Alienation and Exploitation Among Restaurant Servers: A Qualitative Analysis

Zachary Brewster
Western Kentucky University

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ALIENATION AND EXPLOITATION AMONG RESTAURANT SERVERS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Sociology
Western Kentucky University
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

Zachary W. Brewster

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ALIENATION AND EXPLOITATION AMONG RESTAURANT SERVERS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Date Recommended July 10, 2002

Stephen B. Grace  
Director of Thesis

Douglas Clayton Smith

Joan Krenzin

James W. France

Dean, Graduate Studies  August 2002
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ALIENATION AND EXPLOITATION AMONG RESTAURANT

SERVERS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Zachary W. Brewster  
August 2002  
146 pages

Directed by Drs. Stephen Groce, Joan Krenzin, Douglas Smith, and James Grimm

Department of Sociology  
Western Kentucky University

The primary purpose of this research was to examine a sample of fifteen restaurant servers regarding the degree to which they feel alienated and exploited within their working environment. From this information several interpretive findings regarding servers' self-reported job satisfaction are made. In order to explore any possible socioeconomic effects the sample of servers was selected from two different restaurants that varied according to check average and mean dinner price. Data were gathered via in-depth, semistructured interviews and overt nonparticipant observations. Although no SES effect was found, the data did suggest that servers experience high levels of alienation in terms of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement. Feelings of powerlessness that servers report appear to be largely provoked by the structural dynamics of the restaurant establishment and are negated a great deal by the power servers have with their guests. Servers report that they feel a sense of meaning in their work, but this meaning does not appear to extend beyond their working environment.
Servers are afforded a sense of meaning by recognizing the importance of their work role in the functioning of the restaurant and also through interpersonal relationships with their coworkers. The meaning that they experience in their work appears to be greatly diminished by their awareness that they are held in low esteem according to society’s perspective. Servers also report very little connection to their work beyond monetary gain; therefore, self-estrangement appears to be high, especially among male servers.

Servers recognize that they are not paid adequate wages for what they do but acknowledge that they are limited in options based on education and skill. Moreover, feelings of exploitation appear to be produced by job-specific factors rather than anything inherent in the work itself. Finally, when alienation and exploitation are examined, several interpretations can be made regarding facets of their employment that provide satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction. Servers report a considerable amount of job satisfaction regarding quick monetary gain, relations with coworkers, and interacting with guests. Dissatisfaction was found to relate with preferential employee treatment by management, lack of positive recognition, and management’s inadequate hiring and reprimanding techniques.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Employees of service industries are encouraged to treat customers with unflinching reverence and solicitude; to regard their concerns and needs as paramount; to look upon them as masters and kings. But to accept this image of the other requires that one adopt a particular image of self. If the customer is king (or queen), the employee by extension is subject, or servant. (Paules 1991, pp. 131-32)

The fact that we have shifted from a manufacturing economy to a service based economy is virtually undisputed. Thus, in light of the opening passage, we have in a sense digressed back to a pre-industrial epoch in which society is stratified according to master or subservient statuses. Of course I am being facetious but only to a degree. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2001) there are over two million restaurant servers among the 11.3 million people employed within the restaurant industry (Elan 2001). These employees make up only a small portion of the 78 million employees that comprise the service sector, which is the largest segment of our nation's economy (U.S. Department of Commerce 1996). Therefore, approximately 78 million individuals are employed in positions in which they are responsible for caring for the needs of others on a daily basis. These are individuals who must regularly put others' needs above their own regardless of what they might be feeling at any given moment. These service employees literally must become the service they are providing, as the following quotation suggests: “Service is the life blood of any organization. Everything flows from
it and is nourished by it. Customer service is not a department, it’s an attitude” (Poster hanging in an office at Western Kentucky University).

Moreover, research has shown that the majority of individuals in the workforce are not only working for relatively less money than the generations before them (Ehrenreich 2001, p. 203) but they are working more hours as well (Skocpol 2000, p. 5). When estimates of paid employment are made, findings show that hours worked increased by 163 hours per year between 1969 and 1987. This increase in hours worked is equivalent to an extra month per year (Schor 1992, p. 29). In light of the increased time that individuals spend working, it is not surprising that the time available for leisure activities is reduced (Schor 1992). Findings such as these illuminate the importance of continued sociological research on all aspects of work.

In the current research, the specific population of the service sector that was examined is restaurant servers. As previously stated there are approximately two million restaurant servers employed in the industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2001). The remainder of these restaurant employees includes, but is not limited to, bartenders, cooks, host, hostesses, and managers. The restaurant industry is currently the nation’s largest private sector employer and is continuing to expand (National Restaurant Association News Release 2000). Yet service workers, including restaurant servers, are the least studied population of workers (McCammon and Griffin 2000; Paules 1991). Despite their prominence and importance, according to our society’s social hierarchy, individuals employed in the restaurant industry are held in very low esteem (Caplow 1954; Elan 2001; General Social Survey 2001; Hodge, Siegel, and Rossi 1964; Paules 1991; Romm 1989; Sennett and Cobb 1972; Spradley and Mann 1975; Whyte 1946, 1948). In the
current study restaurant servers are defined as those employees who are responsible for
taking food and drink orders as well as serving food and drinks to patrons within a seated

Although a great deal of research has been done in the area of work, the
overwhelming majority of it has focused on the manufacturing sector of the American
economy (Paules 1991). Since the work of Karl Marx and others of his era we have
made great strides in our understanding of the working experiences of individuals
employed in manufacturing positions. However, as Mills (1951) points out when
addressing the work of many classic social scientists, “important and suggestive they may
be as beginning points, and both are that, they do not enable us to understand what is
essential to our time”(p. xx). Therefore, it can be argued that despite the rapid growth of
the service sector, we have remained comparatively naïve in our understanding of service
employees.

To help fill this gap within the scholarly literature, the current research explored
the degree to which restaurant servers experience feelings of alienation and exploitation.
Using information obtained regarding these facets of the subjective experience of
restaurant servers, this research evaluated the moderating effects that feelings of
alienation and exploitation have on servers’ self-reported job satisfaction.

The current research was framed in a conflict theoretical perspective. Relying on
the work of Karl Marx as a starting point, this research will specifically build on the
concepts of alienation and exploitation. Marx’s early writings described the process by
which the human body had become an instrument of production in which the individual is
both alienated from himself or herself and exploited for his or her labor. Hochschild
(1983) opens her now widely cited work on flight attendants and bill collectors with a comparison of Marx's description of the factory worker. Using the term "emotional labor" Hochschild (1983) shows how, rather than the instrumentation of the physical body, it is the individuals' emotions that, in the contemporary service economy, have become objects of instrumentation. The current research built on previous studies within the service sector to evaluate how working in an emotionally labor-intensive position, such as serving, affects individuals' feelings of estrangement. The study also explored the degree to which servers are compensated for the responsibility of "losing their emotions." A general discussion of the historical roots of conflict perspective as well as a more detailed formulation regarding the concepts of alienation and exploitation are found in Chapter Two.

In a detailed review of the literature in Chapter Three a description of the social and structural dynamics of the restaurant industry has been provided. Extant literature has shown that in the confines of a restaurant servers encounter numerous struggles in gaining control of their relations with both management and patrons. In this struggle for control the server often pays a disproportionate price in the form of deterioration in psychological well-being and sense of self. The sacrifice is further exacerbated by the servers' economic dependence in the form of tips.

Data for the current research were gathered using a multi-method approach. Data were gathered primarily via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 restaurant servers who, at the time of data gathering, were employed at one of two restaurants chosen for this study. The restaurants were selected according to variation in socio-economic positioning. This variation in the sampling process was done so that, in an
exploratory fashion, any possible influence that SES might have upon the subjects’ experiences of alienation and exploitation could be examined.

Secondary data were collected via overt non-participant observations within each of the restaurants from which the interview respondents were selected. In using a multi-methodological approach this research had the opportunity to evaluate as well as illustrate data obtained during the in-depth interviews. By having the opportunity to refute or support the conclusions reached via interviews, confidence in the study’s findings has been enhanced. A detailed description of the data gathering methods used in this study along with the demographic characteristics of the two restaurants from which the sample was drawn is found in Chapter Four.

The information provided by this investigation has implications that will be of interest to scholars within several fields including, but not limited to, sociology, psychology, hospitality and tourism, marketing, and management. Finally, individuals employed in upper-level positions within the restaurant industry should find this research of particular interest. If management takes these findings seriously, the retention problems that plague the restaurant industry could be at least partially alleviated (Elan 2001; Oleck 1994; Zuber 2001).
CHAPTER II

THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVE

First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is not working he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. (Marx [1844] 2000, p. 46)

The current research used a conflict theoretical perspective to gain an increased understanding of the antagonism that often occurs within servers’ relations with patrons and managerial staff. Two key concepts within the conflict perspective, alienation and exploitation, were used to drive the current research. Both concepts will be discussed and used to shed light on the employment experience of restaurant servers. Using data gathered via in-depth, semi-structured interviews of restaurant servers, indicators of perceived alienation and exploitation were derived to evaluate their moderating effects on servers’ job satisfaction. In this chapter, a general discussion of the historical roots of the conflict perspective will be discussed and followed by a more detailed discussion of both alienation and exploitation. This chapter concludes with a specific discussion regarding the relevance of the employed theoretical perspective for the current study.

Conflict Perspective

Conflict theory emerged as a reaction to classical functionalism (Ritzer 1983, p.
On the most elementary level, functionalism held that all elements of society served functions and were interdependent, resulting in societal equilibrium. Conflict theory on the other hand can be viewed in a contrary fashion. Rather than agreement and consensus keeping society stable, Ralf Dahrendorf ([1959] 1996) holds that equilibrium is maintained through force and constraint of some by the domination of others (p. 271).

This domination occurs as a result of an unequal distribution of power and authority. Some positions are given the right to exercise control over others (Dahrendorf [1959] 1996). Max Weber ([1946] 1993) extended this notion of power by explaining it as occurring when an individual or group of individuals realize their will over and above the opposition of another individual or group of individuals. Conflict theory has several basic principles that will be discussed briefly before addressing the specifics of alienation and exploitation, both of which are primary tenets within the writings of conflict theory’s forefather, Karl Marx.

Conflict theory holds that societal structures are rife with conflicting interests. These conflicting interests occur on all levels of society. The social systems within societal structures systematically generate conflict thus making it an inevitable and pervasive feature of the system. In most cases conflict occurs over scarce and valuable resources in society, such as goods, power, money, or prestige. The resources that provoke social conflicts are embedded in the human desire for gratification. In attempting to fulfill human desires for gratification, coercive power becomes a resource itself (Collins 1975). As coercive power becomes a desirable resource, the conflicts that occur tend to be bipolar in nature. That is, if one individual or group of individuals wins,
another individual or group loses. A final aspect of conflict theory explains societal change as occurring as a direct result of the continuous conflicts that occur.

In order to gain a better understanding of conflict theory, it is necessary to understand the works of Karl Marx. Marx was interested in, among many other things, conflict and contradictions, specifically conflict and contradictions that occur in large-scale structures between the bourgeoisie (owning class) and the proletariat (working class). As Marx states in his famous 1848 *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx [1848] 1998, p. 167).

Marx defines class as a group of individuals who have similar relations to both labor and the means of production (Encyclopedia of Marxism 2000). He contends that conflict occurs in a capitalist system, and as a result the population is divided into those who own property and those who do not (Marx [1844] 2000). Subsequently, the owning class possesses the power and exerts this power to control the non-owning class. Those who do not own the means of production must rely on their own labor power, which becomes sold as a commodity.

Within a capitalist system Marx suggests that the workers not only produce commodities from which the owning class benefits but the worker actually becomes a commodity (Marx [1844] 2000). In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx addresses the impact that this relationship between the owning class and the working class has had on the latter. In short, two contradictions emerge: alienation and exploitation.
Alienation

In his early writings on alienation Marx argued that within a capitalist society the worker becomes a commodity; therefore, the worker also becomes an object alienated from the product of his or her labor. The worker no longer can see a connection between the products that have been produced as a result of the worker's labors; labor becomes viewed as a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Marx [1844] 2000). In addition, the process of labor becomes an object, further alienating the worker. Under a capitalist system the worker is allowed little creativity or room for personal judgments during the labor process. Marx explains that as the products of labor increase, the relative possession of these products by the workers decreases. Marx illustrates the alienation that occurs by stating, "The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object" (Marx [1844] 2000, p. 58).

Marx elaborates further by explaining that, as individuals engage in the labor market, they become alienated from fellow workers. Within this estranging labor market workers also become alienated from nature as well. They become alienated from the very things that make their existence possible. Nature is no longer viewed as a necessity for survival; rather, it is the labor itself that is necessary for survival. Nature becomes a resource to exploit during the labor process (Marx [1844] 2000, pp. 47-49). Due to the alienation from nature, individuals no longer view themselves as human, resulting in the alienation from other human beings. As a result of these alienating contradictions of labor, the worker ultimately becomes alienated from himself or herself (Marx [1844] 2000, pp. 47-49). Mills (1951) nearly a century later emphasized this process: "Men [sic] are estranged from one another as each secretly tries to make an instrument of the other,
and in time a full circle is made: one makes an instrument of himself [sic], and is 
estranged from it also” (p. 188).

In the sociological literature, few concepts have received as much attention as has 
alienation (Henricks 1982; Lee 1972). Largely originating from the early work of 
individuals such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, the term has since taken on several 
different connotations, and we have made little progress in the refinement of this concept 
(Henricks 1982). It has often been left undefined and ambiguous (Lee 1972; Travis 
1986). In an attempt to clarify the ambivalent usage of the concept of alienation and to 
build a workable research formulation, Seeman (1959) developed the following five 
alternative dimensions of the term: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, 
isolation, and self-estrangement.

According to Seeman (1959) alienation when used to refer to powerlessness 
denotes the idea that individuals take on the feeling that their own expectation of future 
outcomes or probability of desired reinforcements cannot be self determined by personal 
behaviors (p. 784). Alienation used in the context of meaninglessness suggests that, 
rather than a lack of control, as is seen in powerlessness, individuals suffering from 
meaninglessness lack the ability to visualize the possibility that expected, satisfactory, 
future predictions will be obtained (p. 786). Normlessness, the third dimension of the 
concept of alienation, parallels Durkeim’s usage of the term “anomie” and is used to 
describe situations in which unapproved individual behaviors occur as a response to the 
discrepancy between culturally approved expectations and means to achieve these 
expectations (pp. 787-88). The isolation dimension of alienation denotes a situation in 
which an individual devalues goals or beliefs that traditionally are held in high esteem
within a given society (p. 789). Finally, alienation when used to refer to self-estrangement can be understood in terms of the degree to which an individual puts effort into a task in anticipation of a future reward (p. 790).

Although all these dimensions of alienation can be examined independent of one another, it is often difficult to draw a line that would systematically distinguish them. Rather than distinguishing between Seeman’s (1959) distinct dimensions of the term alienation, it has been suggested that the concept of alienation be viewed as a linear process that ultimately ends with social isolation (Browning, Farmer, Kirk, and Mitchell 1961). When using the term “alienation,” unless otherwise specified, I will be using it as an amalgamation of the following three focal dimensions of the term: powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement. In using an aggregated view of alienation I will methodologically prevent fallacies such as those that Travis (1986) warns against. It has been demonstrated that alienation indicators such as those proposed by Seeman (1959) are multidimensional; therefore, one must be cautious in assuming a positive relationship between them (Travis 1986; Zeller, Neal, and Groat 1980). To be more specific, when using the term “alienation” I will be relying on the applicable definition that Blauner’s work (1964) provided, which arguably is the most inclusive definition available for examining alienation in paid employment situations:

Alienation exists when workers are unable to control their immediate work processes, to develop a sense of purpose and function which connects their jobs to the over-all organization of production, to belong to integrated industrial communities, and when they fail to become involved in the activity of work as a mode of personal self-expression. (Blauner 1964, p. 15)

Relying on Seeman’s (1959) work, Robert Blauner (1964) describes the perceived levels of the various aspects of alienation as being dependent on the technological
advancements and structural components within the organization of employment. Other researchers have suggested that alienation occurs among individuals when basic human needs, independent of structural, cultural, and social influences, are not adequately met (Etzioni 1968; Fromm 1955).

Previous research has suggested that the powerlessness dimension of alienation is associated with the degree to which an individual is interested in and knowledgeable about the affairs in which he or she engages (Seeman and Evans 1962, p. 782). Kornhauser (1959) demonstrated this relationship when he suggested that as personal control and sense of participation decrease within an employment setting, an individual is less likely to experience “work” in a rewarding and interesting manner (Kornhauser 1959). The relationship between one’s working experience and feelings of alienation has been supported in studies that have found an inverse relationship between occupational prestige and alienation (Dean 1961). However, other research has demonstrated that this relationship does not always hold. Rather, it has been argued that the low levels of alienation and dissatisfaction among the most prestigious positions are the only factors that support the inverse relationship between occupational prestige and job alienation/dissatisfaction (Walsh 1982, p. 491). This finding would suggest that alienation is not dependent upon occupational prestige as much as other occupational variables such as autonomy or opportunity for self-expression.

It should be apparent by now that the concept of alienation continues to be the source of considerable debate. The various dimensions of alienation that have been addressed, however, fail to explain in general why individuals find conditions alienating and, more specifically, which individual characteristics induce feelings of alienation.
(Wegner 1975). As Erikson (1986) observed, in his American Sociological Association 1985 Presidential Address, for the concept of alienation to be useful for empirical analysis there must be a link between the objective structural conditions that produce estrangement with the interpersonal experience of estrangement reflected in the individual’s actual behavior. In an attempt to construct a general coherent framework from which alienation can be approached, Henricks (1982) distinguished between degrees of dissociation and alienation across social, cultural, and psychological levels. Once this distinction was made, he showed how the following psychological responses acted as intervening factors in predicting alienating experiences from conditions of dissociation: perception, evaluation, integration, blame, and response (Henricks 1982). In doing so Henricks began to formulate an empirically useful concept of alienation.

In keeping with the usefulness of a general theory of alienation, such as the one proposed by Henricks, for the purpose of this research it will be additionally profitable to view alienation from more of a context-specific perspective. Individuals who experience disenchantment while working at one restaurant may feel very connected to the social situations while employed at another restaurant. Or perhaps, as mentioned previously, one employee may feel disenchanted at a particular restaurant while her or his co-worker feels connected within the same organization. Therefore, it becomes problematic to assume that one single source or one single set of sources can be used to examine alienation across social roles and situations (Travis 1986; Wegner 1975). In support of this theoretical approach, research has suggested that feelings of alienation do not generalize beyond the specific social situation in which the feelings were generated (Seeman 1967). It has further been demonstrated that one indication of alienation, such
as powerlessness, does not necessarily correlate positively with other indicators of alienation, such as meaninglessness (Travis 1986). In abandoning the attempt to determine a generalized set of conditions that induce alienation, researchers can determine patterns of specific producing factors within various social situations through empirical analysis. It is only when these patterns have been determined that research can distinguish and identify the various dimensions of alienation that may exist among individuals (Wegner 1975).

Exploitation

The second great contradiction of a capitalist system is referred to by Marx as exploitation of the worker. On the most basic level exploitation occurs when more is given of oneself than one gets in return. Exploitation is illustrated by Marx’s discussion of the relationship between the rise and fall of the laborer’s wages. Marx states, “They stand in inverse ratio to each other. Capital’s share, profit, rises in the proportion as labour’s share, wages falls, and vice versa” (Marx [1849] 1998, p. 190).

The concept of exploitation is further extended by the idea that the exploited and the exploiters stand in such a relationship that the exploiter is materially dependent upon the deprivation and efforts of the exploited, creating an existence of economic oppression (Wright 1994). This relationship between exploiters and exploited becomes evident through the fact that any organization, including the restaurant industry, would fail to operate if the bottom level workers did not supply necessary labor.

