it is worth considering the legal and

research teams, and vast resources, available at the level of corporate management. Each iteration of the tipped wage structure comes with its own hazards and benefits, to be weighed by management and implemented accordingly. And of course, the capitalist employer only decides to make use of the subminimum wage, and allow workers to receive tips, when that arrangement serves to maximize surplus value. At times when tipping might introduce too much worker autonomy, an unruliness that could amount to a real threat to management's control over the workplace, employers opt against it, as they do in Sallaz's (2010) study of South African hospitality workers struggling to be recognized as service workers.

The tip work game, like other work games, neatly accomplishes the vanishing act wherein workers' attentions (and frustrations) are directed laterally, rather than toward management, and obscures the relations of production that surround and structure the labor process. Unique to service work games—and the tip work game most especially—is a redirection of workers' attention to the customer, over and above the employer. This redirection is complicated, as the customer does actually directly provide the bulk of a tipped workers' income, but this fact does not diminish the significance of the tip work game to the offloading of risk, or to the continued eliciting of workers' consent.

Over the course of this chapter I have also tried to elucidate some of the qualities most fundamentally characteristic of restaurant service work, and to demonstrate how it is that the tip work game ably organizes work to suit such an environment. There is, in the restaurant, a perpetual need for service customization, the careful calibration of labor amounting to "good service"—one whose prominence appears to increase along with the stakes. The stakes, in this case, most clearly translate to the size of the check. This necessity poses a challenge to the restaurant employer, faced with the constant struggle of balancing quality (of both service labor

and food) and costs in an effort to provide customers a luxury good and service at a price they will not balk at paying (Fine 1996). And of course, labor—as variable, rather than constant, capital—is ever the more flexible of these costs, and so a good place to begin for the thrifty restauranteur.

Here we see a manner of service provision quite the opposite of the highly scripted service encounters Leidner (1996) observed among McDonald's workers. Certainly, there is always some degree of repetition and scripting in any interactive service work, required sales pitches and management's preferred wording, but in the sit-down restaurant the tailoring of service labor is key, especially as one moves into what is usually called the "fine dining" sector. This work is in large part that of emotional labor, not simply the need for a worker to manage their own emotions on the job, but to evoke particular emotional responses in the customer (Hochschild 1983). Aesthetic labor, while perhaps less customizable, is nevertheless entirely inseparable from this emotions management. Each new customer brings a novel challenge. The end goals, a happy customer and a hefty check, require constant reevaluation of tactics and modification of that service labor.

Thus, tipped restaurant workers are not afforded the protective shield of service routinization (Leidner 1996) behind which to conceal themselves, and preserve themselves from psychic exhaustion. I will return to the issue of this work of service customization as it is experienced by workers, especially as it relates to questions of alienation and authenticity in the workplace, in the following chapter. The point that I want to make here, though, is that this is labor that must be constantly performed in the restaurant. In the preceding pages, I have attempted to illustrate how the cascade of consequences of a 1966 amendment to the FLSA leave tipped workers as the primary bearers of that responsibility. Because the industry standard sets

wages at an almost unprecedented low, servers must work for tips or—as a BSCP organizer once put it—face "the wolf" at the door ("Pullman Porters" 1928). Luckily for the employer, it just so happens that the work of tip earning almost entirely coincides with the requirements of service customization. As an added bonus, employers are able to procure and ensure the availability of this labor for a song.

This brings me to a second salient point about the real ingenuity of the tipped wage—because it really is the *availability* of labor that is at issue. Restaurants are, after all, an inherently risky business. The steady flow of customers might be predictable, but never guaranteed. I witnessed these vicissitudes firsthand at the Danny's host stand: the disappointment from servers and managers when projected "bumps" (large influxes of customers) failed to materialize, the anxiety when a snowstorm or sudden violence turned the mall into a ghost town, the frustration of workers who were "cut" when a shift turned out to have been overstaffed. Through the tipped wage and attendant tip work game, restaurant employers can offload a good deal of the burden of managing this risk to tipped workers themselves. When business is good, workers prosper along with the restaurant, though their employers pay them a base wage they dismiss as pocket money. When it is slow, workers weather the downturn and cope with significantly decreased earnings, and the law-abiding employer[36] has only to part with a modest additional sum.[37] Workers grew to accept these ups and downs and some, like Robyn, simply took on additional work during the slow season. "It's just the name of the game," she told me.

Whether business is slow or booming, the employer's cost of labor is kept to an absolute minimum—allowing it to maintain a large staff of servers prepared at all times for an influx of

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[36] The caveat here being that many restaurant employers are not law abiding. Notably, the food services sector continually tops Department of Labor rankings of low paying, high wage and hour violation industries. For the complete rankings, see: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/data/charts/low-wage-high-violation-industries

[37] In New York State, at the time this study was conducted, that sum would have been about $21.50 per worker, per shift, under the (extraordinarily unlikely) circumstances that that worker earned nothing in tips for the whole of their shift.

customers that may or may not appear—and those workers are provided many incentives to consistently perform the work of "good service." In a strange way, these tipped workers are simultaneously the employed workforce and something akin to the restaurant's own reserve army of labor, "a mass of human material always ready for exploitation by capital in the interests of capital's own changing valorization requirements" (Marx 1867/1990). With the promise of the tip, and for only a modest sum, the employer can maintain a pool of ready and willing workers whose skill and commitment to service may exceed that of the average minimum wage worker, and who are yet imminently expendable. Because of course, and as we will see in the following chapter, it is not only the wage that is insecure, but the very work itself: when a dearth of customers renders their labor superfluous to those valorization requirements, they are simply "cut," unceremoniously sent packing—whether they have earned enough to keep the wolf at bay or no.

Chapter 4 "I'm Here to Get Paid": Mercenaries in the Dining Room

Am I to be allowed nothing in return for all this service?
—Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*

Having dwelt on the development of the tipped wage and mechanics of tipped work, I now want

to turn to the tipped worker, and return to the conundrum that sparked this entire study. That is,

why is it that tipped restaurant workers have not been more significantly mobilized around

contemporary anti-tipped wage campaigns? And further, how do we find ourselves in this

seemingly unprecedented situation, wherein tipped restaurant workers now fight—alongside

their employers and the restaurant industry lobby—to maintain the two-tier wage system? My

contention is that, while there are likely many explanations to the above set of circumstances, a

very significant one lies in the nature of tipped work itself. The previous section detailed just

what the tipped labor process is and how it functions within the broader workplace and serves to

accomplish managerial aims. Tipped work was there conceived as an iteration of the service

work game, one aptly suited for the precarious, uncertain conditions of work on the dining room

floor.

In this chapter, I will describe how out of that context emerges a particular worker

identity, that of the semi-autonomous, entrepreneurial operator. While the tipped labor process

appears to vest workers with the full weight of responsibility for the rather chaotic conditions of

the restaurant's front-of-house, and management may utilize additional schemes to encourage

that notion, workers' autonomy is always constrained, bounded within acceptable limits.

Ultimately, I argue, this self-conception of work and responsibility is one that is directly at odds

with the contemporary mobilizing around anti-tipped wage campaigns. Once we consider the

conditions faced by these precarious interactive service workers today, workers' disinclination to

engage with these campaigns, and to pursue legislative changes to their wage structure, is, I hold, somewhat less inexplicable.

Risk as Reward

Games require players, and the tip work game is no exception. In chapter three, we saw that the conditions of work in the restaurant's front-of-house are thoroughly unpredictable, and such unpredictability carries with it no small degree of risk. However many strategies workers might employ in an attempt to reduce and manage risk, it yet remains. Servers I spoke with generally acknowledge their awareness of this ever-present unknowability, that despite every exertion of effort and seasoned judgement, there remains at all times in the tip work game an element of blind chance. Robyn put this to me in numeric terms:

> I want to say about 75 percent of the time you can tell if somebody's going to tip you well by their interactions with you. Sometimes you can be wrong. Sometimes I've gotten really nice people and they didn't leave me anything—like, Please, Thank you, Oh my god, You were great, write little love letters on my check and say, "You're great," and then leave me like, $3. That happens.

When I asked her how she felt about this ever-present risk, Robyn replied, with some equanimity, "It shouldn't affect you. They're just giving you money, basically. You can't control it. So why be upset about it, when you can just do your best to get whatever you can get?"

While workers might seek explanation for the low or nonexistent tips in various factors beyond their control, like aspects of a customer's identity (as described in chapter three), such coping strategies do not capture the whole of servers' attitudes toward the risk inherent in the tipping game. Tipped workers also described this risk as part and parcel of the adrenaline rush of service work, or even central to its appeal. Alex, ruminating on the various elements that kept her

coming back to the service industry, a field about which she was fairly ambivalent, put it this way:

> I compare it to a game, like gambling, but not like slots. Like blackjack or something. You can learn to read—it's chance. And you're not going to win every time, but you can be better or worse at it. So when you don't have a good night, you can blame it on luck. But when you do have a good night, it feels really good. It's because of the choices you made, the way you played with what you get.

In a somewhat counterintuitive way, then, the risks themselves become the rewards. As Alex puts it here, good tips are attributed to playing well, but getting stiffed, or having a bad night, can be "blame[d] on luck." That, despite every effort and evaluation of the customer, some margin of uncertainty remains, hanging over every service interaction, injects these exchanges with a small and perhaps slightly morbid thrill.

Winning the game, too, provided its own sort of high. As Alex put it, "It's awesome feeling when you have a really busy night, and it's really hard, and you get through it because you make good choices, and you're skilled, and you don't make mistakes, and then you leave with a bunch of money." Alex continued, reflecting on the demands of the work itself—which, by her own admission, she often felt she had to defend to friends and family who disparaged her line of work:

> It's a very difficult job. You have to be good at improvising, because things are always running out, or you have to change your plan all the time, and you're multitasking so many things…It's hard not to feel proud when you get through a night like that and you leave with like, $315 from one night.

So while the bad tip would typically be chalked up to factors beyond the server's control, good tips would be interpreted as confirmations of a worker's skill or worthiness, something in which the server could take pride. For some workers, too, the very unpredictability of the tip seemed to contain an appeal, a mystique elevating the profession above the ordinary drudgery of low-wage work. Servers frequently told me that they believed this work appeals to particular personality

types, those who enjoy the speculative excitement of tipped service work. "It can be addictive in that way," explained Alex. "I think it attracts people who can deal with that kind of intensity and are a little bit competitive, and I definitely have noticed that about myself."

In turn, this high intensity atmosphere affects workers' moods and the way that people socialize outside of work. Workers incessantly remarked on the stress of the job, both in interviews and casual conversations in the workplace. Anita, passing a slow moment with me at the host stand, confided that she had stress dreams about her tables every night after working a shift at Danny's. Time and again, I heard about how servers were often so keyed up after a shift that they could not go home and go to bed, though it was late and they were physically exhausted. Kyle, a marathon runner, told me that he had turned to exercise to help curtail his habit of post-shift drinking and drug use, surprised to find that he was able to "unwind" without these activities. Robyn, reflecting on her own social life, said laughingly that "most people who do work in restaurants are usually borderline alcoholics," primarily because the job is "so stressful." At her request, we met for our interview at another restaurant at the mall, before Robyn's evening shift. Illustrating her point, and perhaps to curb the stress she was anticipating, she quickly downed three margaritas before heading into work. While these qualities of tipped work might hold an addictive appeal for some workers, so too does the high stakes atmosphere appear to take its toll, necessitating the sorts of coping strategies Robyn and Kyle describe.

Spurring Competition

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the particular tip structures selected by management greatly influence relations in production, the dynamics between workers on the dining room floor. While tip pooling offers some distinct advantages to management—namely cooperative efficiency—in

restaurants where workers keep "their" tips a competitive hyper-individualism tends to predominate. These qualities exist not in exclusion, but rather along a continuum, and restaurant management may deploy many variations of tip structure that accord with varying degrees of competition and cooperation. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on the non-pooled house model, and this is for a number of reasons: first, a non-pooled house like Danny's provides a more extreme, and thus illustrative, example of individualism and entrepreneurialism in the restaurant, though such qualities are apparent in tipped restaurant work of all kinds. Further, it so happened that the vast majority of the workers with whom I spoke (including all of my coworkers at Danny's) had primarily or exclusively worked in non-pooled restaurants. This was not something I found especially surprising, as in my own experience tip pooling is the less commonly used model.

Alex, one of the few interviewees who had experience with tip pooling, reflected rather wistfully on the change from her old, pooled house workplace to the trendy Syracuse bar and restaurant where she worked at the time of our interview. She drew a direct connection between the wage structure at that workplace and relations between workers, especially as it related to decisions surrounding the tip out: at Alex's new job, as at Danny's, servers were expected to distribute a portion of their tips to support staff at the end of the night. Whereas in Alex's old workplace tip earning had been a collective activity premised on mutual interdependence, Alex quickly—and to her dismay—found herself adjusting to an attitude of personal ownership, and even possessiveness, over her tips.

> After working in a place where we shared everything, it's so weird, the psychology that happens when it's your tips, and then you have to give your tips away at the end of the night yourself, rather than it going into a pot, or a pool, and then management does it, and then you get your check and then it's on the check. Having to choose to do that, and draw the line, and whether you round up or down—it's like, seven percent of this is $7.56. Am I going to give them $8 or am I going to give them $7? Or should I give them $9, because

I haven't counted it, but maybe I have $25 in cash, and it's the end of the night, and I'm tired and I don't care, and the host—maybe they didn't help. You know?

That servers were compelled—whether by management or by custom—to tip out support staff at the end of the shift fostered resentment, a sense among servers that they were unwillingly obligated to part with *their* hard-earned money, tips representing their individual expenditure of effort. That servers were also often left room to exert some measure of control over the amount of this tip out seemed to encourage a rather tyrannical attitude, each server assessing the worthiness of individual bussers, runners and hosts.

Interestingly, I began to notice that the tip out thus functioned almost as tip work in miniature, and servers reproduced the same evaluation of services rendered that they imagined customers made of them. Just as the tip redirected servers' attention away from management, and toward the customer as the fickle arbiter of their earnings, so too did the tip out redirect tipped out workers' attention—and ire—from management to the servers. For Danny's host Miroki, lingering resentment over tip outs continued to define his relationship to the waitstaff. This was despite the fact that Miroki had only worked briefly as a busser and runner, and had spent many months interacting with servers in the capacity of his hourly host position. During our interview, and when we passed the time gossiping during shifts, he would sometimes recite his litany of grievances with the servers, recalling bad tip outs down to the exact dollar amount.

While it is clearly the purview of management (at whatever level of management those decisions might occur) to select such tipping structures, thus broadly determining these relations in production, management can also deploy other kinds of schemes to encourage competition between workers. One such example was the running leaderboard at Danny's, calculated by a manager and posted each week in the kitchen for the entire staff to see. I learned about the leaderboard on one of my first shifts at the restaurant, and only because I happened to be at the

stand and looking over the shoulder of our front-of-house manager, Valerie, as she harvested data on the servers from the touch screens through which hosts interacted with the restaurant's table management software. I was not the only Danny's worker intrigued by what Valerie was doing. Becca, the young host who had been tasked with training me, and a gaggle of servers all hovered around the stand too, watching Valerie tapping away at the screen, scratching figures onto a paper chart and muttering about how one of the servers "always cheats"—leading me to believe that this system was not exactly common knowledge. Becca leaned in closer to ask what she was doing, and Valerie proceeded to explain the scoring system to us: every server was tracked and ranked according to a series of categories, including total sales, table turnover rates and sales in the specific categories with which management was perennially preoccupied—"apps" and desserts.

This was the only time I was granted direct access to the making of the leaderboard, but what I gleaned in that brief encounter was that the managers harvested certain data from the algorithmic table management software upon which hinged the entire functioning of the dining room. This software captured data about the entire front-of-house. Much of this had to do with the workings of the host stand—reservations, how quickly customers were seated, how many customers gave up and left while languishing on the waitlist. It also collected information on the pace of service interactions at the tables, sales data and the speed with which servers were able to clean and reset their tables once emptied. Information was generally recorded by hosts and the servers themselves—sales data was captured as servers entered orders into the computers, and the pace of customer interactions and table turnovers was captured when either hosts—who monitored the dining room like a cast of hawks, seizing hungrily on any empty tables—or servers marked them "clean," "sat," or "dirty," the last of which could mean piled high with

plates or "on a bus." Managers were obsessed with the "timers," the running count indicating how long customers lingered at their tables, and grew anxious when too many tables were "in the red"—meaning customers had lingered for over an hour and half. Turnover rates figured into the leaderboard, and so too did managers actively and constantly impress upon the servers that keeping the "timers" in the black was on their heads.

As far as the leaderboard itself, the server scoring highest in total sales won a free meal for each shift they worked in the subsequent week. When Valerie told us this Russell, one of the servers at the stand, said rather indignantly, "Every shift? I thought it was just once!" High scorers in various other categories could accrue points through the company-wide points system, which could then be used to buy one's way out of much-reviled side work tasks, or alternatively used to purchase company merchandise. But the leaderboard system had another, somewhat more clandestine purpose, to which Valerie made blithe reference as she finished up her sheet. Dale, our GM, also used the ranking to determine which servers would get the most lucrative shifts, or schedules that more closely aligned with their stated preferences.

Hearing Valerie say this, I was immediately reminded of an odd moment at the end of my hiring interview with Dale. He had mentioned, somewhat offhandedly, that because he kept so many servers on the schedule there were times when he had more servers ready to work than there were shifts to give them. Wanting to appear interested, I asked him how he handled those situations and if the allocation of shifts was based on seniority. Dale looked almost offended, and replied, "No, no, it's based on whoever is doing well. I don't believe in seniority. If seniority had been the thing when I got my job, I would not be where I am today." Then, looking a little disgusted, he shook his head and repeated, "I don't believe in seniority. Seniority isn't anything."

I will return to a lengthier discussion of this connection between performance, punitive measures and Dale's scheduling system later in this chapter, but suffice it to say, the leaderboard very clearly represented a deliberately-introduced means of spurring increased competition among the servers. Dale portrayed the system as entirely meritocratic, and with it came multiple inducements, beyond the promise of the tip itself, to heighten already extant competition between the servers. This compelled each individual server to work harder and faster—and one wonders if Danny's management had instituted the system realizing that tips, in this moderately priced restaurant, were insufficiently motivating. But so too did the leaderboard encourage a generalized antagonism between the servers.

Selling the Self

Such competitive individualism generally translates to a heightened sense, among tipped workers, of the importance of the self at work. While this importance is sometimes burdensome, so too do workers describe it as gratifying, a confirmation of skill and worth. "I feel like there's a correlation between how much you interact with people and how much they tip you," said Alex, considering the means by which she attempted to predict the tip. Customers generally tipped her more, she felt, when she had the opportunity to provide comprehensive and personalized service, because only then was her "presence…more felt." In such moments, the tip work game seemed to provide an opportunity for deep, and maybe even meaningful, connection with customers in the workplace (Erickson 2004b). It was for this reason that many tipped workers told me they abhorred the idea of tip sharing arrangements. "The kitchen would get it, the dishwashers would get it, and honestly I don't think that's fair," opined Robyn. "I worked for that too…I have regulars that come back to see me, because I'm a successful person." Were tips shared beyond

the individual service encounter, they would come unmoored from their linkage to the unique iteration of "good service" and from the servers themselves.

Just as the service interaction is tailored to the individual customer, so too does it emanate from the individual worker, and servers typically drew a direct connection between the tip and their individual skill or merit. While Frenette and Ocejo (2019) argue that "cultural workers'" attachment to precarious work is in part sustained through a deep engagement with industry or product, amongst the tipped restaurant workers I interviewed and with whom I worked, the assertion of independence—from other workers and the employer—in the dining room was a far more common theme. This finding also runs directly contrary to Mulinari's (2019) suggestion that tipped workers prefer tip pooling arrangements precisely *because* they de-emphasize individual exertions of service labor. In the dining room, where servers are allotted their own domains, they can experience themselves as canny entrepreneurs—not wage laborers, but independent self-managers (Sallaz 2009). Gatta (2009a), too, emphasizes the tip as a means for workers to exert their agency over both organizational structures and customers in the workplace. Gia, whose workplace used a pooling system, said that while she appreciated the team atmosphere she sometimes resented the arrangement: "I've worked with certain people who I feel like don't have the same work ethic as me," she said. "I might get annoyed that like, I'm busting my ass and I know they're going to get a lot of my money."

Alex, though she missed the experience of working in a pooled house, reflected on this enticing quality most evident in non-pooled tipped work. When tips were pooled, she experienced "less of the rush. It's less intense…You don't leave feeling as individually capable as this kind of mercenary person." In tipped work, servers appreciated both the affirmation of their "mercenary" cunning and their skilled provision of service, or management of the

customer's emotions in the workplace (Hochschild 1983). And time and again, servers made reference to the "pride" they felt in this work: Alex described the "feeling of *pride*," when she left with an especially hefty load of tips at the end of the night. Gia, reflecting on her skill as a server, said "I *pride* myself on being very personable and giving good service." Kim, lamenting the contrast between working at Danny's at the mall and her former employment at an independently-owned, higher-end establishment, said:

> I found more meaning in my job at [her former employer]. I really found a true love and passion for the restaurant business, and hospitality management and stuff like that…But Danny's—I just feel like there's no room to grow, there's no room to do more. You're just in the mall at a restaurant. We're just trying to sell the food, and we're just trying to sell stuff. It's okay, but it definitely sometimes gets to me, because I just don't love my job…When I worked at Pascal's, just because I was good at what I did, I was recognized for my hard work…I just have a lot of *pride* in that… My boss saw that, and he appreciated that, and he saw that everyone loved me. He gave me the hours that I wanted and the hours that I needed to survive and be comfortable…I worked hard so I earned that money, but it was really nice to know that I made that much with my own two hands and feet. It was pretty cool knowing that I could bust my ass that much and make that much in the restaurant business.

Here the connections between servers' convictions about their individual merit and hard work, managerial decisions about scheduling (and thus tip earnings) and pride and sense of worthiness are made extremely explicit. At Danny's, service customization was somewhat diminished in favor of a maximalist, high-speed approach, which afforded less opportunity for this exercise of self-competence, of individual effort and "mercenary" cunning on the dining room floor. This dimmed the satisfaction that such entrepreneurialism could afford.

If the server assumes the role of entrepreneur in the dining room, of independent salesperson, just what are they selling? The answer to that question probably seems inanely obvious: food, right? But servers' own accounts of their work, and conceptions of the significance of the tip, seem to indicate something else entirely—that the tip, the central focus of their work, represents their performance of "good service." Notably, in all the conversations I

had with tipped workers over the course of this project and the many explanations for good and

bad tips I was given, not once was the quality of food cited as a significant factor. Instead,

workers tended to emphasize the significance of their identity, skill, appearance, commitment,

comportment—assessments that are in fact borne out in studies of customer tipping behavior (see

Brewster and Rusche 2012; Parrett 2015; Lynn 2008; Lynn and Mynier 1993).[38] Kyle,

explaining why he would never work in a restaurant where tips were pooled, put it most bluntly:

"I don't like that. I'm me. I'm selling *my personality*." Kyle, who worked at the more exclusive

(and expensive) restaurant of those I interviewed, distinctly resented the idea that he would no

longer walk away with this sum representing his individual merit, the self that he is "selling." He

went on, adding about his individual performance of service labor, "That's why the people gave

me that [tip]. I'm not sharing it with someone next to me who's not doing that."

This selling of the self is a complicated proposition, and one that I would distinguish

somewhat from the many studies (for recent examples see Gandini 2015; Pagis and Ailon 2017)

detailing the pervasiveness of "personal branding" rhetoric. These studies have tended to

emphasize white collar workers, and Pagis and Ailon (2017) find that such rhetoric is often

deployed in a way that distances the worker from the vulgarity of market exchange, quite unlike

the canny entrepreneurialism of tipped work. Elsewhere in this thesis, I have described the role

of patrons in the restaurant as both customer and employer, as in tipped service work they

provide the bulk of a worker's earnings. In the tipped service interaction, they appear to be both

at once—they are purchasers of the food commodity, but also of another commodity, that of

service labor. As such, the worker is primarily preoccupied with the customer as a purchaser of

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[38] That said, there is also a large body of literature on customer tipping behavior that suggests other factors, well beyond the control of or even entirely disconnected from workers, significantly determine the tip. See for example Jacob et al (2010) on the effects of song lyrics or Lee et al (2018) on the effects of a golden hue.

one particular product, and that product is service. There is also something of the ephemeral in this service labor: in the tipped service action it is tailored and proffered to the customer, who may or may not pay up. If the customer declines to tip, or tips far below the going rate, that specific exertion of service labor returns to dust, and must be created anew to entice the next customer.[39]

This advancing of the use value of labor power before the realization of payment is typical of capitalist wage relations (Marx 1867/1990), but less typical is the absence in tipped service work of any fixed contract. Tipped service work thus contains an extreme level of unpredictability, beyond even that typical of piece-rate work, to which interactive service work has been compared (Sherman 2007), and falls into a hazy categorical zone. If the work of "good service" is the product of a worker's labor, it is a strange one, because it cannot be retained if its intended customer declines payment. If it is the worker's sole commodity, labor power, it is given away with no guarantee of remuneration. Finally, the two-tier wage system introduces a further degree of mystification. Just as the tipped worker appears to have two wages and two employers, so too do they appear to engage in a double sale of their labor power: first, they sell it to their employers, for a sum well below its (historically- and socially-determined) value. Then they attempt its perpetual resale to customers, hoping to demonstrate its true value through their skilled performance of "good service."

Deep Alienation

With this heightened importance of the self comes a degree of psychic intrusion, and commodification of all aspects of a worker's identity—one that, I would argue, blurs traditional

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[39] In this sense, there is an interesting parallel to the other most prominent commodity in the restaurant, the food itself—the perishability of which Mann and Dickinson (1978) argued was one of many obstacles to capitalist development in agriculture.

boundaries between work and non-work. In this sense, some workers described tipped service

work as both appalling and demeaning. Sam, a coffee shop employee who earned the tipped

wage but performed only counter service, put it to me in this way:

> Everyone's like, "Oh, you don't like tips? Then I guess you're not a good worker, because you're not getting the tips you want." And it's not the fact of that. It's the fact that you're relying on other people, outside your employer, for a substantial amount of your living. That's grotesque in a way…asking people to be like, oh, you have to perform for this stranger, and make sure it's optimal, so that they may or may not give you money.

Not surprisingly, Sam intimated that he felt the subminimum wage should not exist, and that

employers like his own who chose to take advantage of the lower-than-minimum wage were

more or less morally bankrupt. When I asked him why he thought that an employer would opt to

pay this wage instead of the regular minimum, he responded: "Just greed. It's just capitalism."

This would suggest that sometimes, however rarely, workers reject the "grotesque" performance

of service altogether, the deep alienation of emotions management (Hochschild 1983), preferring

to lose out on money than to subject themselves to mistreatment—or, at the very least, they

would profess that rejection. Late in a shift at Danny's on my way back to the host stand after

taking my turn tidying the women's bathroom, I walked past the server station and caught the

end of a conversation in which Allen, a young server just out of college, was listening with an air

of extreme indignation to a coworker describing an especially bad table. "I would rather be

stiffed than that!" he said, grandly.

Interestingly, some workers drew the connection between tipped service work in the

restaurant and other, perhaps more obvious, commodification of body and self. After getting

stiffed by a customer at Danny's, server Lauren stopped by the host stand to complain, frustrated

that her customer apparently harbored the misapprehension that she served them simply because

she enjoyed their company. "I'm here to get *paid*," said Lauren emphatically, rolling her eyes.

"Whatever," she went on, "creepy old men give me money." My coworker and I asked Lauren

what she meant by this somewhat cryptic comment, and Lauren explained that she had another,

informal source of income, whereby men sent her money via a cash app in exchange for her

"talking" with them, and that she afforded them varying degrees of attention depending on the

sum. Lauren went on discuss these two forms of work in tandem, highlighting both the parallels

between them and a marked difference, and one that contrasts the limited entrepreneurialism of

the restaurant with the petty capitalism of informal sex work. With her digital clientele, unlike in

tipped work, Lauren could calibrate the amount of labor she exerted to the fee disbursed by the

customer.

While the deep alienation of emotions management is closely associated with qualities

particular to work in the service industries (for examples in restaurant work see Erickson 2004;

Gatta 2002; 2009), it is by no means exclusive to this realm. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han

(2017: 28), sees such incursions as fundamentally characteristic of the mechanisms of control

under the neoliberal regime, wherein "the technology of power takes on a subtle form," and

"does not lay old of individuals directly," but rather "ensures that individuals act on themselves

so that power relations are interiorized." This "[n]eoliberal psychopolitics"

> seizes on emotion *in order to influence actions on this pre-reflexive level.* By way of
> emotion, it manages to cut and operate deep inside. As such, emotion affords a highly
> efficient medium for psychopolitically steering the integral person, the person as a whole.
> (Han 2017: 48)

Here Han expands Foucault's biopolitics into the realm of the "psychopolitical," a regime more

disturbing in its insidiousness, and which raises a real question—of just how deeply this self-

exploitation and the work of emotional labor operate. Vallas and Christin (2018), drawing on

Foucault's (2008: 226) conception of the worker as an "entrepreneur of himself" describe the

way that a pervasive "entrepreneurial ideology" and attendant "normative discourses and

conceptions of the self…have a productive effect on their own, in that they create the kinds of individuals needed to function in a precarious economy" (Vallas and Christin 2018, 10). The authors find that among groups of white collar workers the acceptance "personal branding" discourses varies with the directness of workers' exposure to the whip of the labor market. Those more directly subject to labor market coercion more readily espouse the rhetoric of this entrepreneurialism of the self.

The reflections of these tipped workers paint a somewhat contradictory picture. Some, like Sam and Alex, describe an at-times painful awareness of this selling of the self, experienced as alienation or intrusion, much as Hochschild (1983) described the dissonances of emotions work. Still others, like Kyle (and many of those who cite the "freedom" of tipped work in hearings and elsewhere), appear to reflect something akin to Han's deeper interiorization—that on the dining room floor they are *allowed,* rather than encouraged, to exercise this entrepreneurial self. While not something I am able to address in full in this study, further examination of service entrepreneurialism in the many and varied forms of full-service restaurant, and among different service positions, might shed light on the depth of entrepreneurial identification, and whether, when and by whom it is experienced as alternately liberating or downright alienating. While in this study I trace the conditioning of independent salesmanship and responsibility primarily to the tipped labor process, so too would further and expanded study shed light on its rootedness in the comparative internalization, institutionalization or exercise (whether overt or subtly orchestrated) of domination.

Meeting Flexibility with Hyper-flexibility

So while workers sometimes rejected the such unfavorable conditions in tipped service work, those very conditions also appear to contain qualities that are—at least to those on the outside—counterintuitively appealing. In this next section, I want to veer somewhat from this discussion of tipped work in exclusion and consider another mechanism by which conditions of unpredictability and precarity in the restaurant can themselves go some way toward explaining workers' adherence, or possibly consent, to those very conditions. The strange appeal of uncertainty, or even recasting of precarity as possibility, in fact appears to extend far beyond the wage. In these chapters I have touched on various kinds of unpredictability faced by the worker, and even by the employer, in the restaurant—of the customer and of the volume and consistency of customers. Workers also face, in connection with this latter unpredictability, uncertainty over the very existence of future work.

Week to week, restaurant service workers typically have no guarantee as to what their next schedule might hold, and variability along many axes is the norm. Workers may face uncertainty about the number of hours they will be allotted, the days and times they will be assigned to work or even whether they make the schedule at all. At Danny's, unpredictability featured even beyond the schedule, as a worker could be "called off" a shift that was deemed overstaffed (due to weather or some unforeseen event, or just managerial incompetence), or "cut" and sent home at any point during a shift. Across the board, restaurant workers described the difficulty of dealing with this ongoing instability and unpredictability, usually citing it as one of the most challenging aspects of their employment. Gia, when asked what she thought of her ever-changing schedule, stared at me for a moment before saying, "Uh, it's frustrating." She went on to explain that this was because it rendered her unable to "commit to plans, especially

over the summer" when she made herself available to work more shifts each week. Because of the way that her manager timed the posting of her schedules, she was often unable to arrange anything in her life, at least in the evenings, more than three days in advance.