In a capitalist society the worker is forced to sell his or her labor, but it is not the worker’s labor that is actually being sold; it is rather the laborer’s power to labor for an agreed amount of time that is being sold by the worker and purchased by the
organization's elite (Braverman 1974, p. 37). Wright (1994) argues that it is the concept of "labor time" that can adequately be used to capture the unity of labor power and domination as factors for explaining exploitation among class relations. The culturally agreed upon exchange subordinates the worker, positioning him or her at the mercy of the capitalist or business owners for the specified amount of time and, in return, compensates him or her through wages.

After a very small quantity of time the owners of the organization have paid for the necessities of production such as material, overhead, and laborers' wages. The majority of the working day creates profit for the owner. This profit is a result of the human potential to produce more products than the cost of the labor power, creating the existence of "surplus value" (Braverman 1974; Wright 1979). Capitalists implement various techniques to manage as well as maximize this "surplus value" (Braverman 1974). The profit the capitalists gain from the workers' labor power can be increased drastically through technology and scientific management. Scientific management is the practice of increasing production by developing ways to get more profitable labor out of the worker during the same labor time. Through scientific management, capitalists pay the same wages while increasing profit.

Scientific management was initiated by Frederick Winslow Georgia in the late nineteenth century and would later become known simply as Georgiaism (Braverman 1974, p. 85). Georgia gained national recognition in 1899 when he used scientific management to teach an uneducated laborer to increase his production of transporting raw pig iron from twelve and a half tons per day to forty-seven and a half tons per day. Georgia succeeded in this task by specifying every aspect of the laborer's job. The
increase in production through rationalization resulted in the worker being paid $1.85 per day, rather than $1.15, which was the standard income rate of the time (p. 106). Thus, the company was able to increase production by nearly 400 percent while increasing the laborer’s income by only 60 percent.

Over a century later through a transformation from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, scientific management techniques are still evident. Within the restaurant industry scientific management emerges in the form of company specifications (SPECs). SPECs are organizational specifications that dictate every facet of the restaurant industry (Paules 1991). In the implementation of SPECs the individual employee is exploited for her or his ability to produce labor power, while at the same time is robbed of all room for human creativity and capacity for thought. SPECs as well as related ideas and their prevalence in restaurant industry will be elaborated upon in Chapter Three, but at this time it is important to recognize their importance in illustrating scientific management, which ultimately is a primary producer of exploitation among this population.

Braverman (1974) suggests that, as a result of scientific management, work has been separated along mental and physical boundaries. A worker no longer is mentally connected with the work that he or she engages in; and, as Marx pointed out a century earlier, the worker is alienated from his or her own labor. The following statement captures the power of this phenomenon:

In the setting of antagonistic social relations, of alienated labor, hand and brain become not just separated, but divided and hostile, and the human unity of hand and brain turns into its opposite, something less than human. (Braverman 1974, p. 125.)
At more of a micro level the existence of exploitation has been captured in empirical research. Wright (1979) found in his quantitative examination of income determination among workers and managers/supervisors that managers/supervisors received significantly (p > .001) higher wages than did workers even after statistically controlling for factors such as education, seniority, family background, and occupational status. Although a more delimited regression model involving just supervisors and workers failed to show a significant difference (Wright 1979), the existence of exploitation is, nevertheless, apparent when considering that supervisory roles exist in a "contradictory location within class relations" (Wright 1994, p. 66). The workers' roles are contradictory in that they are employed in positions in which they are exploited by the capitalist while simultaneously acting as exploiters to the workers (Wright 1994).

**Relevance of Theoretical Perspective in Present Study**

Conflict theory is founded on the assumption that individuals and groups of individuals are in a state of continuous conflict over scarce resources. Much has changed since Karl Marx's analysis of the capitalist system. However, one thing that has not changed is the unequal distribution of American wealth under the contemporary capitalist system. The discrepancy in the distribution of wealth is illustrated by the fact that the minority of the population controls the overwhelming majority of wealth in the United States (Kerbo 2000, pp. 20-21) and has since the founding of the country. The inequality in income distribution creates a spillover effect, causing other resources such as power and authority to be unequally distributed. The inequality that exists in the contemporary workforce, therefore, creates a state of inevitable conflict. Individuals who have resources want to retain these resources at the expense of those who lack the resources,
and simultaneously those without resources are striving to obtain them. Human relations within the restaurant industry are no exception to this general macro view of the present conflict.

Since the classic writings of Marx, conflict theory has been extended beyond analysis concerning the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This theoretical extension has proven to be useful in examining conflict between any individuals or groups whose relationship are grounded in superordinate and subordinate roles. As I have alluded to thus far, the social and structural dynamics of the restaurant industry promote a working environment in which there is a continuous existence of conflict occurring between server and patron and server and management. It is precisely this conflict that will be explored in the current research.

By using key concepts (alienation and exploitation) of conflict theory to focus this research, a potentially greater degree of knowledge can be obtained about the subjective working experience of restaurant servers. As fruitful as Braverman’s (1974) insight on the working experience of the twentieth century is, there have been questions raised regarding its accuracy. Braverman (1974) failed to acknowledge the subjective side of the workers’ experience as well as the emotional manipulation that management imposes upon workers within the contemporary workforce (Smith 1994). With this distinction in mind, in the current examination of context specific situations among servers within the restaurant industry, the intention of this research is to bridge this gap and to clarify some of the confusion that exists within the literature.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purposes of the current research were threefold. The research examined levels of perceived alienation and exploitation, independent of one another, among a sample of restaurant servers employed within and across socioeconomic statuses. Through this examination this research has explored the degree to which perceived alienation and exploitation act as moderators of job satisfaction among this population of the labor force. In an exploratory fashion this research has also attempted to determine if a correlation exists between perceived alienation and exploitation and the socioeconomic positioning of the employees’ restaurant.

Using emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) as a link, as well as a starting point, we can easily explicate the aspects of alienation and exploitation that were addressed in the previous chapter. By expounding on the concepts of alienation and exploitation I will use the literature in this area as a method to bring the meanings and perceptions of these terms down to the micro level of the restaurant industry and more specifically to restaurant servers. To provide the groundwork for the dependent variable of job satisfaction in the current research, I will discuss basic factors that research has found to be correlated with job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Although the key tenets of the current research, such as alienation, exploitation, and job satisfaction have all been thoroughly studied, the majority of this research has
examined these concepts independent of one another and has overwhelmingly focused on the manufacturing sector of the labor force (Paules 1991). Moreover, this project differs from previous studies in that it systematically links these major concepts together in a predictive fashion. In addition, through this examination of restaurant servers this project adds to the currently small quantity of literature among a segment of the work force that has received comparatively little attention (Paules 1991). Throughout this review of the literature the term “server” is used in a gender-neutral fashion unless otherwise specified, at which time gender will be distinguished using term waiter (male) versus waitress (female).

Social and Structural Dynamics of a Restaurant Establishment

Although the social and structural dynamics among restaurants can and do vary considerably, there are several aspects that can be found within most dining establishments. Restaurant staff, and for the purpose of this research restaurant servers, are employed in a part of the service sector that has been referred to as “value added service” (Albrecht and Zemke 1985), “direct service” (Paules 1991), “interactive service” (Leidner 1993), and “face-to-face or voice-to-voice service” (Hochschild 1983). What these concepts all suggest is the idea that servers, among many other workers in this sector, take part in an interactive, customer-based relationship where the service producer and the service user are dependent on the simultaneous presence of both parties (Illeris 1996). The concept of customer-based services can easily be seen by examining the fundamental functions that restaurants provide.

On the most basic level a restaurant is a setting that patrons frequent in order to have food and drink prepared and served to them. In return for this service the patron
compensates the establishment by paying the specified amount of money for the food/drink while at the same time compensating the server in the form of a “tip.” Throughout this process the server and the patron are continuously interacting in a fashion that ensures the desired dining experience for the patron and the maximum reward for the server. Although out of the immediate scope of the current study, it is pertinent to briefly discuss the custom of tipping in order to demonstrate the dependent and subordinate relationship between servers and patrons.

**The Importance of the Tip**

Servers earn an hourly wage of approximately two dollars and thirteen cents. With this meager wage it is clear that server’s livelihood is largely dependent on tips (Butler and Skipper 1980; Lynn and Mynier 1993; Wessels 1997). Moreover, research has suggested that self-reported job satisfaction is also directly related to the size of tips obtained among waiters and waitresses (O’Neill, Hubbard, Salazar, and Kent 2000). Tips have generally been defined as voluntary amounts of money given to individuals after they have rendered services (Lynn 2000a). Given that tipping occurs post-services rendered and is often unpredictable, this process can occur only if the server extends credit, based on trust with the anticipation of compensation by the patron (Butler and Skipper 1981). The information thus far has gone relatively undisputed; however, the reasons why individuals tip, the amount that people tip, and factors that increase the likelihood of a higher tip have all been the center of much debate within scholarly research.

On a basic level it has been argued that societal norms require individuals to tip (Bodvarsson and Gibson 1999; Crespi 1947; Lynn and Graves 1996). Bodvarssson and
Gibson (1999) point out that individuals "tip because they are ‘supposed to tip’" (p. 1). This societal custom generally designates that the tip given equal a percentage of the total meal cost (Wessels 1997), in most cases this percentage is in the vicinity of 15 to 20 percent (Harris 1995; Lynn, Zinkhan, and Harris 1993; Paules 1991). In theory, this payment is given as a reward for good service, which to varying degrees has been supported by a number of studies (e.g., Harris 1995; Lynn 2000a; Lynn and Graves 1996; Lynn and Grassman 1990).

Other research, however, has shown that this is not always the case (Karen 1962; Lynn 2000a, 2000b). Despite Bodvarsson and Gibson's (1999) survey findings that the amount that is tipped is significantly influenced by quality of service, Lynn (2000b) disputes their conclusions because of faulty methodology. Lynn and his colleague (Lynn 2000a; Lynn and Graves 1996) further argue that the relationship between the size of tip given and the quality of service received, although statistically significant, is much too weak to be a viable evaluation of service or incentive to provide adequate service. Although the “reward for service” argument for tipping has been supported to some degree, it would appear that there are spurious factors involved in this relationship (Lynn 2000a). Perhaps the best explanation for the tipping custom can be found in the now classic research of Alvin Gouldner (1960) in which he suggests the existence of a universal norm of reciprocity in that “people should help those who have helped them” (p. 171).

The importance of maintaining and enhancing the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960) in the form of tipping is reflected by the tradition of research dating back to Davis’ (1959) typology of taxicab passengers based on variation of tips. Research within the
restaurant industry has suggested that factors such as server posture (Davis, Schrader, Richardson, Kring, and Kieffer 1998; Lynn and Mynier 1993), writing “thank you” on the check (Rind and Bordia 1995), smiling at patrons (Lynn 1996; Tidd and Lockard 1978), briefly touching patrons (Crusco and Wetzel 1984; Stephen and Zweigenhaft 1986), and high self evaluation of service ability (Lynn and Simons 2000) all positively affect the amount that servers are tipped. Other research has indicated that drawing happy faces on the backs of the checks (Rind and Bordia 1996) and physical attractiveness also appears to be positively related to tip size among waitresses (Lynn and Simons 2000). Like physical attractiveness, other factors that have been shown to influence gratuity include weather conditions (Crusco and Wetzel 1984; Rind 1996), food quality, price of meal, and location in which the patron is seated (Harris 1995), all of which are factors that to some degree fall outside the immediate control of the server.

The amount of time and effort that has been put into research on ways to increase tips illustrates the importance of this transaction. Servers who are dependent on tips for over two thirds of their income (Bulter and Skipper 1980) are in a very real sense dependent on the patrons they serve. Servers involved in this type of occupational relationship, however, always run a risk of being “stiffed” (Paules 1991; Whyte 1946, 1948), ending with an unreasonably small tip or no tip at all. This dimension in the server/patron relationship makes the servers’ wage security very tenuous (Butler and Skipper 1980).

The Server/Patron Relationship

As dependent on tips as restaurant servers are it is not surprising that when interacting with patrons they quickly learn impression management techniques (Goffman
1959) or “control moves” (Goffman 1969) that can be employed to give the desired sensitive and authentic impression, which will likely result in a satisfying tip (Mars and Nicod 1984). “Control moves,” according to Goffman (1969), can be described as deliberate and conscious efforts taken to produce an expression, which the actor believes would be beneficial to any specific situation (pp. 15-16).

For the most part servers’ and patrons’ are involved in a service “pseudorelationship,” in which the patron has a service relationship with a particular organization rather than one particular service provider within that organization (Gutek, Cherry, Bhappu, Schneider, and Woolf 2000). The duration of interaction in the server/patron relationship is similar to the cabdriver’s relationship with cab passengers (Davis 1959) in that it is very temporal. The temporality structure of the server/patron relationship exacerbates the need for the server to solidify this relationship in a timely manner. Servers secure their relationship with their patrons by “wooing and courting (Bigus 1972, p. 131)” them. Bigus (1972) refers to these techniques as cultivation or cultivating techniques and explains that they are used with the intention of receiving an occupational reward, in this case a tip. The concept of cultivating parallels that of “counterfeit intimacy,” the manipulative techniques employed by exotic dancers in which they give the illusion that a sexual encounter outside of the dancing establishments is possible in order to secure and maintain tips (Boles and Garbin 1974; Enck and Preston 1988; Foote 1954). The occupational similarities between exotic dancing and serving has even been noted by both strippers (Price 2000) and servers alike (Gensberg 2000). Ritzer (2000) recently put forth a convincing argument that in contemporary times
worker/customer relations across society are based on little more than “false fraternization.”

A restaurant provides a setting in which the relationship between the servers and patrons is based on subordinate and superordinate statuses. This status differentiation between patrons and servers becomes clear when considering that the primary function of the server is to “take the diner’s order.” Furthermore, patrons expect to be addressed as “Sir” or “Ma’am,” while waitresses are often addressed as “baby,” “honey,” “blondie,” and most frequently just “girl” (Butler and Snizek 1976, p. 209; Ehrenreich 2001, p. 12). Servers take advantage of “cultivating techniques” in order to counteract the lack of occupational control within the server/patron relationship that the dynamics of the restaurant necessitates. Servers gain a degree of control in their work setting by using “cultivating techniques” based on promotional manipulation (Butler and Snizek 1976). Using an experimental approach and controlling for age and party size, Butler and Snizek (1976) found that servers can increase the amount of control that they have by initiating, suggesting, and recommending higher priced food and drink. As a result of these manipulative ploys servers are able to increase total check size, which increases the likelihood of receiving a greater tip.

In addition to using “cultivating techniques” with individual patrons, servers also supplement their income with greater tips by enhancing the quantity of service rather than quality of service. Quantity of patrons served can be increased by working the busiest sections, working the busiest shifts, “turning tables” quickly, and bypassing host/hostesses and seating customers themselves in their specified section (Paules 1991, p. 27). Using techniques to increase the mere quantity of patrons served increases total
sales, which again increases the amount of tip income. The structural dynamics of the restaurant industry, which dictate that servers are paid minimal fixed wages, necessitate that servers use variations of the manipulative techniques discussed above. When it is taken into account that these techniques ultimately increase tips on which servers depend, it would appear that these manipulative ploys act in a way that is beneficial to the server. However, this minimal amount of control that servers have available to them within this occupational setting often times comes with profound costs to their individuality and psychological wellbeing.

**The Physical and Emotional Cost of Being a Server**

It’s tiring, it’s nerve-racking. We don’t ever sit down. We’re on stage and the bosses are watching....Your feet hurt, your body aches....It builds and builds and builds in your guts. Near crying. I can think about it...(she cries softly.) Cause you’re tired. When the night is done, you’re tired. You’ve had so much, there’s so much going...You had to get it done. (Terkel 1972, pp. 297-98)

The above statements were made by a veteran waitress of twenty-three years and illustrate nicely the demanding physical nature that restaurant work entails. Servers spend their time at work gracefully moving on their feet from one table to the next while carrying trays heavy with food. The physical aspect of restaurant serving echoes in the voices of many of the waitresses themselves in Elder and Rolens’ (1985) compilation of qualitative interviews. While the physical nature that restaurant serving entails is demanding in its own right, the opening passage eludes to something less apparent but equally demanding. The physical demands that servers face within the restaurant setting are coupled with and intensified by the emotional demands. It is the emotional demands that are placed upon the restaurant server that are of primary interest in the current study.
With the expansion of the service sector, an increasing amount of scholarly attention has been given to the management of human emotions and feelings that service work entails.

**Emotional Labor**

Hochschild (1983), an innovator in the study of emotions within the work setting, extensively developed the concept of “emotional labor” in her widely cited work *The Managed Heat: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Examining a sample of flight attendants and bill collectors, Hochschild describes “emotional labor” as labor that requires the individual to induce or suppress their own emotions in order to prompt a desired emotional state in others (p. 7). In this case servers, which are one of the specified occupational groups that Hochschild describes as requiring emotional labor, control and sacrifice their own emotional states to produce a pleasant dining ambiance for the patrons they serve. As Hochschild points out, managing emotions is a natural phenomenon that is guided by latent feeling rules within public and private spheres. However, it is when the management of emotions is sold as labor and dictated by company policies that it becomes problematic and vulnerable to estrangement (Hochschild 1983, p.19, p.13). In the Marxist tradition it has been argued that in occupations that entail physical labor the human body becomes the instrument of production; in contrast, within service occupations it is the individuals’ feelings that become the instrument of production. Albrecht and Zemke (1985) recognize this aspect of service work in the following passage:

The service person must deliberately involve his or her feelings in the situation. He or she may not particularly feel like being cordial and becoming a one-minute friend to the next customer who approaches, but that is indeed what frontline work entails. (pp. 114-15)
The emotional labor that service work necessitates can ultimately lead workers to be estranged from the most individualistic characteristics of themselves. When service employees, whose responsibility is to make money for the company for which they work, approach customers “with anonymous insincerity the successful person [must] thus makes an instrument of his own appearance and personality” (Mills 1951, p. 182). When engaging in “false personalization” individuals run the risk of losing the ability to distinguish between authentic and coerced friendliness (Riesman, Denney, and Glazer 1950).

The literature on the affective consequences of emotional labor has yielded useful yet contradictory and ambiguous results. According to Hochschild (1983) the estrangement between the individual’s feelings and outward display of feelings often leads to stress, depression, and, in general, a negative disruption in the individual’s psychological well-being. These factors are arguably likely to induce feelings of powerlessness, which have been shown to correlate positively with heavier drinking and drinking problems (Greenberg and Grunberg 1995; Seeman and Anderson 1983; Seeman, Seeman, and Budros 1988). When the physical demands of serving are coupled with the emotional demands, it is not surprising that restaurant workers, by occupation, experience disproportionately high rates of drug and alcohol abuse (King 2001).

Individuals who are employed in occupations in which they are subject to exorbitant numbers of face-to-face encounters also run the risk of becoming “robotic, detached, and unempathetic” (Albrecht and Zemke 1985, p. 114), and a general sense of inauthenticity within the work setting often sets in (Maslach 1976). Research also
suggests that emotional labor can have profound effects on the individual's work identity (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989) and sense of self (Hochschild 1983).

A common means to negate the negative consequences on one's sense of self that are provoked by the emotional manipulation that emotional labor entails is to "positively estrange" one's "real self" from one's "acting self." By engaging in this "positive estrangement" service employees are able to reduce, or in some cases even eradicate, stressful facets of the job (Hochschild 1983). "Positive self estrangement," however, can also lead to a continuous state of tension between one's "real" and "acting" self, ultimately leading to a disturbance in one's sense of wholeness (Hochschild 1983).

These negative consequences to individuals' well being are likely to be exacerbated as the frequency of face-to-face contact with clients or customers increases (Hochschild 1983; Maslach 1978). Hochschild (1983) and others have, however, been criticized for approaching the phenomenon of emotional labor from a narrow perspective, ignoring the positive factors that conducting emotional labor affords individuals (Gordon 1989; Wouters 1989).