Such unstable and unpredictable scheduling has also been described as a boon in and of themselves, at least among certain workers. Wilson (2019b) describes the way that a class of largely white, well-educated upscale restaurant workers weave their jobs and social lives together into "portfolio lives…dynamic arrangements of labor and leisure" (333). Such arrangements, as Wilson points out, are not available to all of those working in the restaurant. For Danny's workers, a group quite unlike those studied by Wilson (2019b), scheduling instability often had more dire consequences. I asked Miroki in our interview whether he found his ever-changing schedule to be stressful, and he reiterated Gia's complaint about being unable to make plans. But unlike in Gia's case, for Miroki this unpredictability often impinged on his parenting responsibilities, and he had in the past found himself scheduled during hours in which he was unable to find anyone to care for his two young children.

Halpin (2015) draws a direct connection between the instability of restaurant scheduling and workplace consent and control. Through what he calls the "mock schedule" management successfully provides workers the illusion of stable work, going "to great lengths to obscure the precariousness wrought by a market-mediated employment relationship" (Halpin 2015: 421). Believing in that illusion—that a posted schedule indicates some semblance of stability in work—workers provide continuous effort in the workplace, though in fact management can at any point rework the schedule to maximize surplus value. The "mock schedule," in Halpin's (2015) account, thus obscures managerial control much in the way that tip and other work games

do, and "mystifies the very conditions that it creates" (ibid: 435)—that is, conditions of extreme uncertainty for the worker.

The conditions and constraints of work at Danny's added further complexity to these dynamics of control, consent and scheduling. As I described previously, Danny's GM Dale kept a deliberately overlarge staff, which could result in a dearth of shifts for available workers. So too did managers draw a connection between servers' performance and scheduling, as a secondary consequence of the restaurant's leaderboard system was preferential treatment from Dale regarding the schedule. And preferential treatment meant many things—it could mean that a worker was given coveted shifts, but it also meant that a worker might be granted the courtesy of a schedule that accorded with their stated[40] constraints and preferences. This connection was simultaneously made explicit and kept extremely opaque: managers attested to it outright, but yet scheduling decisions were ultimately left entirely to the discretion of Dale or, when he was unable to make the schedule himself, our assistant manager Kathy.

This translated to a widespread belief among Danny's workers that one's performance or, alternatively, one's relationship with the managers (and Dale in particular) elicited scheduling perks. It cultivated among workers what could amount to a scheduling game, although one that for servers was directly tied to—and sometimes encompassed—the tip work game. This connection was drawn through the leaderboard system, as workers typically indicated that they believed their ranking, and overall performance, afforded preferential treatment. Discussing Robyn's work ethos during our interview, our conversation happened to drift in just this direction. I asked Robyn if she saw herself as a hard worker, and she responded:

> Yes, I do. I feel like I work hard, and when I feel like I'm working hard, I feel like also management realizes I'm working hard and gives me the money-making

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[40] Stated in person, via email and indicated in the "availability" section of the scheduling app managers used to construct and distribute each week's schedules and communicate with workers.

shifts I want. Management knows what shifts make money, and they give them to me.

Thus, in conjunction with the tip work game, the flexible schedule functioned to elicit workers' ongoing effort, creating what appeared to be a kind of endless loop of effort and reward. Robyn worked hard for the tip and to be rewarded with coveted shifts, and those choice Friday and Saturday night shifts in turn positioned her to earn more in tips. Kim, on the other hand, did not feel she was afforded any such privilege at Danny's, and lamented the contrast with her status at her former job, where when she worked hard her "boss saw that, and he appreciated that, and he saw that everyone loved me. He gave me the hours that I wanted and the hours that I needed to survive and be comfortable."

Other workers, however, had different, and perhaps less generous, interpretations of Robyn and other servers' success at Danny's. Miroki began to tell me, in our interview, that he believed certain servers were given preferential or more numerous shifts largely because they were considered "favorites" of the managers. When I asked him which servers he meant, he immediately cited Robyn, as well as another longtime Danny's server, Kayla, noting that newer, and thus less favored, servers were often cut earlier and rarely given the best shifts.

The schedule at Danny's was also, and unlike the physically posted schedule in Halpin's (2015) study, arranged through an online scheduling system. (Anxious as we were to know our schedules at the earliest opportunity, most of my coworkers and I actually paid out of pocket to install the program's corresponding app on our phones.) This system layered another level of mystification, a sort of double opacity, over the schedule. Though Dale made the schedule personally, all requests and communications were conducted through the scheduling software. Dale seemed to rely on this buffer to deflect attention from his direct control over the schedule, referring to his own scheduling decisions in an abstract way, as if they were the workings of an

impartial system *beyond* his control. At the same time, workers (and other managers) typically saw Dale as the sole arbiter of the schedule, and yet generally imagined him to be fair and relatively unbiased, rather than capricious.

This conviction sometimes defied explanation—Kim, who experienced what she considered to be punitive scheduling, also insisted that Dale allocated shifts "based on the tip percentage" and "how many desserts [she] sold, how many cocktails." She maintained this even as, like Miroki, she complained, "[Robyn] gets the most shifts, and she gets the ones she wants, and she gets the best times. And I'm always the closer, always. I have to come home and take care of a newborn. Nothing ever changes. I barely get the shifts that I want, and it's just tough." Somewhat paradoxically, she concluded that at Danny's, "you're recognized for your hard work, but it's the same people that get recognized for their hard work."

Even as workers typically seemed to construe the schedule's pecking order as an objective assessment of their own performance on the job, there were moments when scheduling decisions were perceived as overtly punitive. Such was the case for Kim, who found herself scheduled for inconvenient and unappealing shifts, and was convinced that she was experiencing ongoing censure from Dale. When I asked Kim if she thought Dale's scheduling decisions went so far as being *deliberately* punitive, she replied,

> Yes. I think it's my personality, too. I act like I don't really give a fuck, because I really don't, because I've been in so many restaurants. I've worked with so many Dales—managers that thought they could do what they wanted. And they can, because they're in that position and they'll fire you if they want. They'll give you want they want. That's just how the restaurant business works. It sucks. It's reality.

Thus, even when the GM's apparent animosity toward certain workers was acknowledged, the worker subjected to such practices still might resignedly accept matters as just par for the course—the "reality" of life in the service industry. Overall, punitive scheduling could mean

reduced hours or access to lucrative shifts, insensitivity to one's scheduling constraints,[41] or even be reflected in the number and location of a server's tables during a shift. The Danny's dining room had one notoriously "cursed" table near the entrance to the kitchen, where customers typically refused to sit. When, at the beginning of a shift, Jane saw that she had been assigned this table, she shook her head and said to me, dismayed, "Oh, man. I'm in the time out section." This sense that, through the schedule, workers could be alternately punished or rewarded for their behavior on the job thus served as yet another mechanism for compelling effort from workers, and a warning to keep toeing the line.

Scheduling can also function as a subtle tool for accomplishing managerial aims. As I have noted, not one worker was fired from Danny's in the months I spent at the host stand. There were, however, several workers who were generally perceived as less skilled, and thus less favored by management. While they were not dismissed outright, they were given only minimal shifts, and typically the less lucrative weekdays and mornings. Similarly, Leidner (1993, 62) observed this sort of scheduling at McDonald's, where a manager told her that the typical strategy for cutting workers loose was to decrease their hours until they "got the message." Dale's strategy at Danny's might not have been quite so straightforward, and my impression was that Dale's admittedly—and deliberately—overlarge staff contained a number of such peripheral workers. In fact, I myself was one—both because I was far from the most skilled host and because my campus obligations left me only a couple of days' availability. These peripheral workers could be used to fill in the gaps of the ever-fluctuating schedule, and though they might score a shift or two a week, rarely would these be the choicest or most lucrative. Those shifts were reserved for workers like Robyn, a veteran of Danny's who—by her own admission—

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[41] At Danny's, this could be a serious hardship, as most workers either held other jobs or were still in school. Many also had familial obligations, and struggled to find childcare and reliable transportation.

would be alarmed to find herself denied a Saturday evening shift. While other workers, like Kim, might resent these apparent privileges, so too would they typically describe them as just rewards. As Kim put it: "Robyn is a little beast…She deserves it. She works her ass off."

So while I did not witness or hear described anything quite approaching a tacit dismissal, several of these peripheral workers (including Edward and Kim) either left or found other jobs in the months I spent at Danny's out of frustration with their hours and earnings. In this way, a core staff of disciplined, "hard workers" could be maintained through the enticement of preferential scheduling, and the gaps and interstices in the schedule could always be filled by a rotating cast of other workers with less attachment to management and the workplace. The front-of-house roster always seemed to include many such workers, and so the loss of any one came at no particular cost to daily operations. Notably, and especially in the hyper-competitive non-pooled restaurant (see chapter three), this combination of flexible scheduling and surplus workers also functions to spur competitive individualism, as each worker appears to pose a threat to their coworkers' chances of securing a stable and sufficiently lucrative schedule. As such, server Kyle, who otherwise insisted on the cordiality of his relationships with coworkers, admitted, "If someone gets hired, I do think about my shifts being taken."

Unlike Halpin (2015), who describes in the "mock schedule" a means of both securing workers' consent to and obscuring conditions of extreme precarity, Wood (2018) sees in flexible scheduling a means through which management's more direct control over the workplace is reified. Studying these arrangements in the low-wage retail sector, Wood notes an absence of work games and consent, and instead sees a "flexible discipline," both the exercise and misrecognition of control. Workers view favorable scheduling as a kindness, and thus develop a sense of obligation and allegiance to management (Wood 2018). Somewhat in contrast to both of

these accounts, workers at Danny's typically had a more complex view of the schedule. Management clearly promoted—through mechanisms like the leaderboard—an impartial, meritocratic vision of the schedule and workplace more broadly. So too did the manager most responsible for scheduling decisions attempt, through the online scheduling platform, to distance himself from that direct exercise of power. Workers did appear to in large part accept this notion, although they would at times (as described above) indicate the conviction—or *suspicion*—that any number of other actions or circumstances might affect one's standing with management, and thus the schedule. In interviews and conversation at work, Danny's workers variously attributed this standing (whether good or bad) to their performance, their willingness to work, errors or missteps or even just how much managers liked them.

As a result, there seemed to be a prevailing sense that anything a worker did, this whole nebulous constellation of actions and attributes, might come to bear on future earnings and job stability. Some factors appeared to be out of a workers' control, as in those moments when a disgruntled worker might point to managerial capriciousness, but so too did workers describe means by which they felt they could exert some control—or at least influence—over their schedules. Even as Kim, whose troubled experience with scheduling is related above, acknowledged Dale's punitive practices and the pervasiveness of unstable schedules and bullying managers in the industry, she told me that she hoped she might be able to improve her situation. "I'm working through it," she said, "hoping that Dale can see that I'm better."

To this end, workers sometimes expressed the conviction that, in roundabout way, they could exert some influence over their future schedules by *ceding* control over their time. They adapted themselves to this flexibilized work by making themselves, in turn, *all the more* flexible. When Miroki and I discussed his own experience of work at Danny's, I asked him about how he

dealt with fluctuations in his schedule—which, he told me, was extremely inconsistent, and varied by as much as 20 hours week to week. He told me that it was stressful, but seemed to believe that matters were improving. When he was first hired, he told me, Dale was dismissive of him. "He was like, 'Oh, he'll probably be a busser and get out of here,'" Miroki said. "I was like, 'Give me anything, dude. I can do this.' I was like, 'I can work. I don't mind working.' … I let Dale know that I'm a company man at the moment. You tell me jump, I say, 'How high?'"

I couldn't help but laugh at this, and Miroki was chagrined. "I know it's what you don't want to hear, Hanna!" he said, as I shook my head.[42] "I've fallen from grace!" But at my urging he continued, describing the tactic he had adopted to influence his relationship with Dale:

> Yeah, right now, I'm the company man, and I tell him, 'Oh, I can do this. I can do this.' And I'm [working] doubles. Hell, I'm a double. I host and then cook[43]…There's days when I'm a double and I close, like I do 12:00 [PM] to 11:00 [PM]. And he schedules me like that because he knows that I can do that.

I knew that this kind of commitment to availability was a major sacrifice for Miroki, who had two young children and a fiancée with whom he would much rather be spending his time. Yet, he seemed to deem it a necessary one to cultivate the sort of a relationship with Dale that would afford him some semblance of stability at work. Kim acknowledged this connection, the paradoxical necessity of ceding control over more of one's time in a bid to secure preferential scheduling treatment. Comparing herself with Jamie, the busser with whom Dale had sided in a dispute over the tip out, Kim said: "She can work eight straight days in a row. I don't do that anymore. I have two kids now. It doesn't mean I'm not still a hard worker." Of workers like Robyn, who seemed able to secure this stable scheduling from Dale, Kim said, "He definitely

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[42] By this point we were friends, and Miroki knew my politics. At this point in the interview, we were both cracking up, and I responded: "I can't help it! No, I want to hear the truth. I want to hear what you have to say. I'm just laughing because you make me laugh."

[43] Somewhat unusually, Miroki had by this point begun to transition from the front-of-house to the kitchen, where two of his family members were already employed. It was not his preference, but he felt he had to comply when management asked him to make the move.

favors those people and gives them the first choice of hours and the same schedule every week. That's all I want. I want my set hours and my set schedule and I'll work every day."

Edward, who was hired as a busser at the same time that I started my hosting job, also attempted this tactic, though it never yielded the desired result. Danny's was a second job for Edward who, as he told me when we first met, had lost his car due to financial trouble. As I noted in the last chapter, Edward was frustrated to have been hired as a busser—he was a calm, forbearing sort of a person, but it was clear from our conversation that he keenly hoped his years of experience (including work as a server and bartender) would quickly elevate him above the lowest-earning front-of-house position. In those first couple of weeks, Edward went all in. I remember running into him in the back of the dining room one night looking a little tired and dazed. I asked him how he was, and he said he was on a double and had worked the night before as well. I asked if he had wanted to work a double[44] and he said no, but that Kathy "just said [he] could stay if [he] wanted to." He shrugged. "I can't say no when someone asks nicely." The next time I saw him, he told me that he had been kept so late that night that his bus line had stopped running, forcing him to make a two-hour walk home in the cold. After a few weeks of effort, Edward left. It had been too hard for him to get to Danny's from his other job, Miroki told me, and he spent his whole wage on the Uber rides.

This pattern also manifested in servers' attempts to control another aspect of the schedule, the order of "cuts" by which they would be released at the end of the night. At the Danny's host stand, where I worked, we created a "rotation" sheet at the start of each shift, updating it as the hours went by. On it we recorded the start time of each server. This was not the official start time of their shift, but rather the moment when they handed us a slip of paper signed

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[44] Managers frequently "offered" the double, rather than demanding it of us.

by management, attesting to their readiness to work.[45] Getting the slip signed and readying

oneself for the floor could be time consuming, but workers were also desperate to be listed

earlier in the rotation, as this increased their odds of being cut earlier in the night, which would

in turn save them from onerous closing tasks (for which they earned no tips) and from being

stuck on the floor during the least lucrative hours of the shift. In order to secure a good spot in

the rotation, servers often arrived well before their shifts, donning their uniforms and tracking

down wayward managers for a signature, and then lingering by the stand until the very moment

their shift was to begin—or even beginning to serve tables before their shift, and thus their

hourly wage, commenced. As a result, workers often ceded unpaid time well before the start of

their shifts in an effort to exert control over the rotation.

Restaurant management—at Danny's and beyond—also appear to go to some lengths to

cultivate the notion that workers have some agency over their own schedules. One form this

cultivation took at Danny's was the leaderboard, through which managers actively promoted a

more or less direct (although still discretionary) connection between workers' performance and

schedules. Another, and even more straightforward, form this took was management's

suggestion that workers in fact had a degree of control over their own schedules. And they did—

to a point. This was an idea that Dale promulgated even in during my hiring interview—when I

asked him how time off requests were typically handled, he said, rather breezily, that workers

just indicated when they wanted to work on the scheduling platform, and everyone got the time

off they wanted. This turned out to be more or less the case. Over the time I worked at Danny's,

and especially when I knew I would soon give notice, I started making more and more frequent

efforts to test the system, blocking off days or even a whole week of unavailability. These were,

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[45] Workers not only had to demonstrate that they were on time and physically prepared to work, but were also required to indicate particular sales pitches and areas of focus for the shift.

in fact, only requests, and thus required managerial approval. That said—and though the assistant manager, Kathy, once pressured me to rescind a request—I was never denied outright. That workers appeared to have this discretion when it came to the schedule, exerted through the faceless app with (generally speaking) no managerial interaction, thus served to perpetuate the idea that workers had some control over their own time at work. Dale made explicit claims in this regard, and during my hiring interview I noted that Dale described himself as "extremely flexible with everyone, with scheduling," a necessity to "keep your workers happy."

Even more significantly, it is typical that in restaurants of all stripes (and many other low-wage service industry jobs) workers are expected shoulder the burden of responsibility for shifts, once they have been assigned. This was the case at Danny's, for every restaurant worker I interviewed and in every service workplace where I myself have been employed. Once the schedule is posted, an assigned shift becomes the sole provenance of the worker—it is "your shift" or "my shift" and, as Wilson (2019a: 13) describes, workers operate much like "merchants at a trading port" managing their shifts. If a worker becomes ill, or has an emergency, or simply does not want to work, they are expected to take it upon themselves to find another worker willing to fill in for them, whether that requires a trade or some favor, or someone else is just anxious to pick up more work.

This process is so commonplace in the restaurant industry that it was actually difficult to discuss it with workers during interviews and conversations at work. At times I made an effort to point out the strangeness of this arrangement. When my coworker at the host stand, Becca, came into work ill one day, and fairly certain that she had strep throat, I listened to her spend the whole of the shift agonizing over her inability to find coverage for the next afternoon. When I suggested that our assistant manager Kathy might help her out and wouldn't want her interacting

with customers when she was so clearly unwell, she looked at me like I was nuts. "I think it's *still* my responsibility," she said. And besides, she was in a mind-numbing bind: she knew that she would be held responsible for the shift if she could not find someone to fill in, but she also knew that if the managers discovered she had come into work with strep throat, she would be reprimanded.

For the most part, workers that I interviewed accepted that this was simply the way of things, too normal an aspect of work in the restaurant industry to warrant questioning. The idea that management *gave* workers shifts for which they were solely responsible also seemed to aid in perpetuating the entrepreneurialism of workers at the restaurant, discussed at other points in this and the previous chapter. And, perhaps because workers found some value in that entrepreneurial identity, some even appreciated their apparent responsibility when it came to shifts. I asked Jenny, who had recently left her job in service, whether she found this responsibility irksome. She replied, "I kind of like having to take the initiative to help them find somebody, because I can't be there." When I pressed her, she continued, "Because it was my shift, and I'm responsible for that and they gave me those hours. I mean, they didn't have to give me those hours, but they did." Here, too, Jenny fairly succinctly articulates Wood's (2018) "misrecognition" of the "scheduling gift."

And yet, even this limited agency could be rescinded. After twisting my ankle on a hike, I woke one morning to find my newly-regenerated joint swollen and painful. I was on the schedule for the next day, but the prospect of heading into work when I could barely stand seemed fairly unrealistic. I then spent the morning texting with coworkers and, when I was unable to find anyone to take the shift, two of the managers. Kathy, after some back and forth, conceded that she would allow me to use a chair behind the stand—conveniently neglecting to address the fact

that the chair would be of little help when I performed the actual task of my job, guiding guests through the dining room to their tables.

Finally, after a stressful couple of hours, Becca agreed to cover for me, though with no small amount of reluctance. It had started to snow over the course of the morning, and the forecast looked even worse for the following day. I knew Becca hated driving in snow and so I felt bad, but there was not much I could do about it. I "released" the shift on the scheduling platform and Becca "picked it up." The next afternoon, shortly before the troublesome shift was to start, I noticed that I had missed two calls from a Syracuse-area number and called it back. It was yet another Danny's manager, somehow totally ignorant of the schedule change, informing me that owing to the weather, I had been cut from the schedule and need not bother coming in. After everything, and no matter how "responsible" the managers might declare us to be, the shift could go immediately, and even absurdly, up in smoke. In the end, the schedule could finally be determined by factors—the weather, directives from regional or corporate, the projections of the store's algorithmic table management software—far beyond the workers', or even the local managers', control.

There is much more that could be said here about the way that workers and managers traverse these flexible scheduling arrangements, but I want to conclude by emphasizing one notable outcome—and one that, I think, ultimately sheds some light on the primary topic of this study. Navigating these unstable scheduling arrangements, the admixture of meritocracy and punishment, responsibility and subjugation, workers employed many tactics. They worked hard, and in the case of tipped workers this effort often accorded with that of the tip work game. They attempted to cultivate relationships with management. But so, too, did they cede control of their time—making themselves immanently available to management—in an effort to secure some

future stability. In so doing, workers appear to be consenting to the precarious conditions of the flexible schedule and, in a strange way, this is both because the conditions are precarious and because workers hope to make them less so. This accords with the findings of Purser (2012) and others that in navigating the vicissitudes of precarity, of unpredictable work and uncertain scheduling, workers are conditioned for a continued future of such precarious work, and primed for consent in the work itself.

Further, unlike in a job with set hours, the constantly changing schedule in the restaurant (and other low-wage service and retail sector jobs) means that things appear always up for renegotiation, as if workers can game the system to yield better results. Because the schedule never stops being in flux, that effort can never abate, and so even a server like Robyn, who by her own account and the assessment of other Danny's workers was the most favored of Dale's employees, sometimes felt her position as extremely insecure. I noted this with some surprise on one of my final evenings at Danny's, when Robyn testily informed me that she planned to quit. When I asked her why this was, she blamed the managers who, she said, were for some inexplicable reason shorting her on those coveted "money-making shifts."

Limits to Autonomy

As I have argued, the restaurant tip work game, in its various iterations, functions as an element of the broader orchestration of workplace relations, the simultaneous operation of multiple distinct but overlapping labor processes. Working in tandem—though with distinct wage structures and objectives—are a rotating cast of hosts, servers and runners, kitchen workers on the line, prep cooks, pantry, take out people, bartenders, all overseen by a manager or two. The ultra-divisive tipping structure employed at Danny's may help ward off certain threats—like the

development of solidarity between workers—but it also poses distinct challenges. As Sallaz (2002, 2009) points out, tip work games do reduce an employer's costs and assure that workers will provide "service with a smile" of their own accord, but in utilizing these systems management also cedes some degree of control over its workforce, a threat that is ultimately kept in check on the casino floor by the failsafe of the pit boss.

In the restaurant, such checks often manifest as conflicts between workers. This is especially the case when the objectives or constraints of one group of workers appear to impinge upon the tipped worker's ability to control their earnings through the management of their section or the performance of individualized "good service." This latter type of conflict, at Danny's and elsewhere, often takes the form of the kitchen's refusal to make modifications to menu items requested by customers. The tip game compels servers to attempt to maximize service personalization, but non-tipped kitchen workers have little to no incentive to perform the added labor of modifications. As such, and much to their annoyance, servers' ability to provide personalized service to customers is always constrained by their inability to cater to requests necessitating the cooperation of other, non-tipped workers.

The former type of conflict, over timing, would often erupt at Danny's between servers and hosts, bussers and runners. Servers could exert some leverage over bussers and runners through the tip out, but over hosts they held no such sway. As such, servers were perpetually aggravated by the hosts' seating arrangements and attempted to exercise some measure of influence by other means. Each server seemed to have their own strategy for doing so. Some nagged and complained. One server, Jeff, was a repeat offender in this regard, and would return to the host stand throughout a shift to lodge his complaints. I recorded the following episode,

somewhat reflective of my own extreme irritation with Jeff, in my fieldnotes following my final

shift at Danny's:

> *Jeff is a real brat all night, constantly coming up front to complain about things, to let us know (passive aggressively, or just aggressively) that a table is clean, or that he's "ready to go." Later in the evening, he stops by the stand, aggrieved, leaning over and pointing at us for emphasis and saying angrily, "I'm not complaining but I really got fucked over tonight." He goes on to accuse us of shorting him a table. He insists that some of the other servers have made $600 tonight and he has only made $300.*
>
> *We all watch him, not saying anything. Then I shrug and tell him that we were out of rotation by the time I came in at 5:00, and if it seems like he wasn't getting seated it's because we spent most of the night on a 45-minute wait since the kitchen was backed up. Miroki says that, yeah, we've just been seating people where we can.*

This was fairly standard behavior for Jeff, and it did not take me long to figure out that he was

likely the most universally reviled server amongst the support staff. During another shift,

Wintermoon, Miroki's younger brother and a new busser at Danny's, stopped at the stand for the

express purpose of venting his frustrations with Jeff. "I hate that guy," he told us. "I have love for

everyone," Miroki responded, with a touch of sanctimoniousness. Undeterred, Wintermoon

frowned. "No," he said. "I think hate is the right word for it."

Though I was there primarily as a researcher, and despite my best efforts, I tended to

agree with Wintermoon, especially considering that on my first shift at Danny's I had actually

witnessed Jeff make one of my coworkers at the stand break down in tears. On more than one

occasion, Jeff came to the host stand with similar complaints about us skipping or shorting him,

bossily demanding that we "double seat" him—give him two tables in a row—to "make up for

it." This was something hosts typically resisted, and for a number of reasons: first, should we

accede to Jeff's demands, we would most certainly be subject to the vitriol of whichever server

followed him in the rotation, or perhaps even the entire roster of servers. Second, we generally

resented the accusations (which were usually, if not always, unfounded). So it was that I

eventually found myself—to my surprise, and later shame—not only participating in but *instigating* the deliberate skipping of Jeff in the rotation, a small retribution for months of ill treatment.

Through this back and forth of autonomy and checks to autonomy, the complex orchestration of workplace relations usually operated fairly seamlessly and without much direct intercession from management. This was reflected at Danny's in the seeming—and actual—absence of managerial presence on the dining room floor. Because the structures of these interrelated labor processes maximized the individual expenditure of effort while curbing workers' actual control, a moderately busy shift of roughly twenty-five workers and hundreds of customers typically required only two managers working—one in the back, supervising the kitchen (along with the chef and sous chef, indicating perhaps that the kitchen workers required more direct management) and doing administrative tasks in the office, and another "floating," which usually meant overseeing the host stand and handling customer complaints. Even more significantly, this design of the workplace—and especially the tip work game—functioned, in typical work game fashion, to obscure the role of management and the extraction of surplus value, and to redirect conflict away from management and toward other workers and customers. While managers were a constant presence for the hosts, as hourly workers, and one of our most frequent sources of frustration and objects of vitriol, servers typically paid managers little attention.

On a slow day, I asked Dori, a server with whom I had become friendly, who she worried about more while she was working, the customers or the managers. Without hesitation, she replied, "Oh, the customers. I'm not worried about the managers. They don't do anything. They don't care." Servers relied on customers for the bulk of their earnings, and perceived other

workers as either helpmates or impediments to their work, a situation that contributed to the

relative invisibility of management in the labor process and on the dining room floor. That

invisibility, like servers' experience of autonomy, always had its limits. Just as pit bosses in

Sallaz's (2009) casino study reasserted control in moments when the stakes were raised or the

house's profits threatened, so too would management reassert its authority over the restaurant.

Unlike in the case of the casino, this reassertion did not typically emerge at the level of the

individual interaction between a server and their table.[46] Such intercessions might occur when

conflicts between workers could not be quickly mediated and threatened to spill over, but often

reflected management's recognition that a (typically tipped) worker's sense of what they could

control had gotten out of hand.

Relating one such incident, Kim, a recent hire at Danny's, told me during an interview

that she dated her poor relationship with Dale, our general manager, to particular conflict over

the tip out, which unfolded shortly after she was hired. After a busy shift, Kim had hesitated

when counting out her tips, reluctant to hand over any significant sum of money to Jamie, the

busser. "It was her seventh day of work and she got called in, and she was pissed about it bussing

tables, and it was really busy," Kim told me.

> It was a Sunday, and I was a double, and [Jamie] didn't bus any of my tables, and I had to
> tip her out $25 because I had made such good money. She didn't touch my tables, she
> didn't clear, she didn't set. Then she comes to me and she goes, "Kim, money."
>
> I was like, "Hold on." One, you don't ask me like that, and two, you know you didn't
> clean my tables. I'll tip out the food runner because he did run all of my food, but for
> you, I don't feel like you even tried or deserve a tip.
>
> She called Dale, and ever since Dale just doesn't really favor me. I ended up tipping her
> out the full amount and I was really pissed about it. I sat down with Dale in the office that
> day and I was like, "Listen, I'm not a bully…I'm tipping her out the full amount because

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[46] The exception here would be when a customer explicitly requested managerial intervention with that timeless refrain: "I'd like to speak to your manager."

I'm not mean. I don't want you to think I'm mean. I'm not trying to fuck up anyone's money, and I don't want to be in trouble, so here it is. I don't want to do this, but here."

…

I got my hours cut and I was working mornings—he knows I can't work mornings. I emailed him a week ago asking him what's going on and he didn't even answer my email. He knows I have two kids. We've talked about it many times. He knows I can't work mornings…I felt like he was just punishing me because of the way I made Jamie feel. I still tipped her out and I still apologized to her…I'm not wanting to kiss his ass.

When the frustrated Kim attempted to censure Jamie, who she felt had not contributed adequately and thus created more work for Kim during the shift, she apparently went too far and violated some unspoken rule governing the tip out. Jamie appealed to Dale, and Dale intervened—perhaps because Kim was new to the workplace, or merely to reign in a server he thought had taken her discretion too far. And of course, management always had one primary motivation for policing the tip out: as I mentioned previously, bussers and runners at Danny's were paid the tipped (subminimum) wage, and so management expected the tip out from servers to be sufficient to put tipped out workers' wages above the regular minimum wage per hour. If their wage fell below, the restaurant would have to make up the difference in their wages. Overall, Kim felt that this censure continued to affect her work and that since the incident Dale had continued to punish her with reduced or undesirable shifts. While at times workers requested such interventions, under ordinary circumstances they were more likely to do everything in their power to *avoid* drawing managers' attention. "The manager—the less work they have to do, the better. They're happy with you," said longtime server Jack. Managerial involvement was "the game changer," he told me, and likely to spark "a disciplinary action of some sort."

Managerial control could also resurface in the ongoing conflicts between servers and hosts and the servers' frustrated attempts to influence seating. This was a cyclical occurrence in my time at Danny's, and at certain points conflicts between servers and hosts would come to a

head. This happened during my second shift at the stand, when—as mentioned above—Jeff, the server most prone to "bitching," accosted Anita, a host, in front of a group of servers and bussers at the server station. Overhearing Anita excitedly informing her cousin Dori that she had been cut and thus could head home early, Jeff became enraged, swearing at Anita and saying that he was "pissed at the whole host stand" for giving him so many tables.

Anita, who was already having a bad night, began to cry, which came to the immediate attention of Valerie, our well-intentioned front-of-house manager. Valerie reported the incident to Dale, who (at least, as I heard it from fellow workers and Valerie herself) reprimanded Jeff harshly, causing him, in turn, to cry, and later to apologize profusely to Anita and offer to buy her dinner. Less dramatically, hosts would also periodically become so collectively fed up with the volume of complaints from servers that one or another of us would raise the issue with a manager. This would typically prompt intercession in the form of rules about servers not being allowed to linger near the host stand—rules that would be followed for a shift or two and then forgotten, so that the whole production could be repeated ad infinitum. During an interview, Kyle described a similar intervention in his workplace, meant to alleviate the tensions that erupted between tipped and non-tipped workers over the differences in the amount and structure of their wages. A few months before our interview, his manager had instituted a rule forbidding servers from discussing their tip earnings at work, because their bragging at the end of the night was stoking resentment among the minimum wage-earning kitchen staff.