In contrast to the above depiction of emotional labor, Wharton (1993) found emotional labor to have positive implications among her sample of hospital and banking employees. Wharton found that when she controlled for other independent variables, including, but not limited to, age, marital status, gender, job tenure, control at work, hours worked, and income, emotional labor significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction. Wharton (1993) also found that, although not statistically significant, emotional exhaustion was negatively associated with emotional labor. Therefore, it has been suggested that psychological well being and work-related stress are dependent on
specific working conditions such as hours worked, job tenure, and job autonomy, as well as individual personality factors such as "people skills," rather than on the mere existence of emotional labor (Erickson and Wharton 1997; Wharton 1993; Wharton and Erickson 1995).

Borrowing from the "organization boundary role" literature, a similarly positive image of emotional labor emerges. "Boundary roles" also called "boundary spanning" refer to occupational positions that serve organizational mediating functions outside of the organization's tangible boundaries (Miles 1980). These positions parallel those described as entailing emotional labor in that "boundary spanning" positions must represent and protect the reputation of the organization outside of the organization’s protective boundaries. Miles (1980) points out that the task of representing and protecting the organization’s reputation among outsiders of the organization often mandates that the individual use impression management techniques that cause conflict and occupational stress. It can, therefore, be deduced that the impression management techniques (Goffman 1959) used to adequately perform the tasks of the job are oftentimes not congruent with the individual’s sincere feelings. However, what Miles (1980) found was that "boundary spanning" activities were positively related to job satisfaction, suggesting that the negative consequences of these activities are at least partially offset by positive consequences such as the power and autonomy that the position affords its occupants (p. 71). Despite the growing literature that suggests positive functions of engaging in emotional labor, the estranging and exploitative aspects of these positions for the most part remain unexamined.

Alienating aspects of the restaurant industry will be addressed momentarily, but at
this point it is necessary to give a brief description of the exploitative nature of this specific industry. Using the extensive discussion of exploitation in Chapter Two as a starting point, we can identify exploitation rather easily within the restaurant industry. Exploitation varies in both the form it takes and the degree to which it exists. On an economic level it can be argued that the sub-minimum wage that servers are paid is not proportionate to the nearly 400 billion dollars that the restaurant industry boasts annually (Elan 2001; Peters 2001). Another facet of exploitation within the restaurant industry that has received little attention, but must be kept in mind, is that of emotional exploitation. The question must be asked as to what is reasonable compensation for the possible consequences that threaten service employees. As Hochschild (1983) points out, "It is not emotional labor itself, therefore, but the underlying system of recompense that raises the question of what the cost of it is" (p. 12).

It is further argued that the structural dynamics of occupations involving emotional labor exploit individuals not only economically and emotionally but physically as well. Women, in particular, who are employed in subordinate, emotional, labor-intensive positions often find that their own physical attractiveness is a source of commercial exploitation (Hall 1993a, 1993b; Hochschild 1983; Spradley and Mann 1975). Waitresses often find themselves financially dependent upon the exploitation of their own bodies in order to maximize tips (Day 1977). This emphasis placed on sexual attractiveness among waitresses further reflects the patriarchal society in which restaurants are embedded. When it is taken into account that women make up the majority of individuals employed in positions that require emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), gender becomes a crucial component of an individual’s working experience.
Men, as was the case with most professions, at one time dominated the restaurant industry in terms of employment. Over the course of the last century restaurant serving has steadily become a female dominated profession (Cobble 1991; Hall 1993b; Howe 1977). Despite general female dominance in serving positions, they continue to be a minority within fine dining establishments where tips are considerably increased (Howe 1977; Prewitt 2000). The subordination that females face in our society is reflected in the structural dynamics of the restaurant. Research has demonstrated that waitresses are not only subordinate to customers and managers but to their male co-workers as well (LaPointe 1992; Spradley and Mann 1975; Whyte 1948). The abundance of females across the service sector, where they are subject to work in subordinating positions for low wages, can at least in part be explained by examining gender as a mediator of job satisfaction. Research has indicated that females value intrinsic job attributes such as feelings of accomplishment, while men value extrinsic rewards such as job security and opportunity for promotion (Tolbert and Moen 1998). Service positions allow individuals to furnish a specific service that presumably would be accompanied with a sense of accomplishment when concluded. Other research, however, has suggested that females reduce importance to job attributes that are not available to them, such as job status and autonomy (Neil and Snizek 1988). In short, the gender comparison research that has been done on individuals’ working experience has not adequately established why females continue to dominate the service sector; moreover, this research has not adequately examined how gender influences the subjective experience of restaurant servers.
In contrast to manufacturing positions in which the laborer is subordinate to his or her foreman, occupations such as serving are located in a double subordinate position. Servers are subordinate to both management and to the patrons that they serve (Leidner 1993; Lipsky 1980; Prottas 1979). At the heart of the concept of subordination lies the idea that one actor in a social relationship provides the exclusive function of service for another actor (Simmel [1908] 1950). Thus, servers are required to serve both patrons and management, both of which are accompanied by separate but related emotional demands. The emotional demands that servers are subjected to by their subordinate relationships with customers and management will be addressed, respectively.

Emotional Labor in Server/Customer Relations

Whyte (1948) points out the importance of emotional manipulation among restaurant servers when he states, “If the waitress appears timid or harassed the customers are likely to be uneasy and expect the worst” (p. 110). When the server is unsuccessful, for whatever reason, in provoking the desired emotional state in the patron the server/patron relationship often breaks down. The emotional demands that are placed on servers to uphold their relationship with the customers often become overwhelming, creating a need for an emotional release. This release often comes in the form of an emotional breakdown within the work setting. The outward release of emotional strain is depicted in Whyte’s (1946) description of the “crying waitress” in which he explains that “the pressures upon the waitress cannot simply be absorbed. In one way or another, they must come out, and crying is one outlet” (p. 130). Nearly fifty years later, and despite Rose’s (2000) recent statement that “if they still cry nobody sees them do it” (para. 1), a subject in Paules’ (1991) study verifies the persistence of crying as a mechanism for
emotional release: “When I first started, I cried. The cooks made me cry, the customers made me cry, my manager made me cry. I cried. I always cried” (p. 11). Because frontline service employees interacting with clients or customers are often dehumanized and given only negative feedback, it is not surprising that customers themselves play a crucial role in staff burnout (Maslach 1978).

Emotional Labor in Server/Management Relations

In service work the clients or customers purchase some sort of service. Organizations within the service sector depend on satisfactory service to ensure that the organization persists and prospers. Therefore, the very nature of the job, to some degree, requires organizational control over the employees’ outward display of emotions. After all, who would want to dine at a restaurant in which the servers were rude and insensitive. Management personnel succeed in producing the desired appearance of emotions such as happiness, friendliness, buoyancy, cheerfulness, etc. through strategic employee selection, socialization, and finally by rewards and punishments of the desired and undesired outward expression of respective emotions (Hochschild 1983; Rafaeli and Sutton 1987; Sutton 1991). In the ideal situation, the employees’ dictated outward expression of emotion would coincide with their inner feelings, creating a state of emotional harmony (Rafaeli and Sutton 1987). When emotional harmony exists, the normative emotional actions within any service sector occupational setting remain consistent and are easily maintained (Sutton 1991).

Problems arise when the employee’s outward projections of emotions that management dictates as appropriate are not congruent with the employee’s inner feelings. The contradictions between the emotions that service employees are expected to portray
and the actual emotions that are felt creates a state of “emotional dissonance”
(Hochschild 1983, p. 90; Rafaeli and Sutton 1987, p. 32). This emotional dissonance
among servers is perpetuated as management increasingly engages in the routinization of
the servers’ employment duties. Routinization can be understood as management’s
tries “to specify exactly how workers look, exactly what they say, their demeanors,
their gestures, their moods, even their thoughts” (Leidner 1993, pp. 8-9).

The ideology of routinization in the service sector was largely developed in
Levitt’s (1972, 1976) work in which he argued that service work should adapt a
production-line approach. To ensure efficiency in service positions tasks must be
simplified, labor responsibilities clearly divided, decision-making responsibilities limited,
and technology utilized (Livitt 1972, 1976). “In short management designs the system,
and employees execute it” (Bowen and Lawler 1992). Employees learn the routinization
of their occupational roles through intensive socialization through which they are
exposed to the company’s specifications, also referred to as SPECs (Paules 1991).

SPECs are of fundamental importance within the restaurant industry. SPECs
dictate virtually every aspect of restaurant employment ranging from food presentation to
how the server is to approach the table. When examining the SPECs to which servers are
subjected and their implications on servers’ emotional wellbeing, Red Lobster, the largest
seafood chain restaurant in the United States, serves as a good example. McGill (1989)
describes a Red Lobster training seminar during which future servers give “smile” as a
response to the teacher’s question of “What’s the first thing we do at the table?” (p. 1).
When personal expressions of emotion such as smiling are standardized and forced upon
employees regardless of their real inner emotional state, the employee becomes alienated
from the very emotion being expressed, in this case the individual’s own smile (Hochschild 1983).

The management role in the perpetuation of emotional labor demands is evident by the fact that emotional contradictions would not occur if the server were permitted to express frustration or anger (individuality) when these are the inner emotions being felt in a given situation. The self sacrifices that restaurant servers must make can easily be identified by recognizing the ideology that lies at the heart of the hospitality industry in general. As La Lopa states “It’s truly putting the needs of customers...ahead of your own. That’s the essence of hospitality” (Cited in Berta 2001; p.12). This ideology is further supported by the common service slogan of which we are all too aware: “the customer is always right.” It would appear that the very foundation upon which the restaurant industry rests requires servers to put customers’ needs, including emotional needs, ahead of their own.

Paules (1991) argues that employees who receive the majority of their income in the form of tips are released “from many conventional constraints of the employee role (pg. 55).” Restaurant servers, who do not financially rely on management, have little motivation to conceal contempt toward management or to abide by the organization’s policy, especially if that policy interferes with the likelihood of receiving a tip (Paules 1991). Paules’ (1991) suggestion that servers work for self-interest rather than the interest of management must be taken with caution. Although the relational arrangement between employee and management within tipped occupations allows for an increased degree of autonomy, which is unique compared to more traditional hourly or salaried positions, it must not be forgotten that managers within the restaurant setting retain the
power to fire employees who are insubordinate. Insubordination can take many different
forms, but not abiding by the management-specified appropriate outward emotional state
that servers must display toward patrons would certainly be considered one such act of
insubordination that would justify termination under most situations.

The organizational goals of the management and the servers, especially in
restaurant corporations, often come into conflict as has been pointed out: “They don’t cut
you no slack. You give and you give and they take” (Ehrenreich 2001, p. 22). The
consequences of the emotional demands that management places on servers have
profound implications not only for the emotional well being of the serving staff but for
the organization’s success as well. Research has shown that there is in a sense a trickle-
down effect within service industries, ultimately ending with the clients or customers
receiving the specified service. In other words, the manner in which service employees
are treated by management is manifested in the employees’ interaction with the client or
customer (Albrecht 1988a; Bowen and Lawler 1992; Butler and Skipper 1980; Schneider
and Bowen 1985; Stahl 1998). Supervisors, therefore, have the capacity to either
exacerbate or alleviate the emotional tension that servers experience as a result of their
interaction with patrons (Whyte 1949). For this reason it becomes increasingly
important that management in the restaurant industry recognize the uniqueness of the
interactional relationship between servers and patrons in order to increase immediate
gains as well as server wellbeing (Romm 1989). One suggested way to increase both
quality of service and service employee well being has been referred to as the
empowerment or “free of rulebooks” approach to service delivery (Bowen and Lawler
1992; Bowen and Lawler 1995).
Job Satisfaction

In most cases working-class employment provides the individual with little freedom for independent judgment or use of specialized skills. Work among this class is often monotonous, provides little or no status, and can even be demeaning. "I was told by my supervisor that workfare was created to humiliate you, to give you the incentive to get off welfare" is how one woman described her work experience after having to rely on welfare because she had been laid off due to company downsizing (Bowe, Bowe, Streeter, Murphy, and Kerochan 2000, p. 25). As the service industry in general and the restaurant industry in particular continues to undergo routinization, standardization, and rationalization, the above depiction of working class employment will increasingly be useful in describing this sector of the economy. It is not surprising that the working class does not see work as something to talk about. When it is talked about, it is done in terms of bitterness, resignation, and boredom (Rubin 1992).

With the depiction of work that many Americans describe, one must address the aspects that create job satisfaction versus dissatisfaction in general and then more specifically those contributing factors among restaurant servers. In other words what aspects of employment produce job satisfaction defined by Locke (1976) as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences" (p. 1300). Hopkins (1983) discovered a series of work situations that correlate to job satisfaction. The study showed that as the speed/hardness, and repetitiveness increased, job satisfaction decreased. On the other hand, the following characteristics showed a positive relationship to job satisfaction: job quality, physical
effort and skilled use of hands, co-worker help, authority, time, information, and equipment (Hopkins 1983, pp. 54-62).

A recent cross national study found that having an interesting job, good relationship with management, high income, and independence were the best predictors of job satisfaction, while having an exhausting job served as the best predictor of job dissatisfaction (Sousa-Poza, 2000). In general, researchers have been in agreement about the positive relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction (e.g., Knoop 1994; Sousa-Poza, 2000). In examining the restaurant industry, research has shown that this population of the workforce is no exception concerning the positive influence that job autonomy has upon job satisfaction. Additional research has indicated that in many cases individuals value job satisfaction equal to or more so than the pay they receive (Costlow, 2000). Wage security independent of amount of pay, however, has been described as having a positive effect on both job satisfaction as well as job attachment (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt 1969).

When examining restaurant servers and other occupational positions that are reliant on tips, a unique nuance emerges in the relationship between wage security and satisfaction. As has been stated previously, servers are dependent on tips, and, therefore, their wage security becomes vulnerable. This wage vulnerability among restaurant servers is either perpetuated or compensated for by factors of autonomy such as disciplinary or surveillance actions on the part of management. These variations in autonomy allowed to servers in the work setting either increase perceived wage vulnerability causing job satisfaction to decrease or decrease perceived wage vulnerability causing job satisfaction to increase (Butler and Skipper 1980). The role that
management plays in extending job satisfaction to servers in the form of autonomy is similar to the relationship between management and the servers’ interdependent “back of the house” co-workers, the cooks (Mars and Nicod 1984; Paules 1991; Whyte 1949). Fine (1996) describes a positive relationship between the stringent management constraints placed on cooks, the constrictive effects on autonomy, and their occupational satisfaction.

Despite the expanding economy and decreasing unemployment rates in the last decade job satisfaction has been steadily on the decline (Caudron, 2001; Sousa-Poza, 2000). With the continuous decline in overall job satisfaction, viewed in light of the positive relationship between occupational satisfaction and life satisfaction (Judge and Watanabe 1993; Wright, Bennett, and Dun 1999), it becomes crucial that factors contributing to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, including alienating and exploitative factors, be continuously explored.

Throughout this review of the literature I have attempted to describe in a coherent fashion the structural complexity of restaurant organizations. In restaurant organizations servers are the soldiers who on a daily basis take the restaurant into battle and for all practical purposes are responsible for the restaurant’s success or failure. In this daily war that restaurant servers fight they are confronted with obstacles that they continuously must overcome in order to return and fight the battle again the next day. Using the analogy of war is a viable perspective to take when addressing restaurant servers. As Paules (1991) points out, the servers implicitly use the comparison themselves in their waiting-tables terminology (p. 141-42). Debra Ginsberg (2000) in her autobiography of
restaurant serving described learning "guerrilla waitressing" at one particular restaurant where she was employed (p. 191).

In this daily war servers are coerced to surrender their own emotions for the prosperity of the restaurant. Servers are, for the most part, single handedly responsible for the emotional ambiance in which patrons dine. In taking this responsibility they run the risk of becoming increasingly estranged from their own personalities. From a capitalist perspective the risk of self-estrangement that servers take would be considered an unavoidable cost of war. From another perspective, when someone gives something, such as servers do on a daily basis, and is not fairly compensated, then they are exploited. It is only reasonable to assume that work satisfaction would be directly correlated with the less alienating and exploitative aspects of the working environment.

It has been shown that many possible factors are involved in the degree to which servers unconsciously or consciously feel alienated and exploited. These factors can be viewed in general terms through the examination of the relational dynamics between both the server and patron and between the server and manager. The purpose of the current research is to shed further light on the degree to which servers suffer from the alienating and exploiting aspects that restaurant work can entail. In the following chapter I will discuss the methodological approach that was used in the current study.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodological approach that was taken. In addition, this chapter gives a detailed description of the restaurants from which the interviews were selected. To protect the privacy of the subjects and organizations within this study all names and specific identifying information have been altered or replaced with pseudonyms. In the examination of this population of the workforce, a qualitative methodological approach was both viable and beneficial. Qualitative analysis allows a degree of understanding that is greater than a more traditional quantitative approach. In the following passage Mason (1996) indicates the benefits that qualitative methodology provides:

Qualitative research aims to produce rounded understanding on the basis of rich, contextual, and detailed data. There is more emphasis on “holistic” forms of analysis and explanation in this sense, than on charting surface patterns, trends, and correlations. (p. 4)

Although the ability to generalize the findings of qualitative research is limited when compared to quantitative research, the tradeoﬀ in depth of data yielded is favorable for the purpose of the current research. Therefore, the choice of adopting a qualitative approach was driven by the richness in data that qualitative methods can provide in gaining knowledge on the subjective working experience of restaurant servers. Data collection for the current study progressed in a linear fashion through two distinct phases.
The first wave of data collection was achieved through overt nonparticipant observations within both of the two restaurants from which the sample of individuals were selected. The second part involved semistructured interviews with fifteen participants. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary, and all subjects voluntarily signed a consent form signifying their willingness to participate. A copy of the respondent consent form can be found in Appendix A. The researcher also obtained consent to conduct observations and recruit subjects to be interviewed from each of the two restaurants under investigation. A copy of the organizational consent form can be found in Appendix B.

Although both of the data collection techniques were valuable, data were primarily gathered using in-depth, semistructured interviews. It has been suggested that in addition to the in-depth subjective data that can be obtained through interviewing, subjects often welcome the opportunity to be interviewed, claiming it to be inherently satisfying (Caplow 1956; Cannell and Axelrod 1956). Using a semistructured interviewing approach allowed the researcher to make use of extensive follow up questions or probes, which significantly increased the usefulness of the data collected. Interviews covered a wide array of topics concerning the subjects’ past and present employment experience. Questions about the subjects’ feelings of alienation and exploitation were asked in order to evaluate the degree to which these concepts contributed to or impeded self-reported job satisfaction. The interviews were audiotaped, and for purposes of analysis each interview was transcribed verbatim after it was completed. Promptness in transcriptions insured the greatest degree of accuracy. A complete version of the interview guide is located in Appendix C. Interviews lasted
between two and four hours and were conducted at various locations, including the researcher’s office, researcher’s home, respondent’s home, local bars, and restaurants. Several of the interviews were completed during multiple sessions.

In addition to data being collected via in-depth interviews, overt nonparticipant observations were used to gather data within both of the restaurants in the current study. Using a multiple-method approach increased both validity and reliability, which increased confidence in the findings that this investigation yielded (Denzin 1978). Observations focused on servers who had previously been interviewed or who had previously agreed to be interviewed. During observational periods the researcher took shorthand notes on the events and dialogues that surrounded the servers. After the observational period these jotted field notes were extended into full field notes, or a detailed description of events, in a timely fashion to insure accuracy and maximum recollections (Lofland and Lofland 1995, p. 91). Over the duration of the data-gathering phase of this research the full field notes and interview transcripts were continuously analyzed as they were completed, allowing the researcher to systematically build on each preceding piece of data (Becker 1958).

Sample

The sampling frame of the current research was servers who at the time of data gathering were employed at Silvers Bar and Sunny’s Seafood Restaurant. Observational time frames varied but ranged between 5:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. Monday through Sunday. Controlling for factors that may vary when compared to the lunch hours, such as clientele and patron volume, was accomplished by limiting observational time frames to the dinner hours. Observational time frames extended beyond the restaurants’ closing
time in order to capture possible back region behaviors as they relate to server’s recent interaction with patrons and management. Observational time periods also varied but ranged from one to three hours. Fifteen hours of observation was logged at each dining establishment, totaling thirty logged observation hours over the course of this data gathering phase.