Dale, the Danny's GM, also liked to mediate conflict between workers by reminding the hosts that we were in no way beholden to the servers. "You know you don't have to listen to them," he would tell us, or, "They don't get to tell you what to do." His reminders did little to alter the frequency of conflicts, and generally seemed to serve the purpose of placing the onus of

mediating these conflicts back onto us, the workers. So too might these curtailments of the agency of one set of workers ultimately function to reiterate the supposed agency, or at least responsibility, of another set of workers. On one of the rare occasions that I was assigned a morning shift, I spent a rather harrowing first hour of the day with only one server on, Jayden, during an unusually early lunchtime rush. Once another server clocked in, Valerie, our front-of-house manager, came over to the stand and instructed me to censure Jayden, who had gotten behind in her work, by skipping her in the rotation. "Don't give her more tables until she can get her section cleaned up," Valerie told me. "I don't want to keep rewarding her with money when she's not taking care of her tables." While this seemed unnecessarily harsh considering the morning we'd just had, I complied with Valerie's directive, only to incur Jayden's wrath myself.

Modes of Refusal and Resistance

Thus far in this account, I have described tipped work as it developed historically and as it operates within the restaurant—as an extremely lucrative means of organizing work to meet the constraints of interactive service work and elicit effort from workers. Like tip work games described in other service (Sallaz 2002, 2009; Sherman 2007) and non-service workplaces (Burawoy 1979), the restaurant tip work game obscures relations in production, redirecting workers attentions away from management and their objective relation to their employers. It cultivates a sensibility of personal responsibility, of autonomy and self-management, always bounded by the ever-present manager who can reassert their authority on the floor. And, perhaps most significantly, it elicits the work of service—and not just service, but *good service.*

Yet it was that in the early weeks of this project I was struck by one element of the restaurant tip work game that does not accord with these prior accounts. Sherman (2007),

considering the implications of work games played in spaces of work *and* leisure, at once the site

of production *and* consumption (Leidner 1996), suggests that in the luxury hotel, service work

games tended to normalize, and thus obscure, class inequalities—relations that extend far beyond

the workplace. By contrast, what I found among many restaurant service workers was that a

preoccupation with the tip often represented a refusal to normalize relations of inequality in the

service interaction, and to reassert the service work as labor. This was something of which I

often took note at Danny's. As I listened to servers debrief on their tip earnings and customers

day after day, I realized that many had a particular and concrete idea about what the tip meant,

which the anecdote at the top of chapter three illustrates quite explicitly.

To recount: servers Jane and Lisa had spent their entire night bending over backwards to

cater to the whims of a large table celebrating a birthday, only to find they had been stiffed when

they collected the checks. Their venting of frustration quickly turned to a conversation about

appropriate behavior in the restaurant, codes of conduct they felt these young women had

breached on multiple counts, culminating in the lousy tip. This reflection prompted Jane to

suggest, and everyone else at the stand to wholeheartedly agree, that *everyone* should have to

have the experience of this sort of work—whether in retail or service—in order that, as Lisa put

it, they "know how to act." This conversation suggested a consensus among my coworkers about

appropriate conduct for both servers and served, of which the 10 percent tip was a clear

violation. Further, it was not only among the servers that I noted this preoccupation with the

import of behavioral norms, a sort of chivalric code they implicitly extended to customers and

expected in return. I felt it myself—at times as simply a violation of what I considered to be

ordinarily polite human conduct. Such breaches never failed to stand out, and tended to

punctuate the shift in such a way that they ordered our very temporal experience. We might

spend hours at the stand, customers coming and going in an undifferentiated blur, only to have one bizarre encounter bring everything jarringly back into focus, setting the tone for the rest of the night.

One evening toward the end of my employment at Danny's, I worked a shift at the stand with Miroki, whom I had already told a great deal about my research and academic interests. It was an extremely busy evening—there was a big game at the university and people from out of town had flooded the mall to shop and eat before they headed to the Carrier Dome. We made conversation in short bursts whenever we had a second, usually catching one another in flight, or in a brief moment between customers at the stand. I recorded the following in my notes that night, barely awake but still laughing about Miroki's righteous indignation:

> *Miroki says that he thinks I should write a book. "What about?" I ask him, and then things get busy. A bit later a large party comes up wanting a table and we quote them the 40-45 minute wait time. They are shocked and say "never mind!" turning to walk over to [a different restaurant]. The oldest woman in the group looks extremely pissed, and we can see her mouthing "45 minutes? That is* ridiculous!*" as she angrily marches away.*

> *"What do they think is going on here?" I ask Miroki. He says that this is what I should write my book about, customers like that, people who don't get how things work in a restaurant. He is especially hung up on the fact that (as we learn from several customers) [a neighboring restaurant] is actually on a* two-hour *wait. He can't stop talking about it all night.*

These violations never went without remark. True, sometimes the objection from workers seemed to be primarily offense at being treated rudely by fellow humans out in the world. But, too, and especially in the surprised indignation of the stiffed server, there seemed to be an assertion of what the tip, and its absence, represented: that work of *good service*—or, to perhaps put it more specifically, a formal acknowledgement of the labor of "good service." This preoccupation with the tip as a representation of the work of service accords with the way in which servers tended to diminish (even to the point of absurdity) the importance of the small

wage they received from their employers, and with servers' frequent insistence that customers, and *not* managers, defined their experience on the dining room floor.

Tipping may indeed normalize, or naturalize, a relationship approaching servitude—as the BSCP workers argued in their campaign against tipping—or relations of extreme class inequality (Sherman 2007). However, servers' insistence on a code of acceptability around tipping seems in a way to function to highlight the transactional nature of the service relationship For the workers with whom I spoke, preoccupation with the significance of the tip seemed to be in some ways a refusal to normalize class distinctions between served and servers—through an insistence that the work of service should be formally acknowledged with a codified monetary value. A customer might conceive of the tip as a gratuity, an individual act of goodwill, but servers seem to conceive of it as something closer to a fee for service (Mulinari 2019). Not surprisingly, servers seemed, too—and regardless of establishment—to have quite a firm idea of acceptable tip amounts. When I asked servers about their earnings, or noted their reactions as they related a shift's haul, I found that they were pretty uniformly appalled by anything short of 18 percent, and considered 20 percent the baseline of decency.

True, as in any *formal* employment relation, the tip also highlights a fundamental inequality upon which this relationship is predicated, that one person must sell their labor power while another person is in a position to purchase it. One free person sits down at the table, assuming the role of diner, and another free person steps up to it, pen in hand, ready to serve. And yet, especially as one moves from the fine dining sector to the midrange chain restaurant, fast casual restaurant, or café, there can also be a diminishing of that distance/inequality, or even elimination of it. At Danny's, as Robyn pointed out to me, the class differential between servers and customers was often indistinguishable: many Danny's servers told me that they had started

working there because they liked the food themselves, and it was not at all uncommon for

Danny's servers to come in to eat when they were off duty (to take advantage of the 25 percent

discount), and for their friends and family members to come in to eat while they were working.

Robyn told me, too, about the network of friendships that spanned the many restaurants at

Destiny USA. "We all know each other," she said. "That's what I love about this mall.

Everybody knows each other—same customers, same people." Before and after shifts, it was

extremely common for servers and bartenders, on their own or in groups, to visit acquaintances

at other restaurants and stick around for food or drinks. Even when Robyn and I met for an

interview, she requested we sit at the bar of a chain restaurant across from Danny's, and as each

passing server and manager stopped to say hello, it became clear that she knew every single

worker in the place.

One of the most common refrains I heard from servers at all sorts of establishments when

I asked them about customers' tipping habits was that service industry workers made for the very

best tippers. Complaining one night about a table that stiffed her, Lauren, a longtime Danny's

server and close friend of Robyn's, said wistfully, "Give me a table of industry people—industry

people flush with tips." After all, a table of servers are, more so than anyone, likely to observe

(or, typically, *exceed*) the norms of tipping and restaurant behavior. But the frequency with

which I heard this same observation suggested that such blurring of the lines between server and

served functioned not as a normalizing of class inequality but a refusal to allow the service

relationship to become one that went unacknowledged, and unremunerated. It meant an assertion

that "good service" was, in fact, labor, and not merely a curtesy subserviently extended by one

person to another. All that said—and as the experiences of Lisa, Jane, and others illustrate—

there is no security in the tip. No matter how much service workers might insist on the standards

of tipping and acceptable behavior, there is really nothing save a guilty conscience (and perhaps a little outraged curtness from the server) to stop a customer departing having left no tip at all. A server might go above and beyond, exerting great effort to produce this good service, and yet find no monetary recognition of that expenditure of labor.

In anticipation of a customer's failure to properly recognize this service labor, or of a breach to codes of conduct in the restaurant, servers might assert control over their work through selective use of emotionally protective "scripts" (Gatta 2002) and by refusing to engage emotionally with customers (Erickson 2004b), or by attempting to circumvent the rotation system and speed through customers (Paules 1991). Workers might also, as I found at Danny's, have the opportunity to demonstrate refusal post hoc. One evening Allen, a young server who had graduated from the host stand, came by to gripe about his last table. They stiffed him, he told us, and then had the audacity to hang around at the table long after paying their bill. This infuriated Allen, and he told us how he had preceded to eject them from the table. "She was only halfway done with her drink, and I snatched it," he said saucily. "If you want to linger, you better tip."

Notably, these forms of resistance are not directed at management, and instead involve workers' assertion of autonomy in relation to customers and to one another. This resistance is not, then, resistance as a refusal to participate in the work game (Burawoy 1979), but rather to a bending of its rules. They are, moreover, hyper-individualized acts that, far from posing any kind of challenge to capital, often redound on one's compatriots—especially when workers refuse a task that falls ultimately to a coworker, or circumvent the rotation and "steal" a table. Workers also might signal refusal by forgoing the tip altogether (Gatta 2009a), but I would argue that this mode of resistance is also bounded. Restaurant servers, for whom tip-earning constitutes the near

entirety of work, cannot make a habit of forgoing the tip, and likely reserve this extreme approach for the worst and most abusive customers. So while this form of resistance may appear to be a momentary withdrawal of consent, it could also amount to a means by which workers merely attempt to manage their inevitable exposure to harassment and poor treatment.

Among Danny's workers, moments of resistance or refusal were a rarity. In this chapter and chapter three, I spent some time elaborating on the network of workplace relations spanning the restaurant, relations that amount to a kind of interdependency amongst workers, even as tipping structures were corrosive to any real worker solidarity. Managers could play upon these relationships, and in fact had an explicit policy encouraging workers to recruit their friends and family members, in return for which workers would receive a monetary reward. I observed that such relationships (familial or otherwise) made workers loathe to shirk duties—something I noticed most commonly among the hourly hosts, whether due to proximity or the distinctness of the pay structure. While there were a handful of workers who consistently avoided the more unpleasant tasks (like emptying trashcans and tidying restrooms) and refused to willingly cover for coworkers (as described above) these workers were, perhaps not surprisingly, fairly universally reviled. After all, any task they refused in that individualized act of resistance would ultimately be taken on by some other worker, who—for whatever reason, and perhaps in an effort to improve their lot on the job—felt they could not decline.

Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter I have attempted to provide one oblique insight into the lack of worker mobilization around contemporary anti-tipped wage campaigns. As the experiences of workers related in this chapter suggest, tipped work not only describes a particular mode of

earning one's income, but also conditions the very workforce that does so. From the workplace dynamics that attend tip work games, and accounts of workers' conceptions of their work and their position relative to both managers and customers, emerges a worker identity of competitive entrepreneurialism. On and off the dining room floor, the tipped worker tends to (view/describe themselves) less as one among many waged laborers than as independent petty capitalists. In the tip work game, and within the small fief of their section, the server acts as enterprising salesperson. They are selling food, yes, but also their performance of service labor—or, as one server put it, selling their very *personalities.* While under the two-tier wage structure tipped workers receive a portion of their earnings from their employers and a portion directly from customers, it is this latter (and often much larger) source of income with which tipped workers tend to be preoccupied, many going so far as to diminish the significance of the employer-provided wage entirely.

Related to, although somewhat distinct from, this entrepreneurialism is a prevailing ethos of personal responsibility, both expressed by workers and encouraged by managers. Tipped restaurant workers are vested with the weight of responsibility for their assigned shifts, sections and the customers with whom they interact. This sense of responsibility emerges, like entrepreneurialism, from the tipped labor process itself, but also from the chaotic conditions of customer-introduced unpredictability and the very instability of low-wage service work—of contingent employment and ever-shifting scheduling arrangements. Management may also go to some lengths to spur competitive entrepreneurialism, as with the Danny's leaderboard, and to impress upon workers the many things for which they will be held responsible.

On the one hand, tipped work in the restaurant appears to operate in classic work game fashion. It provides workers the opportunity for the fleeting or limited expression of that which,

under capitalism, is not fully realizable: control over the labor process, and agency at work. Thus can the entrepreneurialism of the tip game be construed as consent that obscures relations of production. But so too does employment in the restaurant's front-of-house present workers with nakedly, obviously precarious conditions at work, wherein employers have shed even the burden of providing workers' full wage. I would argue that the sense of personal responsibility, of the necessity of self-reliance, expressed by workers in this study is as much an attempt to cope with the visceral experience of such uncertain, precarious conditions as it is an allurement. Server Kim put it succinctly, when we discussed the ways that she and other Danny's servers maneuvered in an attempt to secure more stable and consistent work schedules: "We're all servers. You know how this works. We want good shifts. We want good times in. We want the same shifts every week. We want a set schedule. That's just what we want." It might seem like a meager request, but for many low-wage service workers—Kim included—such security remained an unanswered wish.

Importantly, neither independent entrepreneurialism nor a pervading sense of personal responsibility seem especially compatible with contemporary mobilizing around anti-tipped wage campaigns and neither, I would argue, seem likely to incline workers to seek material redress through legislative change. Of course, I cannot *prove* in any conclusive way that the organization of work in the restaurant is, in some clear cut and straightforward way, the impetus for workers' decisions about whether, and how, to engage in contemporary anti-tipped wage campaigns. During the months I conducted this study, I asked every tipped worker I encountered (whether in an interview or at work) what they thought about tips and the tipped wage, and why they did so, but the simple fact is that most workers were pretty ambivalent, and the

overwhelming majority were entirely unaware of the One Fair Wage campaign and hearings around New York State.

This is, in and of itself, fairly revealing and is perhaps an indication that anti-tipped wage mobilizing has failed to reach many New York State service workers. But perhaps, too, it is a demonstration of the extent to which workers' preoccupation is centered on the customer, rather than the employer (or even state), as arbiter of their incomes. Moreover, I would argue that the stories related in this and chapter three demonstrate a central conundrum in tipped work. The conditions of tipped work are, at least in part, traceable to the existence of the lower-than-minimum tipped wage. As such, one would think, abolishing the tipped wage is a necessary first step toward changing the conditions of that work—and yet, the very conditions of that work might make rallying workers behind anti-tipped wage campaigns distinctly challenging. In the quest for security amidst instability at every level (in the service interaction, schedule, labor market, et cetera), the entrepreneurial self emerges as one sure port in a violent storm. Why, then, would workers look to their employers for the provision of material security, or put their fates in the hands of nonprofit-employed worker advocates, or even the state?

Chapter 5 "It Would Completely Destroy Us…"

What, the governor doesn't go out to dinner every night? What is he *thinking?*
—Kyle, server

As we have seen in these chapters, in tipped work occurs a veritable disappearing act on the part of management, wherein customers absorb the near-entirety of servers' attention. Customers do, in fact, provide such a disproportionate amount of a tipped worker's income as to make any investment of time or effort into securing an additional few dollars per hour in employer-provided wages seem a bit strange—or even quaint. Further, it does well to remember that the tipped wage (where it exists) predates the employment contract and, as we saw in chapter two, this wage really represents an avowed refusal on the part of the employer to take responsibility for the provision of these workers' full wage. This is, of course, a qualified refusal, as employers are technically still on the hook for at least the minimum wage, should customers fail to pay up. But it is also one that is sanctioned—by the Supreme Court and state and federal governments.

At times, too, it is as if those defending and fighting to abolish the tipped wage are simply talking past one another. Workers defending the tipped wage—in public hearings and in one-on-one interviews—often intimated the expectation that employers would respond to any mandatory wage increase with massive layoffs. While these fears may be overblown (and I am not at all sure that they are) or stoked by employers themselves,[47] they are also not fears that the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) or other worker advocates are in a position to assuage. ROC focuses its attention on the material gains to be won through a base wage increase and the way that this reduction in workers' dependence on the tip would alleviate some of the fear workers have of addressing workplace discrimination and sexual harassment. But ROC does not

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[47] In worker interviews I heard more than one story of employers—cautiously, but quite deliberately—suggesting that should the subminimum wage disappear so too would most workers' jobs.

have, as a union might, a shop floor presence. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that workers

might fear that in the wake of legislative changes that stand to reshape their industry, they might

find themselves left in the lurch, to weather the consequences—whatever those might be.

Moreover, and in a perhaps surprising contrast to the anti-tipping movements described

herein, almost none of the workers I spoke to over the course of this study had ever heard of

ROC, the Restaurant Workers of America or that any kind of legislative change to their wages

might be on the horizon. This might be in part attributable to the fact that in New York State,

unlike in Washington, D.C. and Maine, the issue has not made it onto a ballot, and so has

remained at hazy remove, the purview of the governor's office and Depart of Labor.[48] Still,

employer mobilization and genuine indifference pose rather unsatisfying explanations for the

presence of workers from Applebee's and the Cheesecake Factory at New York State

subminimum wage hearings. These workers, and others, gave impassioned testimony rejecting

any change to their wage structure, their fear often boiling down to that of the unknown.

Jack, one of the only servers I interviewed who was aware of the tipped wage issue in

New York State (and the only one to attend a hearing), voiced exactly this concern in our

conversation. I asked him what he would do should the abolition of the tipped wage come up on

a ballot, and he replied: "I think that I would probably vote against it. Yeah, I'd be 95 percent

against, just because I've lived this way, you know, and I understand it…Change is bad for a lot

of people. They don't like it. And that's what it would be for me, is change." When I asked him

to elaborate on what he thought this change might look like, he considered a moment, and then

said,

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[48] I do have some anecdotal, if not actual, evidence to support this idea. I was still living in D.C. during the lead up to the initial vote on Initiative 77, which abolished the city's tipped wage, and worked then in the service industry myself. For a brief period in the spring and summer of 2018, it seemed to be all that food service industry workers could talk about and signs urging residents to vote yes or no on "77" plastered the city.

> I think that prices would change. I think people wouldn't come out to the restaurants as much because they're going to pass it on to those people…It'd be a win for people that have a lot more money, where they can come to restaurants and spend that more money and not worry about it…I think it would ruin part of the restaurant business. I still think that it would make a lot of owners cut corners and therefore have shittier food, and I think it's a win for big corporate food places that can cut those costs and not be hurt by it…*I think people with money will win and I think people with no money will lose in this situation.*

Jack also, like many of the tipped workers with whom I spoke during interviews or informal conversations on the floor, believed that should the tipped wage be eliminated, so too would the practice of tipping itself—whether that meant that the expectation that customers tip would gradually diminish, or disappear overnight.

How justified workers are in harboring this suspicion remains unclear, as only a few years have elapsed since the first state tipped wage eliminations, and I have yet to find any studies on changes to customer tipping practices in these states. While tips themselves are perhaps more difficult to measure,[49] there is at least some available evidence regarding average incomes in typically tipped positions, although even this is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, national data reveals that out of the five states or territories with the highest average annual incomes in 2019 for waiters and waitresses (Hawaii, D.C., Washington, New York and Arizona), four (all but Washington) have a lower-than-minimum wage for tipped workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020a). On the other hand, statewide income data for California shows that between 2015, before the phase out of California's tipped wage, and 2019, the average hourly wage for waiters and waitresses increased from $13.68 per hour to $15.55 per hour (ibid 2015, 2020g). As to potential effects on restaurant industry employment, a 2016 study by Allegretto and Reich found that the first incremental increase in California's tipped wage did not, on the

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[49] Because while workers are *supposed* to report the entirety of their tips for income tax purposes, my own anecdotal experience would seem to suggest that underreporting is rampant in the industry.

whole, appear to negatively affect employment or increase menu prices. There is also some evidence to suggest that gender pay gaps are significantly reduced in states with no subminimum wage for tipped workers (Gallagher Robbins et al. 2014).

All of that is to say that this uncertainty, which looms over the prospect of base wage increases for tipped workers, suggests that workers' perspectives on the tipped wage cannot, in the end, be entirely disentangled from their perspectives on the tip itself. When one considers the context in which this anti-tipped wage movement has arisen—contingent, erratic work in which employers offload risk to workers and shed the responsibility for wages to customers—it is not *so* shocking that workers anticipate they may suffer the brunt of any negative ramifications, unforeseen or no. In the context of extremely unpredictable and precarious work, even one incremental change might seem a risk not worth taking. There is, perhaps, no choice that does not convey upon the worker an intolerable amount of uncertainty, but at least the uncertainty of tipped work is something of a known unknown. When we consider, too, that in tipped work, and through explicit managerial strategies, workers have been conditioned to meet uncertainty with self-reliance, it perhaps makes a degree of sense that some of those workers might bridle at the notion of outside nonprofit groups, legislators and voters proposing to drastically alter the conditions of their work. To a workforce conditioned to value independence and entrepreneurialism, such interventions might read as unforgivably paternalistic or, as Kyle articulated at the start of this chapter, a willful misunderstanding of the workings of the restaurant industry and the needs of its workers.

Unfortunately, the formal tipped wage seems to present a puzzling bind for restaurant industry workers. If workers were formally organized, they might have more of an ability to exert some measure of collective control over, or at least oversight, of the implementation of

wage changes at the level of employer and workplace. Union representation might decrease workers' (justified) fears of summary dismissal. But, of course, most tipped restaurant workers are not unionized, and the tipped wage itself seems to pose a serious threat to such organization. This is a concern that was articulated by certain union organizers and service industry unions long before the institutionalization of a two-tier wage system in the U.S., as discussed in chapter two, and in this sense, the argument I make in this thesis is not remotely novel. Workers' reliance on tip, they argued, fostered competitive individualism, and disinclined workers toward organizing altogether. Thus emerges a sort of ouroboros effect, as a legal tipped wage effectively sets a ceiling on employer-provided wages *and* locates the ground for contestation of this wage at the state or federal (rather than workplace) level. At present, tipped restaurant workers do not participate in large numbers in any organizational form that lends itself to struggle on that terrain.

As we have seen in these chapters, the tipped wage not only weakens the position of workers relative to capital, but also reifies ascriptive hierarchies and amplifies the oppressions of particular groups of workers. Wilson (2018: 121) notes this effect even contained within one workplace where, he says, tips "brightened the boundaries" between different "niches" of restaurant workers. So too have we seen how in tipped work prejudices imported into the workplace mediate the service interaction between workers and customers. While Leidner (1996) suggests that allegiances within the "service triangle" are continually shifting, the tipped wage seems here to work to divide workers from both customers and one another, and thus to the distinct advantage of management. Obviously, I cannot go so far as to claim that this is an effect that is *deliberately* levied by employers in opting to pay the tipped wage. That said, I would note that McAlevey (2016: 158), for one, has detailed employers' explicit attempts to divide workers

by enflaming racial tensions in order to present yet another obstacle to workplace solidarity and organizing.

As to the prospects for restaurant worker organizing in the future, I want to be extremely cautious here about any pretense of prognosticating, especially beyond this current iteration of anti-tipped wage campaigns. While I do think that the accounts herein draw a compelling connection between these campaigns and that which unfolds at the point of production, I also do not intend this analysis to make any assumptions beyond the matter at hand—much less thornier issues like the development of class consciousness at said point of production. True, in my conversations with workers I found a pervasive entrepreneurialism, but so too did I find that some of those same workers, keen to pass the time on the floor riling me up about politics, were at times militantly anti-capitalist. Those conversations fascinated me, but (like much else I would love to write about at greater length whenever I find the time) unfortunately escape the bounds of what I could feasibly cover in these pages.

I would add to that qualification that however much tipped work seems to fit the model of the tip work game (described in chapter three), I remain somewhat uncomfortable with this formulation. Much of that discomfort stems from the fact that in tipped restaurant work the "game" encompasses nearly all of a worker's labor, and quite often the bulk of their earnings. Consent, as Burawoy (1979) described it, means playing the "game," while resistance is the withdrawal of consent and refusal to play. Considering these two options, I am left wondering how in the world the tipped restaurant worker—for whom a refusal to play means a refusal to work, and over whom looms the constant threat of punitive scheduling or outright firing—can meaningfully resist in this way, short of forfeiting their employment. This recalls something of Clawson and Fantasia's (1983) critique of Burawoy's (1979) overemphasis on the game and

consent, and, as they see it, underestimation of monetary incentives. I thought about this during my interview with Robyn (one of the servers whose story is woven throughout these chapters) who, though she seemed at times the consummate entrepreneur, told me decisively that the moment she could earn as much doing a non-service job as she did at Danny's, she would be out the door. In this sense, it is possible to see workers' apparent consent in the tip work game not as some Faustian bargain but a rational calculation, and one workers believe they need to make in order to survive.

Monetary incentive, in another light, is economic coercion, and such critiques draw our attention back to the overtness of coercion (or domination, or *despotism*) in low-wage workplaces today. Hatton (2020) argues that various forms of coercion in contemporary work remain undertheorized. She identifies one such regime, which she terms "status coercion," in which workers labor under an ever-present threat—even experiencing cruel and violent treatment—of a loss of status, and the privileges such status affords. Restaurant work differs in many ways from the spheres of work Hatton describes, but tipped workers share with incarcerated, workfare, graduate student and student athlete workers an exceptional legal status, one that exempts them from certain ordinary labor and employment laws. In the ever-shifting and hierarchical schedule, too, we can see some evidence of this sort of status coercion— workers' ongoing need to maintain a particular relationship with, and status in the eyes of, management in order to secure shifts and hours. While Hatton argues that "precarity is not the only force shaping work in America today" (2020: 20), others have elaborated on the ways that precarity is itself a feature of, and central to, coercive regimes. Ikeler (2016) theorizes in contemporary department store retail work a regime of "contingent control," characterized by at-will employment, unstable scheduling and de-skilled work.

Still others see in the current era modes of domination operating at a much deeper, and even internal level. "[T]he neoliberal achievement-subject," writes philosopher Byung-Chul Han, "engages in auto-exploitation willingly – and even passionately" (2017: 28). Han argues that "[t]he neoliberal economy, increasingly dismantling continuity and progressively integrating instability in order to enhance productivity, is pushing the emotionalization of the productive process forward" (ibid: 46). Han raises the possibility that under neoliberal capitalism, independent entrepreneurialism like that described here amongst tipped workers represents a deeper incursion into the psyche, a new iteration of control and domination that turns all workers into willing self-exploiters for capital, diminishing (or even obviating) the necessity of overt coercion. Whatever the case may be, it would seem that changes in the U.S. economy will require a real reckoning with the depth and pervasiveness of such entrepreneurialism at work. Precarity, after all, appears to be the wave of the future: in the wake of the 2008 recession, job growth has been disproportionately in the realm of "non-standard" employment, including gig and platform work (Katz and Krueger 2019). In such employment relations, of course, workers are often construed as entrepreneurs in quite another sense, in their legal classification as independent contractors. Further reflection on worker entrepreneurialism—its relationship to work regimes and implications for future organizing—may very well presage the shape of things to come.

Epilogue: *98 Days Later*

Just over three months have gone by since I wrote the opening chapter to this thesis, but reading it now feels like looking back across an unbridgeable divide. Too much has happened in the intervening days and weeks, and yet that time has been mostly static, monotonous. In its way, and even as it continues to sow chaos and confusion, the virus has made certain things more glaringly clear. It has viscerally demonstrated the real dangers that lurk within precarious work. Low-wage food service workers like those in this study were among the last to be called off their jobs, where constant customer interface put them at high risk of exposure. Many, like a number of my former coworkers, picked up takeout shifts when they could, suddenly bearing the new designation of "essential worker." Now they march back into workplaces that are like the frontlines in a warzone: enclosed environments wherein strangers intermingle, sharing the same air, tugging down their masks to accommodate forks and straws. All along, these workers have been given something of a choice, such as it is, between contagion and destitution. And while they shouldered risks many of us were lucky to avoid, they could also be unceremoniously dropped, with no hint or promise as to when (or if) regular work might return.

In the early weeks of the virus's spread, before New York State's shutdown commenced, another Danny's host sent me a picture of a new sign up at the stand. It was shot close up, so I could only see the sign itself in the picture, but I knew exactly where it was: wedged under the sticky, smudged glass in front of the hosts' touchscreens by the ever-growing list of closing tasks and Miroki's periodic inspirational notes ("You are a King or a Queen" "DO you love yourself?"). It mandated a vastly expanded list of duties for the hosts to complete during shifts to cope with the outbreak. They were to constantly sanitize all menus and drinks menus, the counter

and any other surfaces infected customers might paw. All condiment containers and salt shakers were to be indefinitely removed from the dining room tables.

The sheet also informed workers that anyone appearing to demonstrate signs of illness would be sent home and "excluded" from work for at least fourteen days. Rebecca, who sent the picture, said in another text that a new chef had been sent home because he had just traveled overseas. Miroki texted to say that with the dearth of customers he had been removed from the front-of-house to work in the kitchen, where an assistant manager then threatened to fire him for talking back. They both told me they thought the virus was overblown. I wanted to warn them to be more careful, but then I paused, genuinely unsure in that moment whose level of worry was a more accurate measure. Mostly it was hard for me to believe that people were still frequenting the mall.

That uncertainty was pervasive, hanging over everything like a miasma. It manifested in the utter illogic of behavior around the city. People ransacked Wegman's and Trader Joe's. I heard middle aged women in golfing attire huddled in Kinney Drugs conspiring over where to find the last bottles of rubbing alcohol—Dollar General, down the street. In the parking lot were elderly people in the passenger seats of cars, waiting anxiously for whoever had gone inside the shop to pick up their prescriptions. Yet most people were still at work, scanning items one by one at the checkout counter, delivering Prime packages, guiding customers to their (recently bleached) tables, making glowing blue cocktails, carrying them out on round trays. The system— its precariousness and its absurdity—began to look especially haggard in the light of the spreading disease.

These weeks have been marked by a looming threat but also by sheer confusion, in many cases the result of genuine incapacity at the state and federal level. The examples are endless,

and would almost be comic if the situation were not so sickeningly dire. There was the lunatic

back and forth over mask-wearing, despite the fact it is standard practice in much of the world,

and especially in those nations that bore the brunt of the H1N1 and Sars outbreaks (Hille and

White 2020). Amidst the shortage, massive but as yet untold quantities of medical-grade

protective equipment were sold and transported out of the country by U.S. companies (Fang

2020). In New York there have been ongoing skirmishes between Governor Andrew Cuomo and

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio over when and whether to institute shutdowns and now

over the unfolding of reopening plans. And all the while we tracked the rolling epicenters of the

pandemic—Hubei Province, Italy's Lombardy region and then not so very far from home.

April 2020 saw astronomically high rates of unemployment following statewide

shutdowns early that month and in late March. At its peak, unemployment reached 14.7

percent—23.3 million people—the sharpest increase and highest rate *on record* (U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics 2020h) meaning, since the Great Depression. Obscene as it is, the number

drastically underreports real unemployment. For one thing, there were issues with the surveys

from which the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated the rate of unemployment, so many

workers who were temporarily without work but still had jobs to which to return were

mistakenly excluded, bringing the real rate of unemployment closer to 20 percent (Ziv 2020).