Roughly half of the thirty observation hours were conducted on Friday and Saturday nights when volume was at its peak. The observational sampling frame was limited to high volume times in order to maximize the knowledge gained regarding the mechanisms and techniques that servers use to manage their work in situations while they are under pressure. Furthermore, research in the service sector has suggested that the emotional displays of service employees are dependent on the population density of the setting (Sutton and Rafaeli 1988). While in the field the researcher adopted a participant-as-observer (Gold 1958) or a peripheral membership (Adler and Adler 1987) social role. In adopting this social role the researcher’s motives were disclosed to those individuals being observed, thereby decreasing the likelihood of role conflict between the researcher and membership roles. This membership role allowed the researcher to avoid the day-to-day working activities that the servers conduct while still maintaining a high degree of acceptability within the research setting. In addition, by taking a peripheral role the researcher decreased the chances of “over-rapport” with the restaurant staff (Miller 1952).

The subjects who were interviewed were selected using a statistically nonrepresentative stratified sampling technique (Trost 1986). In using this technique the researcher was able to maximize variation among the study’s independent variables
(Trost 1986). The process of sample selection is illustrated in Table One. The selection criteria that were used in the current study are as follows: subjects’ sex, subjects’ age, subjects’ restaurant serving experience, and SES of restaurant where subjects are employed. The focal analytical variables examined in this research are feelings of alienation and exploitation.

**Dependent Variables**

Severs’ feelings of alienation and exploitation are the major dependent variables under investigation. In specific, independent of one another, the following dimensions of alienation are examined: powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement. Servers’ feelings of powerlessness were examined using interview questions that indicated the degree of power that servers have in their work setting. For example, all of the respondents were asked, “Do you feel you have the power to change aspects of your employment that you feel are unsatisfactory?” Servers’ feelings of meaninglessness were derived from questions regarding the degree to which they recognize the importance of their work role. For example, all respondents were asked the following questions and others similar to it: “Do you think that you as an individual are in a position that is a vital link in the restaurant’s day to day operations?” Finally servers’ feelings of self-estrangement were examined using questions that indicate the degree to which servers experience their work as rewarding beyond just means to an end. To tease out the degree to which servers felt self-estranged in their work setting, servers were asked questions similar to, “What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?” or “At the end of your shift do you feel a sense of accomplishment?” Due to the qualitative nature of this study
no concrete quantitative value regarding the level to which servers experience the varying aspects of alienation can be determined.

Servers’ feelings of exploitation were an additional dependent variable in this investigation. The degree that servers feel they are fairly compensated for the work they perform was determined through questions such as, “Do you feel your hourly wage is fair?” or “Do you feel that overall you make the amount of money you deserve for doing your job?” Finally, servers’ self-reported job satisfaction was analyzed as a dependent variable and was determined using questions such as, “Do you enjoy your work?” or “Do you feel that management gives you credit for your job achievements?”

**Independent Variables**

The socioeconomic status of the restaurant in which subjects are employed was arbitrarily dichotomized into high and low according to the mean dinner price and check average. Subjects’ experience in restaurant serving was theoretically dichotomized into experienced (greater than two years) and non-experienced (two years or less) in restaurant serving. In distinguishing between experienced and non-experienced the subjects’ experience in the specific restaurant with which they are currently employed was examined. This dichotomy is very arbitrary because overall serving experience could not be determined until after the interviews were conducted. As a result several of these servers categorized as non-experienced might have an extensive serving history but very little experience in the restaurant that currently employs them. Subjects’ age was theoretically dichotomized into older than twenty-four years of age or twenty-four years of age or younger. Finally, the subjects’ sex was naturally dichotomized into male or female. As illustrated in Table 1 the sample was comprised of 15 subjects representing
all combinations of selection criteria. As Trost (1986) points out, some of these cells might be logically or empirically empty or nearly empty. Although none of the cells in the current study was logically empty, there was one cell that was not filled due to the lack of an appropriate subject (n=15). The cell that was not filled is designated with an “X” in Table 1. The researcher determined the subject’s appropriateness regarding the independent cell variation through correspondence with restaurant management and the servers themselves.

Table 1. Statistically Nonrepresentative Stratified Sampling Technique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES of Restaurant</th>
<th>High Socioeconomic Status</th>
<th>Low Socioeconomic Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Non-experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>≤ 24</td>
<td>&gt; 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although using this sampling technique assures representing some selection criteria, measures also were taken to control for contextual effects. Both restaurants from which the sample was selected are chains and are subject to corporate specification or SPECs. All members of the sample were employed full time, which for the purposes of this research was considered twenty-five hours or more per week. In addition, all servers in the sample worked the majority of these hours during the dinner portion of the working
day including weekends. Finally, both restaurants in this study are located in a
Southcentral U. S. city populated by approximately 50,000 residents. At this point it is
necessary to give a description of the restaurants in which observations were made and
from which the sample was derived.

Silvers Bar and Grill

Silvers Bar and Grill (SBG) is one of four different restaurants that are owned by
a single corporation. SBG employs approximately 95 individuals with servers accounting
for 47% (45) of those employed. Of the 45 servers at SBG approximately 50% are full
time. The remaining 50 employees are comprised of cooks, hosts/hostesses, bus
personnel, bartenders, dishwashers, and alley personnel. The mean dinner price and the
weekly dinner check average of each restaurant operationally determined the SES of the
restaurants in this research. At SBG the mean dinner price, excluding any temporary
specials, was fourteen dollars and sixty-six cents. The mean dinner price for both SBG
and Sunny’s Seafood (SS) was statistically determined by dividing the price sum of all
available dinner entrees by the total number of dinner entrees on the menu. The second
component used to distinguish the SES of the restaurants in this study was check
averages. Check averages are calculated by management on a daily basis and refer to the
average amount spent per person on each specific working day. The check averages for
both SS and SBG were determined through an inquiry to management. These numerical
check average values are computed on Sundays and constitute an average check price per
person, Monday through Sunday. The check average figures used in the current research
are for the week of February 3, 2002 through February 9, 2002. At SBG this value was
fourteen dollars and one cent.
SBG has a seating capacity of 250 and serves approximately 5,600 guests per week. Upon entering the front doors you are in the lobby where there are several tall bar tables in front of and to the left of the bar window. Although waiting patrons can purchase drinks at the bar window, it predominately functions as a service bar for the wait staff. The exclusion of bar patrons is largely due to the construction of the bar. The bar window measures approximately four feet in length, allowing room for only three barstools. From the bar window a patron has visible access to the alley. The alley is the place in which food presentation is done and prepared for the servers to deliver. The latter portion of the alley is the place in which servers pick up from the bar staff the drinks, which they had previously ordered through a computer. The researcher used the bar/waiting region occasionally during observational periods, but observations were conducted predominantly in the restaurant’s dining room.

**Sunny’s Seafood**

Sunny’s Seafood (SS) is considerably different from Silvers Bar and Grill. Whereas SBG is considered a corporation, SS was purchased by a corporation and is, therefore, a privately owned franchise. Being a franchise prescribes that the owner/owners must abide by the same basic stipulations that are dictated by the corporation. Therefore, both SS and SBG are subject to the overpowering influence of a corporation making them in this respect more similar than different despite the variance in ownership. SS employs approximately 43 employees with servers accounting for 60% (26) of those employed. The remaining 17 employees, similar to SBG, are comprised of cooks, hosts/hostesses, bus personnel, bar tenders, dishwashers, and alley personnel. At
SS the mean dinner price, excluding any temporary specials, is $8.40. The numerical weekly check average at SS is $10.37.

SS has considerably less seating (164) and serves considerably fewer guests (3,500) per week than SS. Upon entering the front doors a patron has a virtually unobstructed view of the front of the house area. In the center of the dining room is a large circular bar with a seating capacity of approximately twenty guests. On most nights one would find at least several patrons seated at the bar enjoying beverages and often-times eating. Surrounding the bar in a proportional manner are high tables capable of seating six guests per table. The bar area is separated from the remainder of the dining tables by a waist-high partition. The partition provides only a physical distinction between the bar and dining area. At the far end of the bar is a small section with no seats positioned in front of it. It is in this area that servers pick up drinks from the bar staff which, as was the case at SBG, they had previously ordered through a computer.

Observation within this setting were equally distributed between various tables in the dining area and bar stools seated close to the area from which beverages are obtained to deliver to guests. This positioning at the beverage pickup portion of the bar provided the opportunity to listen to informal conversations between the wait staff and the bar staff. Preliminary observations suggested that during these informal conversations a great deal can be learned about the servers’ working experience.

**Demographics Characteristics**

The respondents’ age ranged from 21 to 42 with a mean of 27 years. There were seven females and eight males interviewed. Total experience in the food industry ranged from seven months to eighteen years with a mean of approximately five years.
Experience in the specific restaurants from which the sample was selected ranged from 3 months to 10.5 years with a mean of approximately 2.5 years. Experienced servers are overrepresented in this sample, which is evident by the fact that seven of the fifteen respondents are certified server trainers. The respondents were all Caucasians in this sample, which was intentional due to the small proportion of minority employees in the service industry. Respondents’ education level ranged from the completion of a GED to three participants who have obtained a bachelor’s degree. The mean level of education was 15 years. Thirteen of the respondents have completed one or more years of college. The level of education is consistent with the rest of the population in the community from which the sample was selected. A more detailed description of the participants in this study can be found in Appendix D. This research’s findings will be presented in detail in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

In depth interviews were conducted with fifteen individuals who were at the time of the interview employed as servers at one of the two restaurants from which the sample was selected (Sunny’s Seafood and Silvers Bar and Grill restaurants). All of the subjects in this study were primarily responsible for waiting on tables with the exception of Jackson and Eva, who both identified themselves as bartenders who also wait on tables. The structural dynamics of Sunny’s Seafood (SS), where both Jackson and Eva were employed, necessitated that during approximately half of their weekly shifts they wait on tables in addition to their bar duties. In addition, one shift per month Eva works as a key hourly, during which time she takes on managerial duties. Elaboration on the implications of this variation will be found later in this chapter. The dialogue throughout this chapter comes from the servers who participated in this study. Audible pauses that the respondents spoke have been excluded to provide clarity for the reader.

In this chapter findings are presented in three sections: respondents’ experiences with feelings of alienation, respondents’ experiences with feelings of exploitation, and respondents’ self reported job satisfaction. When discussing the respondents’ perception of alienation the following three subsections are examined: the degree to which the respondents have feelings of powerlessness in their employment setting, feel that their work is meaningless, and feel self-estranged. This chapter closes with a detailed
discussion of the various facets of restaurant serving, which the respondents identified as being contributors to both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Unless otherwise stated, when discussing servers throughout this chapter the researcher will be referring to the sample as a whole, making no distinction between the two restaurants from which the sample was selected.

Before the findings are presented it is worth noting that, although the current research is primarily concerned with restaurant servers, the interdependence between the various positions within the restaurant must be kept in mind. The servers in this research illustrate this interdependency when asked “what position in the restaurant depends on you as a server the most?”

The alley aids, the people in the alley...Well with the alley people, if we are not there to walk the food and get it out of the window, then they can't get food and dress it and get it, you know; they can't do their job. (Ann)

Other servers because if you run their food and you don't care what it looks like and you take it out and they need something extra, well, that's up to you to either tell their server that they need extra ketchup or go get it. Because if you don't tell them, the guest won't let their server know because they assume you are getting it for them. So really it is up to you to do things for the other servers. (Missy)

The cook line.’ Cause without us it would be chaos back there. They wouldn't know what food went to what table. If there is a special instruction, they wouldn't know who to ask, you know, going out to the dining room. (Ken)

I'd say the management because, I mean, if you don't have good servers in the restaurant and everybody's running around there like chickens with their heads cut off, you're not going to run a good business. People aren't going to be happy, and it's going to fall back on the management and hurt them the most. So I think the management pretty much depends on the servers to do their job well. (Jane)

I'd say as a server you're probably most connected with the bar. Just because they're out there working with you; and if you have anything like milkshakes, alcohol, I mean, you need them to be there and on top of it, which is really hard in the day time when they have tables. It's really hard to get what you need. (Roxy)
Some of the respondents recognized the importance of all the positions working together to achieve a multifaceted working whole. For example:

I think all of them’ cause I think we’re the biggest link in the restaurant. I mean we’re the ones that sell the alcohol, sell the food, bring the guests in by giving good service. I mean, in my opinion we are the top employees there, the most needed. We give everyone else a purpose to have a job. But of course everybody else gives us a purpose to have a job too because if we didn’t have good line cooks and good bar people and good host, then we wouldn’t be able to accomplish our day-to-day operations like we do. (Rocky)

I guess kind of everybody. If everybody is slow, you may be on a wait all night. But if they’re fast, you may get off wait early and that kind of affects everybody’ cause if you get off wait early, the less you need other employees to prep the food, seat the tables, to cook the food. So it kind of hinges on that. (Nate)

Paules (1991) argues that servers enjoy the freedom associated with performing independent work tasks, which parallel the work tasks of other positions in the restaurant. The independence that servers’ experience is evident when they are dealing directly with the guests. However, as the respondents have pointed out, the dynamics of the restaurant require that all of the actors involved work simultaneously with one another. “If any part of the cycle breaks down, then bad things can happen real fast” (Morgan). Therefore, it appears that at a structural level, rather than simply performing independent work tasks that parallel the work tasks of others positions, the structural organization of the restaurant necessitates interdependence to insure efficiency. When one segment of this interdependent working system breaks down, it is the source of a great deal of exasperation for all of the actors involved. The significance of this interdependence, from the servers’ perspective, will emerge at numerous points throughout this chapter.

**Alienation among Restaurant Servers**

As was discussed in chapter two, the powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement dimensions of alienation are not necessarily positively correlated (Travis
1986; Zeller et. al. 1980). Furthermore, in acknowledging that it is problematic to generalize feelings of alienation beyond the specific social situation in which the feelings were generated (Seeman 1967), the current research examined powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement as being independent of one another. In independently examining these aspects of alienation, this research attempts to identify a generalized set of alienation-inducing conditions (Wegner 1975) both within and across the two specific restaurants under investigation. Using two restaurant establishments to select the study’s sample increased confidence that the alienating conditions identified will be generalizable to other restaurants. Following a discussion of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement, the author will provide an overall description of the degree to which restaurant servers suffer from alienation within their work setting.

**Powerlessness**

Subjects’ responses concerning the degree to which they experienced feelings of powerlessness varied greatly. The factors identified as provoking feelings of powerlessness among this sample of servers varied as well. However, emerging from the data several common areas may be identified as being aspects of restaurant serving that impede servers’ personal control over future outcomes and hence provoke feelings of powerlessness.

Of the fifteen servers interviewed eleven expressed feeling that they did not have the power to change aspects of their work that they felt were unsatisfactory. As exemplified in the following quotes:

We’ll have meeting every once in awhile, but it seems like we talk more about what they want and what their needs are. But as far as what ours are, we will let them know, but it doesn’t guarantee that things will be changed. A lot of time it’s just they’re serving themselves as far as management goes. (Nate)
No, gosh, that restaurant is so unchangeable. It’s been the same for so long. People have tried to come in and change different aspects of it, and it just always goes right back to the way it was, and I don’t feel like I have any power at all. I’m just a server. (Donna)

No, not really. Like I said, me personally, like yeah, there’s some stuff that I could change, but for the most part it’s like management’s not willing to. You know what I mean. I can want to change all I want, but I can’t because I’m not a manager….I can’t change shit actually, the more I think about it. There’s actually nothing, yeah, that’s one of my biggest problems with that job is that you can’t get anything changed, like some of their policies are just ridiculous. (Lobo)

I just feel limited. We are very limited in what we can do, what we can change, what we cannot change. We have very strict guidelines as to what you can do, how things go, and what not. I mean the rules and regulations of [Silvers] are pretty much you go by what one person says, and that’s it. [There is] no real independent train of thought. Nobody really cares. (Rocky)

No, I don’t know about change. That’s probably something I don’t think I have that much power on. I couldn’t actually sit there and say, “hey let’s change this. They might listen to me. They might take my opinion in, but you know. No I don’t think they would actually just do it right then and there. (Ozzie)

Even those that did express a sense of power to change aspects of their employment often did so passively, while acknowledging that their power was limited to “minor” or “small” issues like work schedules. For example:

Now that I’ve been there for so long, kind of…just like last weekend with me working [out of town.] They knew we were working and we’ve been there for a long time so they gave us our request off….[But] not really policies. I don’t think we have that much power to change all that just because that’s more managerial kind of things. It’s up to them…I mean, we are still working for them. It’s not our restaurant. (Jane)

Yeah, yes and no, kind of….Of course not everything is going to be perfect, the way I want them, but, yeah, generally they try to please us somewhat, enough to keep us from bitching pretty much. (Jackson)

Well like, for instance like my schedule…like basically I had it out with the general manager, and he seemed receptive to that. That’s when he told me he was going to start training me at the bar and making me a trainer and stuff like that….But right now that’s what I’m waiting on to see if he’s actually going to do what he said he was going to do. (Roxy)
The lack of power to change things that servers feel are unsatisfactory is reflected in their perception that management does little to motivate and encourage neither exemplary job performance nor loyalty to the management. Nine of the respondents felt that management did not adequately compensate for hard work nor give proper incentive to work harder. As is illustrated in the following quotes:

There’s no raises. There’s no if you sell this much in alcohol you get a gift certificate or whatever. There’s...nothing to make me want to go out of my way for a manager. (Rocky)

There’s not enough positive encouragement going on to make their employees strive for more because there’s no real thing to really strive for. Because we all want more money, and if you don’t really have that to go for, then you probably aren’t going to give a hundred percent. That’s the way I look at it. Seems like you can give fifty percent and you’re still going to make what you would have made if you gave a hundred percent. (Jackson)

Management really doesn’t care as long as the food gets out and they don’t have too many complaints. They don’t have to comp off to many meals; they don’t care. (Georgia)

I think working harder at that place, honestly, gives you more responsibility. It doesn’t pay off; it just makes things more difficult. So I don’t blame some of the people for not going above and beyond. (Lobo)

All it’s about there most of the time is favoritism. As long as you know them, you talk to them, you get into their lives, they’re into yours....If they see you, look like you’re busy; that’s about it. They can look at you, and if you’re just standing there, they’re going to be like “hey why don’t you go,” you know. But if they look at you and you’re over there just playing around with your table, like cleaning off salt, they’ll leave you alone. It’s really all about favoritism; if they don’t like you, they will find something tough for you to do. (Ozzie)

Other respondents just felt unappreciated and not cared about.

I never really get appreciated....The harder I work it’s not really going to change. Kind of like, “well that’s your job, ok you did it you did your job, good.” (Jack)

They don’t really appreciate their employees like they should. I mean, I don’t think I have ever heard certain members of management say “well you’ve done a good job; thank you for doing this.” They might say it one time, and they’ll
forget it five minutes later, and then it just doesn’t matter, you’re just a regular slack ass employee. (Rocky)

We are always the openers and the closers. We’re the people running the food and doing the side work and basically keeping everybody else in check, and I think our management has come to expect that from us as apposed to appreciating that we do that. (Roxy)

When servers’ feel unappreciated, feel incapable to change unsatisfactory aspects of their employment, and have little or no incentive to work hard, the way they perform their jobs may threaten the overall success of the restaurant. Research has indicated that a key component of success in a service-based organization is taking care of the frontline employees. As J. Willard (Bill) Marriott, Jr., leader of Marriott Corporation, frequently reiterates to his managers, “Take care of your employees and they’ll take care of your customers (Quoted in Albrecht 1988b, p. 41).” Mr. Marriott obviously has done his homework and appreciates the process by which the nature of management/employee relations becomes manifested in employee/customer relations (Albrecht 1988a; Bowen and Lawler 1992; Butler and Skipper 1980; Schneider and Bowen 1985; Stahl 1998). Moreover, when frontline service employees feel that the organization for which they work does not care, as is the case with many of the servers in this sample, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to extend a positive and caring impression to their customers (Albrecht 1988b).