Then, of course, there is the more persistent issue, that even under ordinary circumstances the

official rate of unemployment is a totally inadequate measure of how many Americans are

actually unable to find full-time work.[50]

Restaurant jobs have, as one might expect, been especially hard hit, and restaurant

workers fairly universally without work. In April and March, at least 6.1 million jobs were lost in

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[50] This problem has only been exacerbated, as this same period of months saw an overall drop in the labor force participation rate. See https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm

the broad food services and drinking places sector (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020i). My former coworkers from Danny's were, almost to a person, suddenly unemployed. Some were able to snag a few of the aforementioned takeout shifts as "essential workers," but only a worker or two would be required in the front-of-house to hand bags of packaged foods off to Grubhub and Uber Eats delivery drivers. Workers applied for unemployment benefits, but even that was a challenge. In the first week after statewide closures, New York's unemployment website repeatedly crashed due to the sheer volume of applicants and the phonelines to reach assistance were perpetually tied up. One of my former coworkers, called Kim in this thesis, finally gave up after several frustrated attempts at applying, deciding to wait it out until things cooled off.

Some 30 million people have applied for unemployment across the country (Taibbi 2020)—something like a fifth of the total U.S. population (Werner 2020). Many have by this point received one-time so-called stimulus checks, or Economic Impact Payments, which max out at $1,200 (plus an additional $500 per dependent child). How far this can have gone toward any *actual* alleviation of the "impact" of the crisis, when rent, utility payments and food are still ultimately required, remains questionable. It is more likely Wall Street that will be the biggest beneficiary of the CARES Act, which passed unanimously in the House and Senate, in the form of trillions from the Federal Reserve (Taibbi 2020). Meanwhile, a few conspicuous employers (Amazon, Walmart, Instacart) have taken on huge numbers of new, and of course extremely low-wage, workers (Medina 2020). One might think that, lacking as we do anything approaching an adequate social safety net, most Americans might resort to hyper-individualism, to bare survivalism. Indeed, these months have seen armed resistance to the shutdowns, (largely astroturfed) protests demanding the reopening of economies (Gabbat 2020), product shortages and price gauging. But so too have they seen new militancy and mobilization—from workers

employed at Amazon, Walmart, McDonald's and elsewhere (Medina 2020; Amazonians 2020;

Sanborn-Hum 2020)—and waves of protests following the murder of George Floyd by

Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

Central New York has now wended its way from phases three to four of the governor's

graduated reopening plan, meaning that many food service establishments are beginning to

resume something (vaguely) approximating normal operations. Phase four guidelines still require

distancing in the restaurant and a limited capacity, so while many workers may now be returning

to their workplaces, it is certainly to reduced hours and a smaller staff. Changes to

unemployment figures support this—of the 6.1 million food and drink service jobs lost in the

spring, 1.4 million are back to work, or have been newly hired on—a figure that accounted for

half the gain in non-farm employment in that period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020i).

Throughout, service work itself barreled on. Those with the means to do so retreated to

their homes and cities became strange dystopian landscapes, a vast underclass of delivery

workers ferrying meals, groceries and to-go cocktails and quietly depositing them on porches and

doorsteps—a new corona economy. These workers may still be tipped, but even if the customer

wanted "to buy a smile" they would likely find themselves out of luck. They would not be able

to see it underneath the mask.[51] Whatever the future holds for these workers, the changes the

current crisis might herald for the industry are not entirely unanticipated. In the early weeks of

the shutdown I kept thinking back to a brief moment during my training shift at Danny's, when

general manager Dale, rattling off facts about the corporation for which he was so proud to work,

informed me and Robert, the other trainee, that the company was already moving in the direction

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[51] The masks are suffocating and irksome but perhaps, as Zizek (2020: 57) suggests, they also "provide a welcome anonymity and liberation from the social pressure of recognition." Maybe they give everyone a small reprieve from emotion work, creepy as they are.

of carry out over sit-down dining, and new take-out only locations would be soon be opening.

"It's the way of the future," he told us, shaking his head and scowling—depressed, I think, to have lived to see this, the death of the great American shopping mall.

Danny's, like most Syracuse restaurants, has now reopened its doors to customers, and my former coworkers have slowly started picking up shifts, desperate for work that is still in short supply. And so while most people I know (myself included) are still mostly sticking it out at home they are back in the mall, just as they were among the last workers to retreat to the relative safety of self-quarantine. Uncertainty has been, in many ways, the theme of this thesis. It suffuses the restaurant industry. Now more than ever it features in all of our lives, and nobody seems to know what to expect more than a few weeks, days, moments ahead of time. I am reminded of what Kim said as we spoke over the phone during the early days of the shutdown, articulating the frustrated desire for stability amidst chaos: "We want a set schedule. That's just what we want." How much farther Kim and her coworkers now are from that modest aim remains to be seen.

Appendix: On Methods

I now want to provide a brief account of how this research was intended and how it actually unfolded. The gulf between my expectations and reality was in the end fairly vast, and to say that this project was met with the chaotic, the unfortunate and the bizarre at every turn would be something of an understatement. In these next few pages I present a basic outline of the intertwined theoretical and methodological framing of this project. Following this introduction to the project in both its original and revised form, I reflect on the way that numerous unforeseen events and the challenges of fieldwork came to bear on the way that I conducted and ultimately thought and wrote about this research.

Workplace Ethnography

From fairly early on in the conceptualization of this project, I knew that I wanted to look to the tipped labor process in the restaurant. This line of inquiry suggested a pretty clear course of action in the form of the workplace ethnography, a research method that goes hand-in-hand with labor process theory, a study of the development and conditions of work under capitalism that looks to the organization of work as both an expression of social relations *of* production and determinant of social relations *in* production (Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1979). Further, a workplace ethnography in the restaurant held for me a special and somewhat nostalgic appeal, as I have been inordinately attached to Barbara Ehrenreich's (2001) *Nickel and Dimed* since I read it as a middle schooler, many eons before I ever contemplated the field of sociology.

My plan as initially formulated was to apply for front-of-house positions at an array of Syracuse-area restaurants and immerse myself in several months of service work. Every aspect of this process would be, and was ultimately, instructive—the job searching and preparation, the

application process, the hiring process, training, the work itself and my eventual exit. I planned also to supplement this ethnographic data with interviews with my former coworkers upon leaving the field, and once I had revealed to them my status as a researcher. Moreover, and as I discuss at greater length in below in the section on Methodology and Ideology, I sought to contextualize my own abbreviated workplace ethnography in a lengthy tradition of Marxist-oriented studies of the workplace and labor process (Burawoy 1979, 1985; Sherman 2007; Sallaz 2009; Halpin 2015) and restaurant workplace ethnographies attentive to more micro-level relational dynamics (Paules 1991; Gatta 2002; Erickson 2004a, 2004b; Wilson 2018, 2019a, 2019b).

The Project and its Reconfiguration

As it happened, a relatively minor but totally inconvenient injury to my left ankle forced me to reshuffle and delay entering the field, and to spend the early weeks of the fall of 2019 scrounging for interviewees. Those early interviews functioned then not to confirm findings from the field but to orient my research as it developed, prompting the iterative research and writing process (see Luker 2008) that I would seek to employ throughout, and which I describe in more detail below. They also influenced my ultimate choice of field site. Through this informal sampling method, relying largely on contacts related in some way to the university, I assembled a relatively uniform group of interviewees. Most were in their mid-twenties to thirties, college-educated, and—most significantly—worked at small, independent restaurants in Syracuse's downtown and Westcott neighborhoods. The logical corrective to this bias seemed obvious. I would apply to work in a large chain restaurant.

As soon as I was cleared to spend a full shift on my newly-regenerated ankle, I headed to the mall and was hired as a host, a non-tipped position. Feeling the stress of my greatly-reduced timeline, I took the first job I was offered, at a restaurant that was overstaffed with servers. I had, in fact, anticipated being hired for just this position, and had thought that with six months or so for research I would be able to work my way into a tipped server position. In the end, this was not to be, but the limitation proved fortuitous. The hosting job provided me a vantage point—physically and otherwise—to the daily operation of the entire front-of-house. It was to the host stand that servers came in slow moments to gripe about bad tips and difficult customers, and hosts typically functioned as intermediaries between other workers, customers and management.

I found that I was positioned to consider tipped work as it is experienced, but also as it shapes relationships among workers and between the worker and those other two points of the so-called "service triangle" (Leider 1996), the customer and the manager. Hosting enabled me to observe tipped workers as they worked, to listen to them describe their interactions with customers and disputes with management, and to ask them—directly and repeatedly—what they thought about their jobs. I gained insight into the tipped labor process and workers' perspectives on tipped work, but also into the broader network of workplace relations. As time went on, my attention gravitated toward the interaction of these multiple labor processes, running up against one another, and the overarching mechanisms by which management fostered certain interrelationships and secured compliance.

After roughly three months in the field, working on a very part-time basis (usually somewhere between one and three shifts a week) I had logged approximately 100 hours—it could have been 95 hours or it could have been closer to 105 hours. To be entirely honest, I am unable to be more exact than that owing to the facts that I often arrived before my shift was to

start and lingered long after clocking out, and that there were times when exhaustion and disorientation (which I explore at greater length below) caused me to forget to mark down the exact time I exited the mall. By the conclusion of this fieldwork, I had compiled hundreds of pages of fieldnotes, which I laboriously typed directly after (nearly) each shift that I worked. On one or two occasions I was so tired after work that I could not bring myself to look at my laptop screen, and in those instances I woke up the following morning with a sinking feeling, knowing just how the first hours of my day would be spent. I was also fortunate to have access to 95 surveys with upstate New York tipped restaurant workers, conducted by the students of Dr. Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern's undergraduate course, Labor Across the Food System, in collaboration with researchers from the Restaurant Opportunities Center. These surveys provided helpful insight into the experience of tipped workers, and as well guided my thinking in developing questions for subsequent in-depth interviews with restaurant workers.

I also drew on the compiled transcriptions from New York State hearings on the subminimum wage, held throughout the state in the summer of 2018, newspaper archives and various other media sources. I made the decision not to code, or to draw too heavily upon, transcripts from the subminimum wage hearings, but rather to read these transcripts (especially the hearing located in Syracuse at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry) for their general tone, striking arguments and to get a sense of who turned out to testify on either side of the debate. With these transcripts I tried to exercise some degree of caution, as it was impossible to know the stories behind the testimony, and workers' primary motivations for showing up—whether they were "encouraged" by employers or affiliated with the Restaurant Opportunities Center, the Restaurant Workers of America or some other group.

Interviews, conducted before, during and after my time in the field were generally lengthy, informal conversations, held in my apartment or people's homes, bubble tea cafes and bars. They provided a wealth of interesting material, though in the end I was left with only nine interviewees. Six of these interviews were conducted before I began work at "Danny's," while a subsequent three were held with former coworkers after I left the field. Additional interviews with Danny's workers were planned, but ultimately cancelled during the escalation of the coronavirus epidemic, by which point I was simply out of time. The project would have been strengthened by additional months to devote to research or better circumstances, but as I had neither, it will have to do.

Methodology and Ideology

Considering how to approach the tipped wage question, the framework of the work game (detailed in chapter three of this thesis) seemed an appropriate one to probe tipped workers' interests and how they might be formed at the point of production. In studying the labor process of one restaurant, I sought to contextualize what I found in the broader literature of labor process theory and the study of contemporary low-wage work in the service sector. I would attempt to "follow [the] charged lines of connection 'up' and 'out' into linked structures of domination," (Salzinger and Gowan 2018: 92), and thus shed some light on the work regimes and political context surrounding the workplace.

In this sense my approach was in no way grounded, and in devising a plan for research I was greatly influenced by the extended case method—most simply and exactly, "the failure and then *reconstruction of existing theory*" (Burawoy 1998: 6). The theory I drew from was, largely, that of the operation of control and persuasion on the shop floor. In the extended case method, as

Burawoy (1998: 6) describes it, "[w]e search for theories that highlight some aspect of the situation under study as being anomalous and then proceed to rebuild (rather than reject) that theory by reference to the wider forces at work, be they the state, the economy, or even the world system." While mine was neither a perfect nor exact execution, I saw in restaurant worker support for the tipped wage an unexpected expression of workers' *interests,* and sought to trace back to the point of production the development thereof. I made an effort toward this rebuilding of theory through the contextualization of my own study in a tradition of Marxist analyses of exploitation and relations in production (Burawoy 1979; Sherman 2007; Sallaz 2009) and several decades' worth of restaurant workplace ethnographies that elaborated on tipped work and workplace relations (Mars and Nicod 1984; Paules 1991; Gatta 2002; Erickson 2004a, 2004b; Wilson 2018, 2019a, 2019b).

So too did I attempt to contextualize this study of tipped work today in a lengthier history—of class struggle, its changing legal status and the development of an industry—and the broader industrial and economic forces of which the restaurant in the mall is but one expression. In this regard I was also influenced in my choice of field site and decision to primarily study a large chain restaurant. I considered it to be a somewhat less idiosyncratic workplace than the small independent establishment, and more representative of a standardized model, iterations of which are stamped across the suburban American landscape. I will note here that I think this study would, in the end, have been strengthened by a more robust tracing of those "charged lines of connection" (Salzinger and Gowan 2018: 92) *up* as well, to a more organization- and industry-level analysis. I attempt to include some of the latter (in the history provided in chapter two and in discussions of the broader service economy and work regimes), albeit in a very abbreviated form.

This research methodology has, of course, its strengths and its weaknesses. Burawoy (1998: 7) is emphatic about the importance of participant observation as a "reflexive science." It is neither totally immersive and enraptured with the micro-level, nor operating at some great and imperturbable remove, but instead implies ongoing *conversation* between the researcher and those they encounter in the field. The "reflexive science" of participant observation further "takes context and situation as its points of departure" and "realizes itself with the elimination of power effects, with the emancipation of the lifeworld" (ibid: 30). Remembering that this reflexivity is not a singular event but an *ongoing* conversation, I attempted to practice something like what Stuart (2018: 213) calls an "abductive reflexivity," remaining attentive to the ripple effect of my own presence in the workplace, the interplay of personalities in an interview— considering this part of the "iterative process of theorizing, hypothesis testing, and subsequent theorizing." This informed my approach to fieldwork; writing, reading and coding of fieldnotes; theorizing and ultimately writing this thesis, although it is perhaps most explicitly reflected upon in the pages of this appendix.

I mentioned strengths *and* weaknesses, and so I should also note one such weakness. As Burawoy (1998: 7) puts it, "the extended case method comes up against the very forces it displays." So it was that I fell victim to some of the same mystification and became enmeshed in the very forces that, as I detail in these chapters, elicit effort, sow division and absorb workers' attention in the workplace. This effect was at times overwhelming, to the point, as I experienced, that the workplace exerted a gravitational pull, bringing workers into orbit and assimilating them into its lifeworld.

This theoretical framework also, I should say, went hand-in-hand with the my own ideological commitments, which I most certainly brought with me into the workplace. These

commitments shaped everything about the way that I conceptualized this research, and at no point did I consider it something merely interesting, or was I in any way impartial. One thing that got me through the ethnography, and the discomfort that I describe at greater length below, was those commitments, and an unshakeable hope that some aspect of this project might at some point prove helpful to workers. For better or worse, my own hostility toward management was probably quite transparent to my coworkers and most certainly inflected the data I collected. Sometimes, I'm sure, this must have been hindrance, but at other times I think it may have been a boon, and helped to build the strongest relationships I formed in the workplace. With my fellow hosts I shared outrage when a coworker ratted someone out to management for some minor transgression. I encouraged my coworkers when they told me they were applying for better-paying jobs, standing up for themselves to tyrannical managers, angling for pay increases or breaking the rules in small, thrilling and undetectable ways. And I talked with my coworkers about politics at work, about capitalist exploitation and corrupt political parties. Without a doubt, some found these conversations annoying and went off to find other and more exciting people to talk to, but I was far from the only one who liked to rile people up about politics at work. I stumbled into such conversations all the time—about Russiagate, about the Democratic primaries, about whether or not Ted Cruz was the Zodiac killer.