Data suggest that servers attempt to establish a greater sense of control regarding the functioning of the restaurant by bringing their concerns and suggestions about work related issues to the attention of the management. All fifteen participants in this study expressed the belief that they felt comfortable with the idea of approaching management with suggestions or concerns. The following respondents express this perspective nicely:
Yeah, I can always, I've always thought I could talk to them....I don't have a problem going to them. No. (Donna)

I feel comfortable doing that....I really feel like if something got to the point that I thought something should be said, I think I could do that. (Morgan)

Yeah, I think you could. I mean if you really go and talk to them and let them know what is going on, they may change something. (Nate)

Yes, I feel comfortable with that...because I just think I have confidence to do so. (Roxy)

This willingness to approach management exists despite the fact that management seldom asks for the servers' opinions on serious work issues. In fact, ten respondents (Ann, Georgia, Missy, Nate, Morgan, Donna, Lobo, Rocky, Jane, and Roxy) reported that their opinions are never or rarely requested. When management does make inquiries to the servers, in most cases it is about only minor issues. Even when the management staff does ask them, it does not necessarily mean that they listen. “Some times they’ll ask for your opinion, but they really don’t care what you say” (Roxy). In most cases servers “pretty much have to volunteer it (opinion)” (Georgia).

Although all of the servers in this sample felt that they had the power to go to management with suggestions or concerns about their employment, the data suggest that what servers really feel is a false and temporary sense of power. When servers were probed as to whether they felt management takes their suggestions seriously, independent of age, gender, and place of employment, the majority of respondents replied with some degree of ambivalence. Four respondents expressed definite doubt.

I think they take them all in. We get told, you know, “well we’ll talk about it” or “we will write it down in the log book,” but...it never changes. As long as the food gets taken out, they are making money (Georgia)
No, not really....If I’m going to you with a problem, it’s like I’m not just blowing smoke up your ass. It’s like I have a legitimate problem with the way things are going, and I think it falls on deaf ears sometimes. (Lobo)

They (suggestions) would pretty much go unnoticed because I don’t really think that our opinions are taken very seriously by members of management. I believe that members of management feel that their way is right and is always right and that’s it. (Rocky)

I really don’t know if I’m taken seriously or not because I never see effects. I might say, “I see a problem with this or that, like side work.” Some of it might eventually get done, but most of the time no. (Donna)

Other servers felt as if their suggestions or concerns were listened to only when they had the potential to directly benefit management. As Nate and Roxy point out in the following quotes:

I think it depends on the situation, maybe. I don’t know how much credit they really give us as far as having ideas about things. I think that they just kind of assume that we’re just angry about the way that’s affecting us and we’re just griping about that, you know, from our own perspective not for the betterment of the restaurant but just for us. (Nate)

It depends what they are about. If it is something that they think is going to save them on food cost or save them money or time, they’re really open to it. When it comes to suggestions about how you need to make the workers happier so they are willing to come and do things for you, they’re not necessarily that open about them. (Roxy)

Even many of those who felt their suggestions and concerns were taken seriously expressed at least some apprehension. As Morgan, Jane, and Jackson illustrate in the following quotes:

I think I’d be listened to. I wouldn’t always expect my hairbrain schemes to be put right out into operation. but I think I’d at least be listened to and taken seriously. (Morgan)

It depends on the circumstances of my concern, but most of the time I do think they are taken into consideration just because I have been there for so long.... Some things I think they kind of take in and let it go, but I think the majority of the time they take it seriously. (Jane)
If it’s a concern of mine, I bring it to his (manager’s) attention at the end of his shift, and he’ll go ahead and mention it to everyone. (Jackson)

The data suggest that one contributing factor that may account for the inconsistencies among servers’ perceptions that their suggestions and concerns are taken seriously can be found in these individuals’ job duties beyond those of serving. All seven servers (Ann, Ken, Morgan, Jane, Ozzie, Eva, and Jackson), with the exception of Jane, who did feel that management takes their suggestions and concerns seriously, had additional responsibility. Jackson, Morgan, Ozzie, Eva, and Ken are certified server trainers, making their pay rate slightly higher and giving them an increased amount of authority over other servers while on the floor. Ann, Jackson, and Eva also have bartending responsibilities, which is considered to provide individuals with a greater sense of prestige. “I guess I kinda feel a little more superior when I am a bartender” (Ann). “You get a lot more respect by saying you’re a bartender than saying you’re a server for some reason” (Jackson). Eva also takes on occasional managerial responsibilities. When it is taken into account that authority and responsibility are both factors contributing to job satisfaction (Hopkins 1983), it is not surprising that these individuals (Ann, Ken, Morgan, Jane, Eva, Ozzie, and Jackson) are much more optimistic about their employment in general, including optimism that their concerns and suggestions will adequately be taken into consideration.

When servers are prohibited from taking an active role in shaping and creating their own working environment, the likelihood of self-actualizing effects in the workplace is greatly reduced and is replaced with alienating effects. The facets of the occupation of serving that provoke feelings of powerlessness that have been addressed thus far have been either structural in nature or have come from managerial
shortcomings. It can be argued that servers’ perceived powerlessness to change unsatisfactory aspects of their employment is an issue, at least in part, beyond the scope of the management staff. Both restaurants in this study were corporate chains and, therefore, were governed by corporate officials. Several of the servers recognized the dilemma that these “middle managers” (Wright 1994) face and in doing so alleviate management from some of the responsibility for their feelings of powerlessness. As exemplified in the following quotes:

We have policies that even the general manager doesn’t like and doesn’t agree with, and he might agree with us, but he can’t change them because he didn’t make them. They are corporate. (Roxy)

It’s a corporate thing...’cause they wouldn’t put us in red pants....Nobody asked me, and nobody asked any of the other people about the red pants; it just happened. (Missy)

A lot of the changes are not really even up to our managers, sometimes they’re corporate decisions that are handed down, and they don’t really even have an option. They’re just making us. (Nate)

Although outside of the scope of this research, from these servers’ voices we can speculate that restaurant establishments, at least those restaurants that are governed by the “corporate claw,” are permeated with powerlessness at all levels. It appears that restaurants are structured in such a way that perhaps the powerlessness that servers experience is a direct manifestation of powerlessness among the middle management. Middle managers have the power to ignite both excitement and loyalty in their frontline workers (Albrecht 1988b). It is unfortunate that, as an extension of this ability, middle managers also have the ability to ignite unhappiness and powerlessness, which appears to be what is happening.

With the lack of power that is afforded servers from both the management and the internal structure of the restaurant, it is not surprising that servers seek gratification and
power elsewhere in order to make their employment bearable. The data suggest that
servers are furnished with considerable power when dealing with the guests whom they
serve. Participants in this study unanimously responded that they felt power to use their
own judgment to solve the majority of the problems they encountered, rather than going
to a supervisor. Ann, Donna, and Jack expressed their ability to solve interpersonal
conflicts with coworkers.

   I am very open and outspoken. If a server does something that I don’t like I will
   be the first one to tell them. I don’t hide behind management, you know. We are
   all adults there, and we should all be able to be adults about the way things go.
   (Ann)

   I never ever, ever, ever, ever go to a manager with a problem with a server or
   another employee, ever, ever. (Donna)

   If an employee was rude or very hateful or just mean, I never feel like a manager is
   going to solve anything. A manager’s only going to make it worse. It’s going to
   make it worse for me from the perspective of the employee because I made
   myself look like we can’t handle this ourselves. I’m going to go tattletale on you
   kind of thing,… and I never do that in any kind of situation with an employee….I
   feel like any time I go get a manager for any kind of personal reason, I feel like I’m
   belittling my manhood so I never do it. (Jack)

Eleven other respondents expressed their ability to handle problems they encounter with
the restaurants’ guests. As is illustrated in the following quotes:

   If a guest isn’t satisfied about the way something is cooked, I don’t need to go to a
   manager and have them fix it. I can go and have their food re-cooked…so, unless
   its like something like a customer that is just extremely dissatisfied, I don’t have
   a manager deal with it; I will deal with it on my own. (Ann)

   I mean some of them are pretty simple problems. In the big problems you
generally go to the managers, but some of them you can solve yourself. If the
food takes too long or you forget to ring something in, you know, “can I get you
something right away? I’m sorry,” you know. Buy them an appetizer or
whatever. Normally you would not get a manager if you bought them an
appetizer while they wait for their food to come out. (Missy)
I feel pretty autonomous, I feel like I can do what I need to do....In my perspective management is a last resort because 95% of problems I’m having at the table [I] can solve at the table. (Morgan)

With the guests, well say like if they didn’t like the food or they said it took a long time for their food or it took a long time to get seated or, you know, I pretty well know how to talk them out of being upset. So I don’t see a point in finding a manager....I don’t think it’s that important to take a manager out to every table that has a little problem. I mean you can solve it yourself (Donna)

I try to avoid all member of management whatsoever when I’m at work. I solve most of my problems myself. I’ll give them a free dessert, free shrimp cocktail or something....I think that the more they [management] stay away and let me do my job and them do theirs, it works out for the best for everybody. (Rocky)

I mean, unless it something totally out of my hands. I’d say eight out of 10 times they actually give us that freedom to handle something without contacting a manager, especially the trainers. (Eva)

The data suggest that the only time servers will approach management with problems occurs when guests become abusive or when something goes drastically wrong at a table, neither of which seem to occur often. For example:

When like customers getting rude and food taking forever, when you got horrible cooks, then I’ll go get a manger because I don’t get paid to have people gripe at me. That’s what the managers [laugh] are on salary for. (Lobo)

If somebody was drinking too much and they got obnoxious with me, I won’t deal with that at all. I had that happen one time a long time ago, and they were really, really rowdy, cussing at the other tables. There wasn’t anything I could do at that point but go get a manager because the other tables; it was involving everybody else. So, that’s all I could do. (Donna)

Say I rang in a well done steak, rare, and it came out to the table bleeding and the customer was upset and they’d have to wait fifteen more minutes for a well done steak. I’d have to go to a manger then because they’re probably going to be pretty upset. (Jackson)

Just things like, I mean, there have been times where you have people who are at your tables who are really drunk and, you know, being obscene to other customers so you have to have mangers go take care of that, make them leave. Food that doesn’t come out right and people are really, really upset about it and just trying to take it out on you. I’d go them about that, have them handle that because it’s not your fault really so. (Jane)
When a customer gets rude, that’s when I definitely get a manager because I’m not paid enough; they are. They’re paid salary. They don’t care if one person bitches at them or if nobody does so they can get the bitching. I’m not going to do it. (Georgia)

If a guest got too drunk and like got up and started wanting to fight or I’ve seen them hit their kids or something, I’ll go to a manager and tell them. If they’ve got a question about getting their meal for free because they eat their whole steak and it wasn’t cooked right, I’ll go to a manager. I don’t want to put up with that crap. (Ozzie)

The power to solve daily problems that servers encounter seems to negate a significant amount of the powerlessness that they experience with the internal structuring of the restaurant and management staff. The majority of the power that servers are afforded is directly linked with the patrons whom they serve. Although management largely does not empower their serving staff to express opinions that could ultimately lead to positive change within the restaurant, it does appear that they permit their servers a great deal of freedom when dealing with guests. One server in particular captures the paradox between the power that servers have available with the guests compared to power within the restaurant as a whole. “I feel like there’s more freedom at a table than in the restaurant itself ’cause once you go to that table, your locked in their zone” (Jack).

The structure of restaurants necessitates that servers have autonomy with their guests because it is not feasible for management to closely monitor them (Paules 1991). Roxy verifies this point nicely: “Managers really can’t be hovering over you saying ‘I don’t like the way [you do something].’ It doesn’t really happen like that. You can’t run a restaurant efficiently if they were.”

Several participants acknowledged the existence of service standardization and corporate specifications, but the effects of these practices on servers’ sense of power
appears to be minimal. Often when dealing with customers, servers appear to be empowered to the point of ownership. As Jackson and Morgan explain:

The only thing I have to slip in for the company is suggest certain items that we have on our promotion. I always do that so as long as I suggest those items, I'm doing my part for the company and as for anything else I'm doing for myself.... The way you should look at it, whenever you're serving, is your renting out, kind of like your renting out a little section in the mall to have your business. You got your little business stand up there, and that's the way you should look at it and sell your self. That's basically the way I look at it. I'm not working for [Sunny's Seafood] I'm working for myself. (Jackson)

Be possessive of your tables...This isn't [Silvers Bar and Grill's] table; this is your table. And it's not even the guests' or the customers' table; it is your table. You're the one that's in charge, and you're the one that's gonna control how that experience goes. Don't let the customer take over; don't let the manager take over; you have to take control. I feel like I have the ability to do that. (Morgan)

When a server takes ownership over a specific table, the degree of power that is possible is shocking. The data suggest that servers have a large amount of control over how the restaurant patrons' dining experience unfolds. Contrary to previous research that has suggested that the relationship between tip size and quality of service is much too weak to provide adequate motivation to provide good service (Lynn 2000a; Lynn and Graves 1996), the majority of servers in this study expressed a high level of confidence that their guests would reward them for their hard work. Eight of the respondents explained that if patrons witnessed them working hard in the restaurant as a whole they would be fairly compensated. As illustrated in the following statements:

Let's say I'm busting my ass and the table hardly sees me; but when they do see me, they see my diligence to try to get them something. You know, as hard as a worker as I am, I feel like I get a better tip just because they're like "this guy, you know, maybe he's really trying." (Jack)

Yeah, definitely, because if you're out there working hard people are going to see that, and I think they're more willing to give you more money if they see you're, you know, busy the whole time and not just hanging around doing nothing. (Jane)
I think, if I’m serving a bunch of tables at once and they see that I’m really busy, they are less likely to get upset over a coke that didn’t get refilled. If they can visually see how many tables I’m waiting on, I think, yeah, it helps. (Jackson)

Two other respondents felt that if they worked hard to “turn” their tables they would receive greater economic benefits.

If you work hard, you can turn the tables and get more people and, therefore, you are going to make more money. If you let a table sit there for two hours and you aren’t trying to get them out of there, then you’re not going to make any money. (Ann)

When you’re working really hard and you’re really busy, the harder you work the more you know that you’re going to make money just for the simple fact of the volume, turning tables, the more you’re running. (Nate)

Still others recognized that it was not necessarily hard work in general, for which guests compensated them; it was hard work associated with specific tables:

A lot of times people notice if you go out of your way for a certain table. I mean, they’ll appreciate it and reward you for it. (Rocky)

The harder I work by doing stuff for other people, that’s not going to effect my tips; but likely if I do stuff for other people and it takes away from my tables, then that will effect my tips. So there it is sometimes, the harder you work the less money you make because they see you doing stuff for other people. (Missy)

Like last night I made over a hundred dollars, and I didn’t even really break a sweat. For me I slacked off. I wasn’t running people’s food all night long….I mean all my customers were taken care of, but I didn’t really work hard. I was not tired when I got off work, and I made more money than other nights when I busted my ass. (Lobo)

I think the less work you do, with what your supposed to be doing, like your section and everything, and put more of that emphasis on the actual people, the more you make….The more personable you are to your table, the more money you’re going to make off of them….I love these people that are running around doing their side work, screaming and yelling ’cause they only made thirty bucks, and I haven’t even been in the back yet; I haven’t even looked back there. (Ozzie)

Even those who felt they did not financially benefit when they worked harder expressed an inability to provide satisfactory service to their guests as their rationalization. When
patronage is at its peak a few servers felt that they were overloaded and, therefore, were not able to give their guests adequate attention, causing their tips to decrease. Thus, it appears that, although they do not feel much incentive to work harder for management, they do feel incentive to work hard for the guests. This incentive to work hard for their guests is not surprising when we consider that ultimately it is the guests who provide the overwhelming majority of servers’ economic security (Butler and Skipper 1980; Lynn and Mynier 1993; Wessels 1997).

Despite the sense of general control over the patrons’ dining experience and the sense of financial incentive to work harder for the guests, servers are all too aware of the possibility of being “stiffed.” All of the respondents, while acknowledging that they could perform tasks that would increase the likelihood of receiving an adequate tip, felt some lack of personal power to control the size of the tip that patrons left. The servers themselves verified the vulnerability of their wage security (Butler and Skipper 1980). Four respondents expressed no power at all over the likelihood of a fair postservice-rendered reward. As is seen in the following quotes:

I don’t think I have control over it because you can give just exceptional, unbelievable, service, and that person might have no idea how to tip, and they will still leave you a two dollar tip and still tell you that you are the best server they have ever had. You know, and some people, one person may come in and eat all by themselves and you just kinda stroll by and let them, give them what they need, and they leave you a ten dollar tip. You know it’s a personal decision on how people tip. (Ann)

I mean, I feel like most usually when you go in a restaurant, you are going to tip according to how you usually tip. I mean, if you tip ten percent, then you’re going to tip ten percent. Unless say, just like you have somebody that’s just like really bad server, or, no I don’t think that, no matter how well you serve, some people, most people, they’re not going to tip you any better than they would when they walked in the door. They might tip you worse so I don’t leave it to fate in that way. I mean that tip. I still treat all people the same. You can’t judge them because a lot of times you’re surprised, but I don’t feel I have any control over it,
no. In the other direction I can make it where I don’t get a good tip, but I can’t make it any better, no. (Donna)

I think it’s totally up to them. Some people you can sit there, you know, you can cut up with them the whole time, and everything is great. The food is awesome, but they’re just tightwads so, therefore, they’re only going to leave you your two dollar tip. Then other people they can have a ten dollar bill and leave you an extra ten dollars on top of it just because they know where you’re coming from and they’ve been there done that or they really appreciated their service. So I don’t think you really have any control over it. I think it’s up to the people. (Jane)

The remaining eleven respondents that did express a sense of control regarding the size of tip left by their guests oftentimes did so sarcastically, while making it clear that it was often out of their hands. In the following quotes Jackson, Nate, Lobo, and Rocky capture the wage vulnerability that servers face:

Yeah, I think so in a way. Better service. I mean, you give somebody better service, make them feel like you’re really paying attention to them and you’re really keeping an eye on them doing stuff….I mean sometimes you look at a table and, you know, I’m going to get 10% or less from this table, and there’s really nothing you can do about it. All the good service in the world, just because they don’t know any better. (Nate)

For the most part I think you are in control…[but] there’s always people out there that are just not going to tip….There’s times that I give awesome service, and they leave me not even a full dollar….I think you do control your own destiny as far as how much money you make, but there are also extenuating circumstances that you really have no control over….Like everything from how horrible their service was that last time they came in here, how long it took for their food to come out….There’s some nights where you can be just on it, and you get two dollar tips. Two dollar tips, just two dollar tips. (Lobo)

At times if I’m in a good mood and I feel like talking, I believe that if I carry on a conversation and interact with guests more so than just “How’s your food? Thank you. Have a nice day.” You actually make them feel kind of special, I think you get a better tip. I’d say fifty/fifty because a lot of the time people come in and they don’t want to speak to anybody. They don’t want to see anybody. They don’t want to be talked to. They just want to eat their food and go. That’s kind of one of the fate, I guess. People, they don’t really care about your life or who you are. They don’t want you to know anything about them. They come in in a bad mood; and if they decide a decent tip, well then they do; and if they don’t, well then they don’t, and there is nothing I could have done to change what they left. (Rocky)
I think the more down to earth I am, the better my tips will be most of the time. A good 75 percent I think you can control. Of course, there’s some that are going to leave you the normal two dollars no matter what you do. You can do cartwheels and sing them a song and tell them a joke, dance at their wedding. (Jackson)

In examining whether servers feel a sense of control over the size of tip that they are left, there appears to be a gender effect independent of age. The four respondents in this sample (Jane, Donna, Georgia, and Ann) who expressed no control over tips received were all women. This gender difference could reflect the lack of overall control that females have available to them in the patriarchal society in which they exist. The effect of gender upon sense of control of tip size appears to be offset by either educational attainment or increase in responsibility. Roxy and Missy, who both expressed a degree of control, have both earned a four-year college degree. And, as discussed earlier, Eva periodically takes on managerial responsibilities. Both of these circumstances appear to have the potential to help servers’ overcome feelings of powerlessness.

The powerlessness servers feel in controlling the likelihood of receiving fair tips appears to be caused by the patrons, rather than by any internal facet of the restaurant or its staff. Seven servers attempt to excuse non-tipping patrons for inappropriate tips based on ignorance. Nate, Morgan, Roxy, Jackson, Rocky, Eva and Jack all feel that many times they are unjustly tipped because the patrons do not fully understand the cultural custom of tipping. Servers to some degree attempt to regain some power over the tipping process by being personable and by initiating friendly conversation (Jackson, Roxy, Jane, Rocky, Ann, Ozzie, Eva). Others explained that tips could be increased by paying attention to detail and providing “surprise service” (providing something before the patron asks for it) (Morgan, Nate). When applicable, servers pay particular attention to children (Ken, Georgia, Ozzie) in an attempt to increase their tips. Of course, all
respondents attempt to provide superb service to increase the likelihood that they would be tipped.

The power that servers do have to control and predict the guests’ dining experience as well as their own future economic rewards is largely obtained through their ability to “read” their patrons. Several different explanations of this ability were expressed when the respondents were asked if they feel they have “freedom in how they interact with the guests.”

Usually I can size up a table. If they are from the country, I really lay on my country accent real thick and become this big country boy, and you’re basically acting. Like I said, to be a server you have to be a good bullshitter. And if I make them feel good, if your sitting there drinking, you come in, I make you and your friends laugh, have a good time, you know, I’m gonna get a good tip, you know, basically. (Ken)

[The] flexibility that I talked about earlier. Being able to modify my style to what I think they are looking for....If there’s a couple of women that come in and they’re drinking and having a good time, I don’t mind talking dirty and flirting. If it’s an older couple that looks like they’re out on a nice date, then I’ll say yes sir or yes ma’am, and I’ll be very, very friendly. And those two tables can be sitting right next to each other. I think flexibility and freedom are important because guests expect you to do things, and you should be able to provide that....I like to be able to adapt my level of service to what they want. To be a good server you kind of have to be a chameleon of some sort. (Morgan)

You kind of have to judge tables and know how to treat different tables differently. I could be country. I could be anything you want me to be. I’m like, you have to pretty much be a chameleon to be a server....You have to be kind of ignorant if they want you to be ignorant....You have [to] just kind of feel them out. If they don’t want to talk, then you don’t talk to them. If they want to talk a lot, you know, just please them, and take their order....With black tables I can act black. If people act like uppity, I can be uppity....If you listen to me, if you took a tape recorder around, I wouldn’t sound like the same person at one table sometimes, you know. It just depends on how they act. I can act however they want me to act. (Donna)

Basically you have to be able to know how to read people....You just have to be a people person and be able to know how to read the situation. Like some people you can joke with, and some people you can’t. Some people like sir and ma’am, and other people they might come in all the time, and you know their name. And
you have that freedom. I can usually read them when they are coming in the door, whether it be my table or not, as soon as they sit down. A good indication is, you always greet your table and you’re like “Hi. ‘How are you guys doing today?’ My name’s Roxy, and I’ll be your server.” See if they respond. Some people will say, “I’m doing great. How are you?” And you know that person’s really friendly. Other people will say, if you say “Hi. How are you?” They’ll be like “sweet tea, water.” You know, that table is all business. You’re just going to go “ok, what can I get you?” And you know then you just have to be really efficient and short and to the point, and so you’re like that with them. And then other people come in and they’re lonely, and they want to talk. If some one comes in by themselves, I always start a conversation with them. Usually I either like kneel down at the table or sit in the booth with them and talk to them for a few minutes... because that’s really what they came in for is just some human contact. People who come in with a newspaper just fill up their coffee. They’re eating alone, but they’re ok with it [laugh] (Roxy).

Try to kind of read them, and if I think they kind of want to be left alone, you know, some people are like “just give me my food and leave me alone” whereas some people want you to sit and talk to them....Basically you can tell just by pretty much the first few words you say to them, what eye contact they make with you, or how much they have to say back. If I like bring up a little topical conversation and they just kind of say “yeah” and turn their head and say “I want a damn coke” or something like that, I leave them alone. Whereas if they start talking, it’s pretty easy to start a conversation. You can start a conversation with “It’s a pretty nice day, isn’t it?” (Jackson)

All respondents alluded to or explicitly addressed their ability to “read” their patrons. Morgan and Donna compared themselves with chameleons, a reptile that is continuously adapting to its environment. The ability to “read” patrons can be viewed as a direct indication of their conscious attempt to present themselves in a fashion that they feel will result in a desired reward. As Jack clearly illustrates, “I try to read them...and see what they expect because if I give them what they expect, that’s my tip.” Servers accomplish the desired “presentation of self” through impression management techniques (Goffman 1959) that they learn through socialization while working in the industry. These techniques are oftentimes as basic as recognizing when the patron wishes to talk or be left alone. Impression management techniques can also be much more difficult and
complex, as is the case when servers transform themselves and adopt varying personas that are accompanied with appropriate argot. One might assume that the ability to "read" people is universal among human beings, and to a point perhaps it is. However, several servers suggested that the ability to "read" the guests is, at least in part, a service-specific ability and takes time to master. As Morgan, Lobo and Roxy point out:

I've met a few people that I don't think have the ability to do that [read]. There's a couple of girls there that try to act chipper with everybody, and I think they turn people off because everybody doesn't want chipper. (Morgan)

Like if you've been doing it [serving] long enough. The people that have been doing it [serving] as their career for a while....But like dude there are some servers that are so oblivious to it [reading]. (Lobo)

Some people can't [read] and that's why we have issues in the past where people have gotten in trouble for it because they say inappropriate things. (Roxy)

The process by which servers gain power in their work environment through the ability to "read" restaurant patrons can be examined and understood by acknowledging the human potential to take the role of the other. In its simplicity the idea of "reading" that occurs during interaction between servers and their guests can be understood using Charles Horton Cooley's ([1902] 1964) classic notion of "looking glass" or "reflected self." According to Cooley one's social self is constructed through interaction in a reflected manner. In the construction of a "reflected" or "looking-glass self" individual behavior is shaped through interaction in three distinct elements: (1) the individual imagines what he or she appears to be through the eyes of the other person; (2) then imagines the other's judgment of the imagined appearance; (3) and finally this imagined judgment creates positive or negative feelings causing the individual to adjust his or her behavior accordingly.
Using Cooley’s notion of “looking-glass self” to examine the interaction that occurs between servers and their patrons, one can see the process rather easily. Donna “could be country,” or she “could be anything you want me [her] to be.” Ken further illustrates with the following statement: “you smile, you take their order, you figure out what they like, what they dislike and become that person.” When a server consciously attempts to become anything that the patron wants him or her to be, the “looking-glass self” is in process. The server approaches the patron and initiates conversation. The initial point of contact at the table is usually pretty routine and standardized with slight variation across actors but very little variation within individual actors. As Rocky and Lobo illustrate in the following quotes:

I’ve got my set lingo that I say to every table that I’ve been saying for the past two years, the same, same, same shit. Just the same phrases, “Hey how are you all doing today?” “Hi my name is Rocky. Can I get you some appetizers, cheese stick, chicken fingers?” “Well, how is everything? What would you like to drink?” Just the same phrases….I know they hear the same shit out of my mouth every time. (Rocky)

Every table you go up to, dude, you have to repeat this whole little spiel….so your basically a robot. You know what I mean? There’s only so many ways you can change, you know, change your wording to explain one basic concept that you have to get across. It’s like you can only do it so many ways, and it’s like you say the exact same thing to this table, you say the exact same thing this table. So like in that aspect it is totally monotonous, but, like I said earlier, there’s different tables. Every table is a different experience as far as just what to expect. (Lobo)

It is in the first moments of interaction and oftentimes even before any first verbal dialogue is exchanged that the server begins “reading” the patron. It is in these initial moments, while engaging in interaction with the patron, the server is imagining how she or he appears to the guests. At this point of the interaction an initial “read” has been made and is often enough to provoke a change in the server’s behavior.
I’ve got a pattern. I say almost the same thing to every table until something at the table makes me change that, makes me come out of it. (Morgan)

Servers then imagine what the patron’s judgment is of this appearance and then alter their behavior according to what they imagine the patron wants them to be. If the server imagines that the guests could identify with an African American, the server “becomes black.” If the imagined judgment of the server’s appearance suggests that the guest could relate to a server who was had a rural upbringing, the server becomes “country.”

Servers not only have power and freedom in how they interact with restaurant patrons but the data suggest that they have power over the actual emotional states of the patrons whom they serve. The power to alter patrons’ moods can greatly influence the patrons’ dining experience and hence the success of the restaurant. Seven servers use humor to control the emotional state of their guests over the duration of their time in the restaurant.

Sometimes I just make a joke, and that really helps. I had this really big table one time, and they happen to get me on April Fool’s Day...She wanted a coffee with a lot of cream, a lot of cream. She said it really bitchy. So I went in the back, and we had the little silver creamers that we bring out with the coffee. I filled that up with coffee, and I filled the coffee mug up with cream. And I took it out to her, and she looked at it, and I said “April Fools.” The table loved me from then on, and it’s all about that, just turning it around on them. (Missy)

Like as far as if a guest is rude or something, I’ll know there is a reason why and I just gotta find out that reason and fix it. Just like I had a table the other night, and they came in, and they had been standing out in the lobby so long. And it was just elbow to elbow out there. Well when they got to their table, they were already ready to complain. They were upset. I went up there and knelt down and said, “oh man, I’m so glad you got to a table. It looks like its elbows and buttholes out there.” And they both just busted out laughing. I knew what they was going through so immediately they kinda switched their mind to food and was gonna treat me better and probably leave me a better tip. (Ken)

If you see they’re having a bad day and you joke around with them about it and ask them if they need a shot of tequila or something, they might lighten up a little bit....I would say about 90 percent of the time if your nice to them, it’s hard for
people not to be nice to you back. So if you’re in a good mood, they’re going to be in a good mood. Last night, for example. I had some women, and they were all just sitting around drinking, there were about five different women, and one of the women like, I mean, she drank a lot more than everybody else. She was like “Get me another beer [rude tone],” and I was like, “Long week?” And she was like, “kind of yeah,” and she just kind of laughed about that, and she lightened up a little bit, and the whole mood kind of changed with her. (Jane)

I’ve had lots people come in a really grouchy or bad mood, and I just start joking with them and say, “Ohhhh it’s not that bad. I’ll get you a beer.” Just joking around with them, and by the end of their time they’re smiling, and they’ll thank you. They’re like sorry, you know. I’ve had people come, a guy come up and say, “I’m sorry I was so cranky. I’ve just had a really bad day.” And I’m like, “Oh that’s ok. We all have bad days.” And he’s like, “Thanks for being nice and understanding.” I mean you definitely have the power to change people’s moods for the good and also for the worst like if you’re just inconsiderate. (Roxy)

Like if they’re [guests] down or anything, I’ll try to get them to drink. And you know they’re getting like they’ve been drinking and just say a little crack or just something little just to get them to smirk and laugh. If they’re really in a bad mood, just try to get them to talk about it. Most of the time they actually talk about it and are cool about it. (Ozzie)

Other servers (Ann, Georgia, Jackson, and Jack) successfully impose their own mood onto their guests.

A lot of times people get mad because they have to wait an hour to get a table, and they sit down, and they’re in a grumpy mood. And if you walk up to them and your all excited and happy, then that is going to change their outlook. They are not going to be so grumpy because I am not going to let them be grumpy. I have even told a table that you need to quit being so grouchy and to cheer up [laugh]. It does work, you know. If you can get them to smile, then it turns around their whole attitude about being there. (Ann)

I don’t think that anyone wakes up in the morning wanting to be a bad person, and you just have to be nice and kill them with kindness, and eventually by the end of their meal they will smile. Even if it’s just offering them a to-go drink, you know. It’s that last little run to the kitchen and back. They will say “Thank you” and smile. (Georgia)

Try to turn it around just by being nice or whatever, and most of the time that will work. ‘Cause everybody gets a little irritated and you know most of the time whenever they come off as being rude, they’re not really necessarily a rude person; they were just irritated. Usually you can turn it around for them, and they’ll end up ok by the time they get their food. Ninety percent of the time you
can make them feel better....If somebody gets a little rude, it’s not because they’re rude in general; they’re just irritated. (Jackson)

If I get these people and are just kind of looking at the menu the whole time and they don’t want me to talk to them, sometimes I want to change that. I want to talk to them. I want to get them in that mode of where I’m in. I want to get them in a happy state or something, just because they’re down. (Jack)

In the event that one position within the restaurant, such as the kitchen, breaks down, servers speak of specific tactics they employ in order to minimize the patrons’ frustration while controlling their dining experience. As is exemplified in the following quotations:

If you’re observant, you can tell when things are gonna take a while. You can see a pattern going with your ticket times. You can control your customer’s response to that by taking longer to get their salads out. That might sound backwards, but if you take a little longer to get their salads out, then there’s gonna be less down time between the salads and the meals. And the time between the salads and the meals to me seems to be a bigger issue with the guests. You can also prepare [the guests] for it if they order a well-done steak or if they order our biggest lobster tail. As they order, tell them that it takes a little longer because it’s gotta cook for a long time. I also use a distraction technique. If you go by a table that is still gonna take half an hour from the time it’s ordered to the time the food gets there, if you go by three or four times asking questions, talk to them, it makes their perspective of that time be shorter. Or sometimes even solving a problem efficiently and giving them a sincere apology. Sometimes even if you had problem at a table, you can turn that into a positive experience if you show that you care about how that experience went. (Morgan)

Well, it just really depends on the situation. Like say if they’re mad because their food is taking too long, usually I’ll explain the situation. Usually if you can explain to a guest what’s going on, that’s really all they want. They want to know what is going on; that’s basically it. If you can give them that, then usually that will make them happy. Just kind of be like, “Well, it’s taking so long because of this and this and this,” and then following that you usually want to ice it over with, “Oh, but I just checked on it.” Usually if they know you’re concerned, if you can make them feel like you’re concerned and explain what the problems are, usually that will make them happy. So let’s say their food’s taking long. I can just say, “Well you know it’s Saturday night, and a lot of people came in at the same time as you so a lot of food went back in the kitchen at one time, and they just have a lot of food to prepare.” Then kind of ice it over with, “I was just back there though, and it shouldn’t be more than just two or three minutes.” ’Cause usually by the time they’re irritated enough to say something to you, their food is almost ready. It’s hardly ever going to be more than five minutes from the point that they’re irritated so usually I’ll say I was just back there and it won’t be any more
than a few minutes and they’re happy. They’re smiling. They’re like, “oh, ok.” They’re happy again. They get their food in a few minutes, and it’s like they were never upset. (Jackson)

In my opinion you have to let them know that things are running a little longer than normal, and they expect that longer ticket time. I’d say seven out of ten times when you tell them, it doesn’t happen that way, but they’re already expecting the long ticket time so they’re sitting there chilling. I mean like if you have to ask for, if your running, your kitchen is crashing or it’s not kicking out food the way it should be and you don’t have time to go back there and see what the hell is going on....But you have to anticipate disaster so to speak, and then if they already expect things that are not coming out exactly the way it was the last time they were at [Sunny’s Seafood], then they’re not going to have a problem with it....I mean you just have to be able to please your customers. You have to talk to them. (Eva)

The freedom to interact with the patrons as well as the unique opportunity to shape the patrons’ dining experience affords servers power independent of the actual establishment that employs them. However, it should be understood that, although servers experience a considerable amount of control over the interaction at their tables, the impression management techniques and control moves that extend servers their sense of power are not always successful. As Lobo points out, “Just some people are going to be assholes...no matter what you do.”

All these impression management techniques (Goffman 1959) and control moves (Goffman 1969), which servers employ to control the patrons’ dining experience, are done in hopes that they will be rewarded with an appropriate tip. Each server has a personal investment in the success of these ploys. Each specific restaurant has an investment in its serving staff; and, as an extension of this investment, they to have something to gain from the ploys enacted by their servers. The power that servers speak of in controlling their guests’ dining experience can and should have training implications. Although outside of the scope of the current study, it has previously been
suggested that servers are subject to developmental socialization during the early stages of their serving careers. If the techniques and methods employed to control patrons’ dining experience are better understood and incorporated into restaurant organizations’ training curricula (to the researcher’s knowledge this is not part of the training process), perhaps the transition into serving would be less disconcerting for the server, and fewer errors would be made that are costly to the restaurant.

In evaluating the overall degree to which the servers in this sample experienced feelings of powerlessness, one can see that certain facets of their employment promote power, and others promote powerlessness. On the one hand, servers do not feel that they have the power to change aspects of their employment that they find to be unsatisfactory, nor do they have a genuine sense that their suggestions and concerns are taken to heart by management. However, the powerlessness caused by these facets of employment seems to be mostly negated by servers’ control over the interaction and chain of events that are directly associated with their guests. This conclusion is based on the structural dynamics of serving. For example, the majority of servers’ time spent at work is spent interacting with and providing for the restaurant’s guests. It can, therefore, be deduced that on a daily basis servers suffer from very little interactional powerlessness. This finding does not justify or excuse the lack of power middle management and upper management alike extends to their frontline workers. Perhaps there is much to be learned from the president of Scandinavian Airlines, Jan Carlzon, who tells his managers, “Look, you are not here to dictate to the frontline people. You are here to help them—to support them. And when they come to you for help, you have to listen to them, and not the other way around” (cited in Albrecht 1988b, p. 108). Moreover, Carlzon explains that frontline employees
often have a greater fundamental understanding of the day to day working situations than managers do. In the following section the degree to which servers experience feelings of meaninglessness will be examined.

Meaninglessness

Servers who experience feelings of meaninglessness associated with their employment lack the ability to visualize the possibility that expected, satisfactory, future predictions regarding aspects of their employment will be obtained (Seeman 1959, p. 786). Indicators associated with feelings of importance were used to analyze the degree to which servers suffer from feelings of meaninglessness. Once again the responses varied, but several commonalities regarding feelings of meaninglessness emerged.

All of the respondents indicated that they make significant contributions to the success of the restaurant. Eleven of these respondents expressed the belief that they contribute to the restaurant success by providing good service. For example:

I think I make a more powerful impact than some other people make. I try to give people good service, and I’m nice to people. I try to treat people the way I want to be treated, and I work hard, and I think that is positive. I think that is a good representation. (Nate)

I think I have a big influence especially over a guest’s perception of how the restaurant’s doing, and I’ve almost always felt that strong servers really improve the chance of a restaurant doing well and weak servers can really bring it down. A single bad impression can potentially lose not just that guest but then some of their friends as well. (Morgan)

I feel I do with just good customer service. I believe in the restaurant industry the majority of business is come-back business—people that have been there and know the food’s good and the quality is good and the service is good so they will come back again and again and again. I think that’s one way that every server affects the profitability of the restaurant. (Rocky)

I feel like I really help the restaurant out in any kind of way, but my big contribution is to my customers. I always give every table that I have good
customer service....We have a lot of regulars in there, but I try to keep them coming back just by performing good service. (Jack)

In feeling that they make significant contributions to the success of the restaurant, it appears that servers recognize their importance in the day-to-day operations and, thus, feel that there is a certain amount of meaning in their work. Several of the servers in this sample explicitly stated the importance of their position in obtaining and maintaining repeat patronage. Georgia makes this point very clear as she explains that her primary goal when interacting with the guests is to make sure “that they will come back, even if I don’t wait on them because....they’re not my customers. Who knows in two weeks if they won’t be.” This awareness on the part of restaurant servers is crucial to restaurants’ success, and management should be grateful for this awareness while encouraging all servers to think in this manner. The short- and long-term meaning in performing work tasks, which servers express, however, appears to be accompanied with contradictory effects on servers’ identity and self-concept. When the respondents were asked whether they felt their occupation was important, the majority responded negatively. Even those who did respond positively expressed only qualified importance, such as “without servers how are people going to eat [laugh]” (Ann).