Time, Pain and Positionality

Of course, there were other limitations to the approach I took in this research. Much of what I ended up exploring in the chapters of this thesis pertains to the deployment of particular wage structures, and the way these structures in turn related to workplace relations, the extraction of surplus value and control over the workforce. The strategy I took to this research—gaining

access to the workplace by presenting myself as an ordinary (fairly low-skill) job applicant and being hired into an entry-level position—gave me insight into how these structures are experienced by workers, but very little in the way of access to managerial decision making. Nor did it allow me to explore the complex (and fascinating) relationships between multiple tiers of management: low-level store managers, our senior "Managing Partner," regional and corporate. In many such workplace ethnographies (for example: Burawoy 1979 and Sherman 2007) researchers gained access to the field site through management, making their intentions clear from the outset. Plankey-Videla (2012), for example, obtained informed consent from management before entering the workplace, although she later found that the issue of consent grew more complicated along with her relationship to fellow workers.

As I formulated a plan, it seemed clear that the consent—or even knowledge—of management would make the project unfeasible. Based on my own experience in the service industry, I judged it unlikely that a hiring manager would want to bother with employing and training a graduate student researcher for what was, ideally, supposed to be a no-brainer, easy-to-fill position. I knew also that corporate restaurants are prickly about exposure, and possibly warier still of outside agitation in an era that has seen some uptick in service worker organizing. Lastly, I did not want to enter the workplace with either the oversight or blessing of management—even if they were willing to hire me knowing my intentions. The former would restrict my freedom to observe unobserved and the latter, more importantly, would come to bear on the tenor of relationships I formed in the field, and the likelihood that my coworkers would trust me with their opinions, whether at work or in an interview. While it was important to me to be transparent with my coworkers about my intentions (as I discuss at greater length below), it

was equally important to me that I could be at all times—whether at work, in an interview or at home writing—squarely on the side of my fellow workers.

Thus, I attempted to remain ever cognizant of the significance of how exactly I accessed the workplace—to pay, as Pachirat (2003) puts it, reflexive attention to the position this afforded me relative to extant power relations. So too did I attempt to maintain this reflexivity throughout the course of my fieldwork, and awareness of how my position in power hierarchies both within and beyond the workplace influenced the data I amassed. At Danny's, this was fairly complicated, and I have in subsequent months thought a great deal about the implications of the experiences I had during my term of employment, how they did and did not differ from those of my coworkers and how they shaped my ultimate lines of inquiry and theoretical framing. Realistically, I had no "power" in the dining room. For various reasons, some of which I explore in these chapters, hosts and bussers occupied the lowest echelon in the hierarchy of the front-of-house. Hosts, with our distinct wage structure, operated at some level of remove from the bussers, runners, servers and bartenders, but were subject to more direct scrutiny and supervision from the various managers.

For the most part, my position at work left little room for idiosyncratic experience, regardless of who I was before I stepped onto the floor. When I was at work, like the rest of the hosting staff, I was rarely still, and typically spent the five or six hours of the shift scurrying around desperately, even mindlessly, trying to keep up with the rapid pace of work and managerial directives, as well as trying to appease the easily-irritated servers and customers. Working the hosting job meant rewiring myself and upending my entire life, the hours I woke, ate, worked and slept. As a newcomer low on the scheduling totem pole, I was nearly always scheduled to close, and that meant being stuck in the glaringly bright mall with its cacophony of

sounds—ten or so different warring musical soundtracks, the chatter of customers, clattering dishes in the kitchen, all echoing endlessly—until long after I would normally be heading to bed.

Then there was the sheer stress of the place, the intensity, the being "on" until the moment I retrieved my coat from the weird little utility closet where we stuffed our belongings. What this usually meant was getting home tweaking, jittery, exhausted—not so much physically as mentally, or even emotionally—but unable to sleep, and not just because I still needed to write fieldnotes. In those months I went from being someone who rarely stayed up past 11:00 to someone who was usually up until 2:00 or 2:30 in the morning, and because I still had to get up to live my other life at the university, that meant simply consigning myself to only four to six hours of sleep a night, if I was lucky and, of course, if I could sleep at all. (In the first few weeks of work, I simply couldn't.) I felt awful the entire time. I didn't have enough time to sleep, to exercise or eat properly, to handle all of the ordinary obligations of my life—I was wrecked.

Then there was my bum ankle, a recurring obstacle to the execution of this workplace ethnography. I fractured it in the late summer of 2019, only weeks before I had initially planned to begin fieldwork, and so from the start the injury constrained the project, delaying everything and forcing me to both rearrange and scale back research. I was obstinate, though, and wanted to get into the field at the earliest opportunity. So when, in October, I finally did start working, I did so in a brace, and willfully ignoring the advice of the physician's assistant who read my X-ray. Standing on my feet for the six or so hours of the shift was doable. It also, in those first few weeks of fieldwork, hurt like hell, and it seems to me now that this experience of working and note-taking always in some state of pain, and anxious about the swelling that would follow a long shift, or that I might find myself on the schedule and unable to work, colored that experience in the workplace in various, and even indistinct, ways.

I know that it made me always want to leave, even though I was glad to be in the field for the sake of the project, and so I angled to be "cut" early like the rest of the hosts. When I was left off the schedule, or called off a shift, I felt an admixture of frustration and great relief. Only once did things get bad enough that I had to concede and get out of working, and that experience was in itself maddening, time consuming and stressful. The weather was bad, and at first I could not find anyone willing to cover for me. Despite everything I knew about the way that scheduling worked at the restaurant and management's insistence on our personal "responsibility" for shifts, I was still surprised when our assistant manager informed me that she would expect to see me in the following day. "I can't walk," I texted her. She reflected on this and then said she would grant me a chair.

The effects of this injury were somewhat contradictory. I know that it weakened the project in certain ways, and that without it I would simply have *more* data: more weeks and hours in the field, more interviews, et cetera. I think too, though, that it was in other ways an unexpected boon. My experience of work was never entirely comparable to that of my coworkers, to the extent that theirs could be said to be remotely heterogenous. Their primary incentive for showing up to each shift was monetary, and mine was gathering data for a thesis project (still in some ways monetary, but more circuitously so). I constantly volunteered to do the much-reviled "restroom checks" (i.e. cleaning the bathroom) or ducked out of sight of the surveillance camera so that I could jot notes on my phone and spent hours writing fieldnotes after each shift. To my knowledge, nobody else was engaging in this particular lunacy.

But like everybody else, I balanced the constant conflict between wanting to work because I *needed* to work and desperately, passionately wanting not to. The injury provided, even in my extremely condensed timeline, the experience of having to attempt to push physical

discomfort from my mind and do the job anyway—just as for my coworkers, employed in an industry that rarely affords paid sick leave and even punishes workers for physical incapacity, working through illness and injury was simply par for the course. Likewise, it forced me to weigh the discomfort of working against the hazard of not working, and to handle the onerous process of "finding coverage" when working proved to be an impossibility. True, the stakes were much lower where I was concerned. If I missed a shift or lost the job entirely it would not impinge upon something so weighty as providing for a family or making payments on the car that allowed me to get to work in the first place. But like everybody else in the front-of-house, I had pinned my hopes on the job. Any shirking of duty in the present moment could affect my future hours and, quickly running out of time to finish the project and thus my degree, I felt entirely constrained in my actions.

So too did the experience of stress and the upending of my schedule provide, I think, a necessary experience in studying this workplace. Most of my coworkers balanced their shifts with numerous other far more time-consuming responsibilities—what Dale, the general manager, glibly referred to as "pursuing other things." They were students, or parents or worked other jobs beyond the restaurant. Exhaustion, lack of free time, irregular eating and sleeping schedules, stress and sleep deprivation were far from unique experiences in the restaurant. In this sense, physical and mental discomfort of various kinds provided a particularly visceral experience of low-wage service work and, I think, brought me closer to a more truly immersive and "carnal sociology" (Wacquant 2015), an embedded and, moreover, *embodied* generation of knowledge. The causes were sometimes different, but the ultimate lived experience was one that my coworkers and I in large part shared. Work on the floor was also—and in part, I think, owing to this disorienting, dislocating temporal experience—extremely absorbing, which frankly made it

difficult for me to recall events in any ordered fashion or to remember to take notes as the shift went on. We were all sucked in at work, to the dramas and the chaos, and much was lost, as Ehrenreich (2001, 47) wrote of her own foray into the restaurant, "in the fog of war."

The Ethics of Secrets

Some amount of subterfuge was central to the successful carrying out of this project. I never lied to gain access to employment, nor did I ever lie about what I was doing or who I was to my coworkers. But I did make the explicit decision to neglect to mention my truest purpose in seeking employment in the restaurant. I chose to highlight other—also true, and no less pressing—things, like the meagerness of my graduate stipend and the necessity of paying for food and rent, when hiring managers asked me why I wanted the job, and that was the last we ever spoke about it. When they asked me what else I did, I told them what I was studying and where. They nodded, and then they lost all interest.

This issue of consent and covertness was, of course, not remotely unique to my study, and is one that ethnographers have grappled with in many different ways. Plankey-Videla (2012), struggling with the complexities of informed consent in an organizational study *beyond* that obtained from management, proposes an ongoing process of consent concerned not with bureaucratic approval but power relations in the field. Her case and others highlight the problem of what exactly informed consent means in the organizational or workplace ethnography, and to whom it is owed. It is also worth noting here the added complication of the Intuitional Review Board (IRB) process, which layers on its own requirements, reflective mostly of the concerns of the academic institution in question. I had decided from the outset (consistent with the plan

approved in my IRB application) to circumvent entirely the issue of informed consent in the field, while still obtaining it from interviewees.

With coworkers, things were slightly more complicated. I felt strongly about never being dishonest, or misrepresenting myself to them. It would be poor strategy, if I hoped to interview them upon leaving the field, but moreover it just felt gross and unnecessary to contemplate deliberately misleading the people with whom I worked side-by-side. That said, it was quickly clear to me that workplace and interpersonal relationships at Danny's were complex, and it would take me weeks—even months—to begin to understand them, or build any real rapport. If I wanted to keep my research from management (and I did, because I wanted to stay in the field— not to mention the fact that I was concerned about the non-disclosure-type agreement I had to sign upon being hired) I knew that it would be unwise to broadcast what I was doing, having no idea who might take offense or happen to be in the confidence of a manager.

Where this left me was mostly uncomfortable. I slowly shared my intentions with coworkers—as I got to know them or when, as did actually happen a couple of times, they questioned me about just what I was doing at the restaurant and what I actually studied. There was always the question, though, of when it was safe, or opportune, or *smart* to do so, and in the middle weeks of my employment I spent numerous shifts feeling guilty for not telling someone, or anxious about having done so, or wondering when exactly I should. For the most part, I know (and knew then) that I was likely the only person who *really* cared one way or the other, but at the same time it seems somehow right that I should have felt this discomfort, and that I continue to feel it now. Scrutinizing the lives of other people, and then writing about them (and possibly, one day, publishing some of that writing) is a strange thing, an intrusive thing, and it strikes me that it should not ever feel easy.

On Other People's Words

In the course of conducting and then transcribing interviews, as well as surreptitiously jotting the many remarkable things I heard people say in the field into my phone, I tried to minimize symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1996) and remain at all times aware of the broader relationships surrounding the interview, and the power dynamics at play. How successful I was in this regard I will likely never know, but, as with the question of revealing my status as an interviewer discussed above, much of my approach revolved around not letting myself get too comfortable. I tended toward a preference for loosely structured, informal, conversational interviews, but it seemed important that I remind us both that it was, of course, an interview toward a research project. I recorded these conversations on my phone, which I kept planted squarely on the table between myself and my interviewee. On the recordings themselves, I pause to "check on" the recording, or make some reference to it, at irritatingly regular intervals. So too did I attempt to remain extremely sensitive to the implications of our location, which I typically left up to the interviewee—stipulating only that it be quiet enough that their voice was clear on the recording. My approach changed with time, as well, and while I always kept a sheet of interview questions obtrusively at hand, I was able to be more of a human in these conversations, to listen attentively and sensitively, once I knew them cold.

I think, also, that the very nature of this project allowed me to minimize symbolic violence simply because the distance between interviewer and interviewee was not, all things considered, so very great. Later interviews were conducted with my former coworkers, people with whom I had worked side-by-side for hours on end, and developed a rapport, or even friendship. Earlier interviews, simply because of the disjointed way that I was forced to begin the reorganized project, were typically conducted with acquaintances, friends of friends and even

fellow members of my academic department. In these conversations, I shared my own years of experience in the service industry and was, generally, extremely transparent about the purpose of my project, my ideological orientation and personal feelings on work in the service industry. I was, of course, a lowly graduate student with no institutional power to wield, and someone paid more or less the same wage per hour for my work as those I interviewed—or even *less* than some of them. That said, there are always strange and difficult-to-detect power relations at play in the interview, and I tried to remain at all times attentive, sensitive and generally compassionate.

I took notes immediately following interviews to capture elements I knew would not be reflected in the recordings, and in transcribing interviews, I did my best to be extremely cautious about the capturing of another person's words. I listened to sections of those interviews over and over again, and attempted, with the aid of post-interview notes, to match words and inflections with expressions, with the tone of our exchange and with the lengthy silences that sometimes elapse. With fieldnotes and notes jotted on a shift, I tried to preserve especially striking comments, and the immediacy of feelings and experiences, as undigested impressions. I made no effort toward impartiality and so my notes reflect my own affection and irritation toward those with whom I worked, especially as time went on and I grew more immersed in the restaurant. This diminishing distance proved a challenge in some regards, as I describe in reference to the challenges of the extended case method above. But it also, and when viewed in its entirety, presents an interesting picture in and of itself, of the way that the experience of time and social relations evolved over the course of those months in the field.

When reading through and coding my fieldnotes (using the software program Atlas.ti), I used a mixed approach. It was certainly not what would be called entirely "open coding," and I began the process with a set of key codes drawn from the studies of workplace control and

consent that had framed my own study, as well as codes generally corresponding to the subject matter at hand. As I read, I allowed additional codes to emerge, either as I noticed recurring themes or found moments in the notes especially intriguing. This prompted an iterative, although not grounded, approach. It tended to attract my attention to features of the labor process that were most experientially striking, which would in turn bolster or challenge the theoretical framework I brought to the field. Sometimes it led me away from my initial research questions, only to return me right back to where I started. For instance, I found myself coding for time, scheduling and shifts nearly as often as I coded for exchanges directly related to the question of tips. From this observation I began to draw connections between control over time in the workplace and effort in the labor process—tipped and non-tipped alike. Thus, through this iterative process, I landed on some of the central arguments I make in these pages.

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MS in Food Studies   2018-2020
Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

BA in Philosophy, cum laude, with distinction   2006-2010
Minor in Russian Language
Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Work and Labor, Political Sociology, Social Theory, Law, Inequality, Economic
Sociology, Algorithmic Management, Ethnography

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2019   Research Assistant to Evan Weissman
                 Syracuse University Department of Nutrition and Food Studies

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Guest Lectures

"NAFTA and US-Mexico Immigration" in Labor Across the Food Chain, Fall 2019,
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"Landscape Diversity" in Agroecology, Spring 2019, Syracuse University

Teaching Assistantships, Syracuse University

Food Movements, Professor Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern (Spring 2020)

Will Work for Food: Labor Across the Food Chain, Professor Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern
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Agroecology, Professor Rick Welsh (Spring 2019)

Food Fights: Contemporary Food Issues, Professor Evan Weissman (Fall 2018)

Other Teaching Positions

2013   GRE/GMAT Tutor, AMIDEAST, Rabat, Morocco

2012-13   English Language Instructor, AMIDEAST, Rabat, Morocco

2012-13   English Language Instructor, Éducation et Territoires Maghreb, El Jadida, Morocco

PUBLICATIONS

Book Reviews

Goldberg, Hanna. 2020. "Review of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2019." *World Nutrition* 11(1): 210-214.

Manuscripts in Preparation

Goldberg, Hanna. "To Buy a Smile: Entrepreneurial Individualism and the Tipped Wage."

GRANTS, AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2020   Graduate Fellowship, Scholars Strategy Network
2020   Graduate Center Doctoral Fellowship, CUNY Graduate Center
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2018   Syracuse University Falk College Graduate Assistantship

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

2016   Permaculture Design Certificate
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2011   Teaching English as a Foreign Language Certificate
            Oxford Seminars
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2009   Summer Intensive French Language Program
            American University of Paris
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RELATED SKILLS

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