Despite the fact that nine of the servers reported feeling that their occupation is important, only one (Nate) reported feeling important from a societal perspective. To varying degrees, fourteen of the respondents felt that society underappreciated, disrespected, and belittled their importance. For Example:

[People] think it’s someone who is just going to refill their drink and give them their food. [They think] that you’re losers. I mean everybody has that feeling. (Georgia)
Well I think they realize that it is stressful, you know, 'cause it has always been the top five stressful jobs is being a server, but I don't think it is really taken serious because they’re just servers, you know. They could be doing something else. (Missy)

Over all I would guess that that appreciation also depends on where you live, what class of society, but I would say that as a general rule we are under-appreciated rather then fully valued....I think there is a stigma associated to service work....Just from the name of the industry; it's the service industry, which is very close to a servant, which is easily related to a slave. (Morgan)

Some, I mean, I've got customers that respect me, that know that I do a good job, but for the most part no. Like no, I’m their servant, you know what I mean, for that forty five minutes to an hour I’m waiting on them hand and foot. I’m their servant, you know what I mean? Their coming in there for an hour to have somebody wait on them hand and foot. Some people, it honesty gives them a power trip, you know? (Lobo)

Are you respected? I think that would probably be about fifty/fifty. I think a lot of people, I think some people take servers as a joke, like, “Oh what do they do? You know, sit around and try to look cute or whatever. (Jackson)

With some degree of certainty we can assume that even those who did feel that their job was important experienced some degree of meaninglessness as a result of societal sentiments. This perspective can be deduced based on the argument proposed by Skipper and McCaghy (1971) when speaking about deviant or stigmatized occupations.

Individuals’ attitudes about their occupation are bound to be affected by what they believe other people think. This would seem to be especially true if they perceive societal response to be essentially negative (p. 280).

Donna captures the essence of this phenomenon when she expresses her thoughts about how she feels society perceives her.

That’s why I don’t [feel it is an important job] because they always make me feel inferior. I guess that’s what I don’t like about the job. I just always feel like...I’m just a lowly server. That’s how I feel. Even like really poor people. They just don’t know what goes into it....They don’t understand the effort that goes into it. They think anybody can do it because they have never done it. (Donna)

Nate offers a similar description.
You know beyond a year or so from now I don’t really want to be waiting tables any more because it’s not that dignified, really, to be waiting tables. I mean there is not a lot of honor or prestige in waiting tables. I don’t know if it’s just because that’s the way our society put on it. There’s just not a lot of prestige in it, you know. It’s just like, “What do you do?” “I wait tables.” And in a crowd when some-body asks me where I work, I’m not going to be [Silvers Bar and Grill] [emphasized] [laugh], you know, a big thumbs up. It’s just not something I’m really proud of. I would rather be doing something else, something more important. (Nate)

The data suggest that although servers enjoy a degree of meaningfulness in their employment, this meaningfulness is considerably offset by society’s cynicism towards their jobs. This finding is unfortunate and, in part, might explain the high turn over rate among restaurant staff. Several servers expressed the idea that if it were not for the way they are perceived by society, they would continue indefinitely in the industry. For example:

I love what I do. I get to talk to a million people a day. I get to tell my stories all over again to every different table about Tasha [Subject’s daughter] and they all listen and they all laugh....If it wasn’t for the general notion of how people think of servers, you know how they can’t do anything else except take a drink order, I could do it for a long time. (Georgia)

I don’t really like it, but I like it so much. It’s kind of mixed feelings. I wouldn’t mind doing it the rest of my life, but I couldn’t never be real successful doing it. (Jackson)

The comments of these respondents support the findings of previous studies that servers are held in very low esteem in our society (Caplow 1954; Elan 2001; General Social Survey 2001; Hodge, Siegel, and Rossi 1964; Paules 1991; Romm 1989; Sennett and Cobb 1972; Spradley and Mann 1975; Whyte 1946, 1948). It is not surprising that several respondents felt a certain amount of shame about their employment.

I kind of look down on myself a lot of the time just for doing it. Just ‘cause in my own mind it doesn’t seem like a very respectable profession. I don’t really like to tell people what I do. (Rocky)
I just don’t think it is an important job. I don’t feel like I’m contributing anything to society besides paying my taxes. So what? I wait on 300 people, 300 people a week, you know. What have I done for them besides be nice to them? (Donna)

I don’t want my child growing up her whole life saying my mom works at [Sunny’s Seafood], saying my mom’s a server. (Georgia)

Even many of those who used their employment as a means to a greater end beyond monthly financial responsibilities illustrated the societal stigma of being a server. When the respondents were asked what they tell people they do, eight respondents used qualifiers. The most common qualifier used was being a student, which is not surprising when considering that “people’s first question if you’re a server is, ‘Are you in school?’” (Roxy). For example:

I usually say I’m a waiter or a server, but I also qualify that I’m putting myself through school, a little caveat at the end. (Morgan)

I usually tell them that I go to the University. I tell them I do a couple of things. I go to school, I’m a student, and I’m working at [Sunny’s Seafood] and I’m doing an internship at a radio station right now. (Jack)

I tell them I’m a server at [Sunny’s Seafood], and I’ve been there for a year...[and] that I’m a college student and I’m going to school right now. (Jane)

A qualifier to alleviate some of the stigma associated with just serving is often even a step up in the restaurant’s hierarchy, as Jackson points out:

I tell them I’m a bartender at [Sunny’s Seafood]. But, it’s funny you say that because I got to say from the time I first started bartending and I only had one shift bartending and people ask me what I done at [Sunny’s Seafood] and I said I bartended. (Jackson)

For those individuals who do not have a qualifier, the stigma is likely to have more impact, as Roxy explains:

It really matters to people if you’re in school or going to be in school or saving up for school. Like if you’re a server and you’re in school, people don’t really seem
to have an issue with it, but if you’re just a bartender or just a server sometimes people really look down on you. (Roxy)

The degree to which people suffer from meaninglessness provoked by their employment appears to be dependent not only on education but on age as well. Ozzie, Georgia, and Missy point out that public perception of servers differs according to the server’s age.

I think it is ok when you are young but my worst fear is becoming a [name]. Being 42 years old and only worried about how much rum goes into a drink bothers me. And if somebody got the right kind of salad dressing scares the shit out of me. (Georgia)

If I was one of the older people, I think they [society] look at them different, you know. “Why isn’t she doing something else?” (Missy)

People look down on servers like if they’re older and they’re doing it....When you’re in college and you say you’re a server people are like, “Oh that’s cool.” But if you’re out of college, people are like, “Oh, so why you serving?” You know it’s like a server....If you went to school, like me I get it a lot now. I have people ask me, and I’m like no I graduated from college, and they’re like, “And you’re still at [Sunny’s Seafood]? (Ozzie)

During an observation period Jackson explained that older servers do not get any respect, regardless of gender. Jackson elaborated further on how the public views servers and bartenders. He explained that as you get older, the percentage of individuals who respect your employment position decreases from fifty percent to twenty-five percent. This finding would suggest that as servers age, the adverse impact on their sense of self would increase while their sense of meaning in their work role would diminish. During one particular observation session Donna, who is older, disclosed, “I feel like I am above this, not really above, just that there is more to my life than this.” Servers who adopt this perception about their occupation in relation to their self-concept, inevitably must feel some degree of societal stigma of their work. The negative impact that society has on
these servers’ sense of self is unfortunate considering the apparent importance that servers play in contemporary society.

Despite being stigmatized by the general public for their work, servers are afforded a great deal of meaning beyond the specific tasks associated with performing their daily jobs. Fourteen of the fifteen respondents reported that they felt important while at work. Although many reported that their guests enhanced their feelings of importance, the majority also recognized their fellow coworkers as the prominent source that provides meaning in their daily work. When asked if “in general do you feel important at work,” twelve responded positively. As is illustrated in the following quotations:

I have been there for so long so I feel, not that I have seniority, but it makes me feel important when people ask me questions. When the new servers ask my opinion on how they should this or how they should ring something into the computer, that makes me feel important. (Ann)

Probably because I just feel like I know the job inside and out. Being there so long and, you know, a lot of people, a lot of people come ask me what I would do with this, how to do that, and it’s just because I’ve been there so long. (Donna)

In a sense yeah, like I said, I’ve been there for a long time and people ask me how to do things or what to do. They ask me for help and, therefore, I’m a little important sometimes when people ask me questions like that. (Jane)

If you want to talk about importance like who is higher on the totem pole at work, I’m probably higher up there just because now I’ve been there longer than a lot of other people….If you’re always the go to person, they look up to you. They’re asking you questions; they’re coming to you for advice. (Roxy)

Some of the servers (Ann, Donna, Jack, Jane, Roxy) also expressed the sense of importance that they felt was dependent upon the length of time that they have been employed with a particular restaurant. Others (Jackson, Rocky, Ken, Georgia, Missy) expressed a sense of importance based upon the interpersonal relationships they had with
their coworkers. These results, suggest that servers establish a subculture in the course of their work and that this work place social reality counteracts some of the negativity they receive from the larger society. Nine (Eva, Nate, Ann, Georgia, Morgan, Rocky, Jane, Roxy, and Jackson) of the servers spoke of their coworkers as their “family” or their “team.”

In this sense performing work activities with coworkers becomes a major basis for self-identity and self-respect. Results thus suggest that with the help of coworkers, servers recognize their importance to the functioning and the success of the restaurant and to others with whom they accomplish these important tasks, and hence experience a considerable amount of meaning in their work activities. What results suggest is that the stigma that society attaches to serving is displaced at the workplace itself by a work place culture that provides servers with important self-satisfying experiences. Consequently, the use of prestige to infer the effects of work on servers’ sense of self or lower status employees is misplaced.

Self-estrangement

In “self-estrangement” or “self-alienation” the degree to which workers in general and servers in particular experience their work as intrinsically rewarding beyond any monetary or other tangible rewards. As Seeman (1959) points out, “the worker who works merely for his salary, the housewife who cooks simply to get it over with...are instances of self-estrangement (p. 790).” When participants were asked whether they feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of their shift, ten of them responded that they felt no sense of accomplishment beyond that of monetary gain. For example:

A sense that I’ve really made a change in the world or difference in the world, no not really, no. Just financially. (Donna)
When I’m walking out of there with a lot of money, I feel good about it, but I
don’t feel like I’ve accomplished anything. Like I don’t feel like I’ve done any
greater good. That job’s not that important in the whole grand scheme of things.
(Lobo)

If I’ve made good money, I do. I’ve accomplished my goal of being there to pay
my bills. I’ve survived one more day at [Silvers Bar and Grill]. (Rocky)

No. Well unless I make really good money. If I’ve worked a double, the most
I’ve ever made was like two hundred dollars in one day, and you know that’s an
accomplishment. That was my accomplishment. (Jack)

If I’ve made a lot of money, I feel a sense of accomplishment. If I’ve only made
like twenty bucks I’m pretty mad, and I just want to go home. (Jane)

Many of the servers in this sample are not only consistent with a self-estranged worker
“who works merely for his [sic] salary” but also closely resemble “the housewife who
cooks simply to get it over with” (Seeman 1959, p. 790). For example:

Mostly you’re just relieved that it is over. (Roxy)

No, I am just glad to go home [laugh]. I have accomplished the fact that I have
been there and done my job and got through it. I’ll have a goal when I get there
that, be calm about things, because I tend to go off on people sometimes that
irritate me. So I feel accomplishment when I left and I haven’t bit anybody’s
head off. (Ann)

I get to go home. That’s all I’m thinking about. I just want to go home. I just
want to get something to eat. I just want to go home. (Missy)

Sometimes I’m just glad to get out of there, to be honest. Sometimes you just got
to get out of there. (Ken)

Usually I make my money and get the hell out of there as fast and quickly as
possible. (Jack)

Of the respondents who did express a sense of accomplishment beyond monetary gain, all
were certified server trainers (Georgia, Morgan, and Eva). Their feeling of
accomplishment appears to reflect the increase in responsibility they have as well as the
advanced training and commitment to their employment. The lack of accomplishment
that servers feel can be attributed to several factors. On the one hand, restaurant serving is not an occupation in which obvious positive outcomes can be witnessed. Lobo captures the core of this idea in the following statement:

Not a sense of accomplishment as far as like feeling like I got a lot accomplished. Like say when I worked at Books and More. Leaving that day with three thousand cases of books and twenty cases of movies on your truck and when you pull in that night, it’s all off. You know what I mean. That was more rewarding to me to actually see, like doing hay bales too. It’s like you’ve got these huge fucking trailers just full of hay bales that need to go in this shed. It’s like at the end of the night you see the progress that you made, and it’s like at [Silvers Bar and grill] you really don’t see that because stuff you do twenty minutes from now, it’s going to be trashed. (Lobo)

On the other hand, since management appears to shelter their employees from administrative involvement in the restaurant, this restrictive approach might contribute to the servers’ lack of a sense of accomplishment. One suggestion for management that could possibility alleviate a portion of these self-estranging aspects of employment is to alter their managerial style when considering the logistics behind the functioning of the restaurant. Perhaps servers’ sense of accomplishment could be enhanced if management were more open with their serving staff about administrative aspects such as restaurant volume, service quality scores, food and alcohol sales, food cost, etc. If problems of the restaurant such as these were made available to the servers, discussed with them, and they were involved in collective comparisons with competitors, it is possible that the serving staff might thereby gain a greater feeling of collective accomplishment. Once a greater collective awareness exists, it is feasible that servers would in fact gain a greater sense of accomplishment, beyond their own monetary gain (Hodson 2001). Such increased meaning could reinforce the recognition that they must provide good customer service to be monetarily compensated with tips. This point was illustrated by the fact that even
those who reported that their primary goal when interacting with the guests was to make a tip did so by acknowledging the positive correlation between good service and a good tip. As illustrated in the following quotations:

To make it a lasting memory for them...because that means they will come back and that means I will make more money. (Missy)

Making them feel good, 'cause if I make them feel good, they’re going to leave me money. (Ken)

Primary goal is to make them feel like they had good service so they will be more inclined to give me more money. (Nate)

I would say basically your primary goal with any table is to make them happy so you make a good tip. (Roxy)

Despite the overall sense that there is little to accomplish beyond monetary gain and leaving the restaurant as soon as possible, twelve of the fifteen servers in this sample expressed the opinion that they felt a personal connection with the work that they do. This finding might appear to be contrary to their adamant feelings regarding their sense of little or no accomplishment within their work setting. However, when their statements are examined closely several interesting aspects of personal connections into their work emerge. Not intending to take away these servers’ sense of connection to the work that they perform, several explanations regarding the inconsistencies between their sense of accomplishment and sense of connection can be explored. In contrast to the self-enhancing aspects of work in professions such as college teaching, the results suggest that the connection that some servers speak of is more job specific and more temporary in nature. One can see the temporal connection quite clearly in the words of Roxy and Jane, focusing on the phrases that have been italicized.

Right now I guess I do just because I do it pretty much every day. It’s what I’m doing right now, I’ve been doing it for the past year now, so yeah. I mean, yeah, I
guess I do. That’s what I do; that’s my job. I think you have to feel some kind of connection with it. I do feel a sense of connection with it. (Jane)

Yeah sure, it’s pretty much who I am right now; it’s what I do. It’s the only thing I do pretty much. I think your job is always a big part of who you are whether you like it or not just because you spend so many hours of your life there every week that it has to be a big part of who you are. I mean you can’t really detach it. I don’t think anybody can. Even if they have a nine to five job that they hate, they can’t detach it from who you are. You still have to go there every day and do it. So you have deal with it every day whether you like it or not. (Roxy)

Another possible explanation that emerges is that what respondents are really speaking of is a personality artifact of self, rather than a self-actualizing connection as such to their work. The influence that servers’ personalities have on their work is consistent with findings that suggest that the ill effects of emotional intensive labor can be mediated through work activities defined as symbolizing specific skills, rather than personal capability as a whole (Erickson and Wharton 1997; Wharton 1993; Wharton and Erickson 1995). This interpretation can be seen in the words of Georgia, Missy, and Ann as they distinguish their self from their work-like behavioral self. Pay particular attention to the italicized, indecisive phrases with which Georgia and Missy qualify their explanations.

*I don’t know if it is so much a part of me or if I have become so much of it.* Like just last night when me and Jim, Lobo, and Roxy were swimming. I was just cleaning up, and he was like, “Georgia you’re not at work. You don’t have to empty our ashtray. You don’t have to refill all of our drinks with the pitcher. I can do that for myself.” And I’m just like, “Well I’m used to it....” I don’t think it’s so much a part of me, but I mean like my house is spotless, completely spotless because I don’t want someone to walk in and think it’s not clean, you know, like I’m a dirty person. I guess it’s the same way I feel about the restaurant. (Georgia)

*I don’t know if it is part of myself,* but it’s something that I just automatically do when I’m at home. You know, I’ll be getting up to get a drink, “Anybody need anything?” It’s just habit; I don’t think about it. But you know it’s something I used to do as a kid too. I would serve my family. Because I remember my brothers would be playing poker and big family poker games and I would go
around and be filling everybody’s drinks, you know, and it was just something I did automatically. and I like it. (Missy)

Yeah, I do it when I am not at work, you know. When I am at home eating with my family, I am still serving. I feel like that’s just part of me. I am the one that clears the table off. When I am at my grandparents, I will be getting them more to drink. I just feel that is a part of the way I live, a part of who I am. (Ann)

Four of the participants’ (Ozzie, Lobo, Eva, and Donna) responses showed the inconsistencies in their sense of self and the stability of their sense of self. Lobo, Eva, and Donna, in particular, seem to have mastered their ability to engage in “positive self-estrangement,” whereby they successfully make a distinction between their “real self” and their “acting self” while at work (Hochschild 1983).

When I’m off from work,...I’m real laid back. I’m easy come, easy go. But when I’m at work, it’s this [slapping his hands]. I’m not the same person, and I don’t treat customers like I’d normally treat my friends and stuff like that so I think I am a different person. Not a different person but kind of in a way I am. Like I don’t act at work like I do when I am outside of work so I do think I am a different person. (Lobo)

One of my selves [laugh]. Yeah it’s all me. I mean I’m not fake or anything. A lot of times I’m in a bad mood when I get to work, and I can’t show them that so, you know, so maybe that is fake….I always smile no matter what. You know, you can’t go out there and show them if you had a bad day or a rough day....You can’t show them that at all. You always got to be positive. But I don’t think that’s really fake, you know. It’s still me, and I’m like that anyway, whether I’m trying to make money or not. (Donna)

I pretty much act like my self unless I don’t know the people. Then I am going to act like my server self but not necessarily my outside work self. ’Cause you got to be able to read everybody to see how much they can tolerate. (Eva)

Perhaps the only three respondents who really felt a deep connection to the work they perform were Eva, Donna, and Morgan. Eva and Donna have both served over ten years, and they acknowledge that they will most likely continue indefinitely. These responses indicate that servers can potentially have deeper connections with self and work despite engaging in “positive self-estrangement.” Donna illustrates this deeper connection.
It’s part of my life, I mean a personal connection, and it’s my personality. Everybody that I wait on sees my personality. (Donna)

Morgan expresses a deep connection to his work based on his religious faith.

Yes, I do, partially because of my Christian background. I feel a real connection to the job, and I didn’t really make this connection in my head probably 'til about a year ago. But there’s a part in the Bible where Jesus is talking about who it getting into heaven and the scene is him on judgment day talking to everybody in the world and talking about who it getting into heaven. He tells [someone], “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” And he says some other things, too, but I was reading that a year or two ago, and it just kind of struck me that I’d been reading that passage since I was probably four or five years old. I feel like I can put a lot of myself into this position. I feel like I can make a difference and that I can show what’s unique about myself through this job sometimes. (Morgan)

Of course there were several respondents who blatantly conveyed their feeling of a lack of personal connection (Ken, Jack, and Rocky) with the work that they did and two others who were equivocal (Nate and Jackson) about how much of a connection they felt to their work. Considering that those that felt no or little connection were all males, there appears to be a gender effect. This gender effect is most likely embedded in the patriarchal values to which we are all exposed. Due to the increased stigmatization to which males in a female dominated profession may experience, it is not surprising that male servers would be more reluctant to express a deeper and more personal “connection” with their work. While observing at Sunny’s Seafood, Jackson explained that he could not endure much more serving because he was beginning to question his masculinity. Moreover, waitresses’ sense of connection to their work is more consistent with traditional patriarchal defined female roles. It has long been suggested that females are socialized to be more nurturing and caring while males are socialized to be more assertive and dominating; therefore, what better occupation, according the socialization agents by which we are influenced, is there for females than one in which they are
responsible for taking care of others? The deeper connection that many waitresses feel to serving patrons is consistent with research findings that have suggested that females value intrinsic rewards more than their male counterparts (Tolbert and Moen 1998).

In performing the duties associated with serving, nine of the respondents acknowledged that there was a certain amount of acting involved; hence, the existence of emotional labor was apparent. Four of the respondents recognized the emotional-based link between “reading” tables and engaging in a conscious effort to control and/or alter patrons emotional states:

Sometimes you don’t [act like yourself] because sometimes you may [have a table that is all] dressed in Alpha University clothes, and I hate Alpha. I hate U of A [laugh]. I hate it, but if you have that table and they like it, you like it. “Did you see the game?” “It was great.” “I’m really sad to hear about U of A. Aren’t you? What a bummer.” (Missy)

Most of them are rednecks. So when I wait on them, I become an old redneck too. I’m myself back in the alley, cutting up in a cubbyhole with the other servers, but when I hit the floor, my voice deepens a little bit. I try to slink around, but no, I’m not myself. That’s part of my character. I do joke around a lot and cut up; but when I am out there, I am putting on a show. ...With my guest it’s all just a big act being a server. You can go in and smile at someone and make them feel special and don’t even care what they have to say, just a bunch of acting. (Ken)

You have to be somewhat fake. You can’t just come across just as yourself, but you have to put on a little something for them. And I guess maybe if I put on more of a show, I might get better tips, but I don’t want to do that....There has to be some [acting]. If you have a table that’s just some old guy telling some stupid jokes, you have to kind of laugh at them. You can’t just stop and say, “That’s so stupid.” You just got to laugh and go along with it. You just got to act. You have to act like people’s kids are not annoying. You know, you just got to act like you are happy to be there [but] I want to be at least somewhat my self. (Nate)

You can never act like you’re in a bad mood. That’s when you just keep everything to yourself ’cause if you don’t, that it rubs off and that’s bad service. And then you won’t get a good tip....A lot of times [I’ll be] more submissive. Tell people what they want to here. Talk to people about what you think they want to talk about, just general conversation. Nothing just straight individualized or what not. (Rocky)
Other respondents use even more explicit in referring to their acting ability when waiting on tables. For example:

There’s times where you have to kinda put on a fake part of yourself, but if you really are in a terrible mood, you have to just act happy even if you’re not. (Ann)

There’s quite a bit of acting that goes into waiting tables…especially if I’m not that happy that day. I can’t let that show because I’ve seen what you get. You get disastrous results. (Morgan)

Sometimes I don’t [act like myself]. Like if the guests make me feel uncomfortable for some reason, I don’t. It’s hard for me to act like myself because I can never really open up with myself. It’s very hard to be comfortable around some people. I try to keep it inside if I’m in a bad mood. I try to be positive no matter what. Be nice no matter what. (Jack)

I mean sometimes you have to turn yourself down or liven yourself up a little bit, depending on their [the guests] moods. But pretty much I’m myself all the time….If I’m in a bad mood, I’m in a bad mood in the back. It’s all smiles, I mean literally. Go up to them smiling, turn around smiling until you get to the back. I mean, I can turn that on and off pretty easily [laugh]. (Roxy)

**Self-enhancing Acting.** Although all respondents indicated some degree of emotional manipulation, the degree to which servers suffer ill effects from this emotional labor could not be directly determined due to construction of the interview guide.

However, it appears that, contrary to researchers who have found negative consequences of engaging in this type of emotional labor (Albrecht and Zemke 1985; Hochschild 1983; Maslach 1976; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989), the participants in this study seem to be exempt from many of these negative effects. This finding is not to say that the respondents do not suffer emotional effects as a result of performing emotional labor. Twelve of the respondents explained that “acting nice” despite unpleasant guests was like “second nature.” The notion that being nice was like “second nature” was explained in many ways, but Rocky, Roxy, Jack, and Ann illustrate this facet of “acting as second nature” nicely.
Second nature, I’ve been doing it for so long that it’s just not really much effort. It just happens. (Rocky)

I guess I have just done it so long that it just comes natural just to put on a smile. (Ann)

It kind of comes as second nature for me just because like I don’t, you know, people don’t phase me too much. If they’re going to be in a bad mood, that’s their prerogative (Jane)

I’m pretty good at just second nature, turn it on and off or whatever. I can do that, for the most part. (Roxy)

The emotional management that servers speak of appears to take varying forms. On the one hand, some of the servers appear to be engaging in what is referred to as “Deep acting” (Hochschild 1983). Rocky’s, Ann’s, and Nate’s statements above, all of which indicate that “acting” is a learned trait, illustrates what appears to be “deep acting.” Hochschild (1983) explains that in this form of acting the desired emotional response to stimuli is spontaneous rather than forced and self induced. The emotional response, however, is only spontaneous once the actor has socially, or in this case environmentally, learned to produce the desired outward emotional appearance.

The statements of Roxy and Jane appear to be consistent with what Hochschild (1983) calls “surface acting.” When individuals engage in “surface acting,” they consciously change how they outwardly appear, while never really feeling the outwardly displayed emotion. “Surface acting” is demonstrated by Roxy’s ability to “turn it on and off.” Ann also displayed this ability when describing her reaction to guests who do not compensate her. At the table she explains that she’ll say “thank you” in a pleasant voice; but then as she walks away, she admits to silently cursing many guests. The long-term impact that these two forms of acting have on servers could not be determined from the data gathered in this study. This research limitation is largely the case because nearly all
(12 out of 15) participants reported that “being nice” came as “second nature,“ and the researcher did not probe them adequately to elaborate on this aspect of their employment. Respondents, however, did not appear to be estranged from their emotions. In most cases respondents were very aware that their job necessitated pleasant behavior and, therefore, adapted their behavior accordingly, despite the behavior of the patrons. This finding is consistent with the temporal nature of the server’s working-self that was previously discussed.

It appears that the servers in this sample suffer from delimited types of self-estrangement. As discussed earlier, servers find very little accomplishment in their daily tasks beyond that of monetary gain, which indicates that they are self-estranged from the structural facets of their work as a whole. However, it appears that servers who are willing to manipulate their emotional displays based on their desire to secure a tip often gain a sense of connection beyond the structural functioning of the restaurant. While engaging in emotional manipulation servers appear to gain a sense of pride through their ability to distinguish and manipulate their work-self and real-self while performing their job duties. Although this connection appears to be produced through temporary job specific factors and/or individual personality traits, servers nevertheless feel an overall sense of connection to their work alleviating a great deal of the self-estranging effects.

It is worth noting that male servers appear to suffer somewhat more than their female counterparts. When asked what was most rewarding about their employment, all of the males indicated that the money was the most rewarding, while all of the females identified facets of the job such as friendships and ability to interact with many people.
Again, this is not surprising considering research findings that have suggested that females internalize intrinsic rewards more deeply than males (Tolbert and Moen 1998).

**Servers' Perception of Exploitation**

The primary purpose of this portion of the study was to determine the degree to which the servers themselves feel that they are being exploited. As was pointed out in Chapter Two, exploitation occurs whenever more is given of oneself than one gets in return. It is important to note, however, that servers are arguably exploited a great deal simply based on the fact that, although they make good money, their monetary compensation is not proportional to the overall revenue of the restaurant industry.

**Earnings of Servers**

It is unfortunate that the frontline workers who make the organizations functional are not paid wages adequate enough to send children to college or obtain anything that resembles the American dream.

The whole rest of my life depending on somebody else tipping me, how I'm going to raise my daughter. I'll never be able to send her to college [emotional pause] in fourteen years like that, never....Tasha is going to be not going to school. (Georgia)

I wouldn’t mind doing it the rest of my life, but I couldn’t never be real successful doing it unless somehow I saved money and owned my own restaurant of course, but I don’t know how possible that would be. (Jackson)

The servers in this study are paid an hourly wage between $2.13 and $5.00, with $2.13 an hour being the most prevalent. Eva and Jackson both have bartending responsibilities and, therefore, are paid five dollars an hour. Several of the other servers are certified server trainers and, depending on the restaurant, are either paid an inflated wage only when they are training or all the time. Ten of the participants recognized that that their
hourly wage was not adequate compensation for their importance in the restaurants functioning. As exemplified in the following quotations:

No...I mean like I’ve worked two weeks; my paycheck was like $36.00. That’s nothing. I mean it’s not even working a whole night. It would have been more if it wasn’t for insurance, but I have to pay for it. I understand that. That’s not a qualm about paying for insurance; it’s just the point of $2.13 on the average is not ok. (Georgia)

If you just count the $2.13, then not really cause I think I contribute more to the restaurant than that. I also know that $2.13 is set up for that reason because they know that I’m making tips. They know that my income is not what they pay me. My income is what the customers pay me. So I would say in general I think I deserve more than that. (Morgan)

No, cause it’s $2.13 an hour. A lot of other places they get paid minimum wage. See when I’m doing like side duties and stuff, I’m still making $2.00 an hour, and I don’t think that’s right because I’m not making tips then. You know, so, and when I’m cleaning everyone else’s tables and when I’m, you know, checking their side work and when I’m closing the alley, that’s $2.00 an hour, $2.13 an hour. I don’t think it’s fair. (Donna)

Hell no, because all the crap that we put up with and the job that we do, we should at least get minimum wage. I believe even though we do make very good in tips, still a lot of times it’s not worth it. There’s still nights that you go in and don’t make crap. So my hourly wage covers my medical, covers my insurance, and that’s it. I haven’t seen a paycheck since god knows when. (Rocky)

The remaining servers felt that although their “hourly wage isn’t that much, the tips more than make up for it” (Lobo). Feelings of exploitation were really produced by the duties for which servers were responsible beyond waiting on their guests, duties such as the ones often associated with opening and closing shifts. Rocky, Georgia, Ken, Donna, Roxy, and Ozzie explain in the following quotes:

They should definitely pay you at least minimum wage from 10:00 to 11:00 when you open because you’re not serving people and you’re not making tips, but you’re making $2.13 an hour. They should pay you at least minimum wage. And as soon as you’re cut from the floor and doing cleaning stuff like that and you’re not waiting on tables, I think your time should be switched over to a higher pay. (Roxy)
Like openers have to come in; they have to open up at ten. They have to do all this work, cutting up shit, that’s why I won’t work days. I’m not going to cut up lemons for $2.13 an hour; they don’t pay me enough to do that. I think it should be minimum wage, and I think anything past 10:00. When I’m sitting there cleaning and things like that, I think it should be minimum wage. And I don’t think I should have to stay there for an extra hour cleaning up all these tables for $2.13. I think they should change it to minimum wage. (Georgia)

When we’re slow and they come out and say we want you to scrub and clean the walls and this and that, I don’t think that’s fair at all because if were doing that and not serving, then they should pay us $6.50- $7.00 an hour. Even if it is for 45 minutes ‘cause our time is valuable to us too. We wasn’t just hired in to scrub the walls and clean the restaurant like that; we’re to take care of the tables and your guests. We’re not hired laborers for $2.13….That’s not fair at all. I just think that’s slave labor (Ken)

See when I’m doing like side duties and stuff, I’m still making $2.00 an hour, and I don’t think that’s right because I’m not making tips then. When I’m cleaning everyone else’s tables and when I’m checking their side work and when I’m closing the alley, that’s $2.00 an hour, 2.13 an hour. I don’t think it’s fair. (Donna)

No. Because when you open in the morning and you come in at 10:00 and you don’t get on the floor ’till 11:00 and they’re only paying most people $2.13 an hour. You do more work between then, than you do all day. Plus, if it was just serving and that’s all you had to do, then yeah. But you have to go back there and roll all the silverware. You have to put the pans through. You’ve got to do food prep and all that. No, I think everybody should get minimum wage plus servers should get tips. (Ozzie)

Others suggest that feelings of exploitation are dependent upon the long hours and the limited opportunity to wait on tables and make tips. As is illustrated in the following quotations:

No, not at all. It’s really not. And I think it can be ok like on the weekend nights, but they should definitely pay day people more an hour because you don’t make nearly as much money, but you’re there doing just as much work. (Roxy)

On occasion, I mean, it’s fine because there are times where you’re making, you know, ten, fifteen, twenty dollars an hour pretty much. Other times during the day whenever you’re dead and you have like no customers and you’re only making $2.13 an hour, it really blows. (Jane)
There’s sometimes that people go in at lunch, and I don’t work lunches that often any more. But sometimes you go in at lunch, if it is especially slow, and you’re in smoking. I mean, somebody last week said they made $4.00 at lunch ’cause they just came in and there was nothing going on so you hang out for an hour or two. (Morgan)

It was obvious that the servers felt they were victims of exploitation when they were coerced to perform duties beyond that of serving during which they could not maximize earnings. One could argue that these servers are just complaining. One could also propose the argument, “Who wouldn’t want to make more money?” These arguments avoid what is going on in the restaurant industry. The themes in responses suggest several exploitative features of the restaurant industry, especially from the viewpoint of long-term employees. Donna, for example, has been employed with Silvers Bar and Grill for over a decade and yet is paid $2.13 an hour. Donna expresses her frustration:

I think we should get a raise every so often just because, you know, I’ve been there ten years, and you’ve been there three months, we make the same thing. I just think every so often you should get a raise according to your work performance and how long you’ve been there. Even if it’s a quarter, so it’s a quarter. Nobody gets raises there. (Donna)

In general servers had really reasonable suggestions for changing their compensation. Ann, Nate, Jackson, and Eva (Jackson and Eva both make $5.00 an hour) even felt the current arrangement was fair when tips were taken into account. Others requested only humble pay increases, as Morgan, Lobo, Rocky, and Jack illustrate:

I think if I was just making enough to cover my taxes off my tips and my insurance, that probably be adequate to me. That would probably be around four dollars an hour. It doesn’t sound like much, but it would make a big difference. (Morgan)

Shit, they gave me fifty. Like if I got paid $3.50 an hour, you know, that’s an extra 15 or 20 bucks on your paycheck. You know, it doesn’t seem like much, but, you know, every little bit helps. (Lobo)
Minimum wage, maybe $5.25, maybe even just $4.00 an hour. That would compensate people for their time, and if they didn’t quite make what they should have on a given night, I mean, at least at the end of the week, I mean, most people would at least get some sort of pay check. Something more than maybe five, ten bucks. (Rocky)

I feel like if they could make the hours consist of, the hour that you don’t have tables is like the hour that you should be paid at least minimum wage. Like if you get there at ten o’clock and the restaurant opens up at eleven o’clock, that hour that you’re there from ten o’clock to eleven o’clock you should get at least the minimum wage. Then the hour that you start serving maybe you can make it $2.13 because you’re going to be making tips too. I feel like that would be more fair. (Jack)

The data suggest that servers, while they recognize that they are being exploited, feel there are very few alternative occupations in which they can make the same amount of money without at least a college degree. In making this rationalization ten of the servers in this study felt that overall their pay was fair. For example:

It’s good money for what I do because, outside of a professional job, it’s the best money you can make for this area for the work that’s in it. (Donna)

It’s not like I have a ten year degree in college, and it’s not like I’m out busting my back, and on the other hand I do make enough money where I do pay all my bills really well and have plenty of spending money (Jackson)

Finding that overall servers feel they are fairly monetarily compensated does not erase the fact that they still feel exploited. The aspects of servers’ work that induce feelings of exploitation appear to be tasks specific things beyond waiting on tables. Thus, there appears to be limited exploitation based on the structure of the work itself. A great deal of this exploitation could rather easily be eliminated if the industry were willing to take even slight pay cuts at the corporation level. At minimum the pay structure could be reevaluated and altered to compensate the serving staff when the guests are not compensating them. Ehrenreich (2001) recently illustrated the struggles that individuals
face when trying to make ends meet in minimum wage, working-class occupations in her book, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. Therefore, it is not an unreasonable request that servers get paid $4.00 an hour, at minimum.

**Self-Reported Job Satisfaction**

After examining the degree to which servers experience powerlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement, and exploitation, several conclusions can be reached as to how these subjective experiences influence self-reported job satisfaction. In keeping with Locke’s (1976) definition that job satisfaction results when one experiences “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1300), restaurant servers appear to enjoy specific aspects of their employment. These aspects will be discussed in the following section.

**Servers’ Search for Satisfaction**

Overall, the data show that servers enjoy at least some degree of job satisfaction despite the potentially alienating and exploitative challenges they face. Five of the servers (Missy, Jane, Rocky, Nate, and Ken) expressed the opinion that they were happy with their employment as servers “right now.” For example:

I feel like I could do something else as far as later on down the line when I get older. I know I won’t be able to keep it up forever. I’m just satisfied for now. (Ken)

I’m satisfied for right now in my life. I mean it’s a good occupation to be in school and to be able to work and actually get out there and make some money and still be able to do everything as far as school goes. (Nate)

It’s tolerable; the money is ok. It’s good for right now. (Rocky)

I enjoy going to work most of the time. I mean, it’s a good job for me to have right now. I wouldn’t ever go back to retail like in the mall or anything. Right now, I mean, I enjoy it. It’s a good job to have. (Jane)
In being satisfied “right now” the servers are conscious of the fact that they will not remain in the restaurant industry for any considerable length of time. In part, this attitude most likely occurs because of the social stigmatization and lack of overall opportunity for economic advancement in the restaurant that has previously been discussed. Seven (Missy, Nate, Morgan, Jack, Jane, Roxy, and Ozzie) of the respondents had definite alternative career goals associated with their college emphases and were using their employment as a means to accomplish these goals. As Nate points out above, serving is “a good occupation to be in while in school.” Four other respondents (Ann, Georgia, Lobo, and Rocky) acknowledged that they did not intend to work in the food industry for the rest of their lives. Donna and Jackson, with some reservation, explained that they would most likely remain in the restaurant industry but felt that there should be more to their lives. Eva was the only respondent in this sample that expressed both a willingness and desire to remain in the food industry. The satisfaction that servers find in their employment can be classified into three areas of their work. As would be expected, one of the major contributing factors of job satisfaction was the opportunity for “substantial” monetary gain over a short period of time. While working for only monetary gain does induce feelings of self-estrangement, it provides servers with extrinsic satisfaction, and “it pays the bills (Jack)” (Herzberg 1966).

A measure of personal satisfaction is also produced through both temporary and long lasting interpersonal relationships that servers develop within their work setting. Positive relationships with coworkers were found to be the second biggest contributor to job satisfaction behind monetary gain. As illustrated in the following quotes:
I like working with the people that I work with. They’re different than I am, but we all get along….We all [serving staff] kind of seem like a family in a way so I think that’s real beneficial and the part that I really enjoy. (Jane)

My coworkers are a lot of the reason why I go to work. You can feel like you can actually help other people out that you work with a lot of the times. They make it fun, make it tolerable. (Rocky)

I have been there a little over a year, and probably my best friends are the people I work with. I can talk to them about anything. It’s a pretty steady group of people. Not many people are quitting and leaving all the time. (Ann)

Even the ones [coworkers] who have the personality that I wouldn’t pick, I at least have some kind of interaction with them that I enjoy, and over all I really enjoy it. I’ve met a couple of people there that, when they are in my section, it just makes my night. There are a lot of people there that I wish I had more time to actually hang out and be friends with, but yeah that’s one of my favorite parts of the job. (Morgan)

I really enjoy most of the people that I work with, and we are all best friends, and I’d say we’re all really good friends pretty much for the most part. I mean we really watch each other’s backs. (Roxy)

Just as servers can be a source of satisfaction and enjoyment for each other, there is some evidence that such relationships can yield problems as well. Five servers suggested or stated explicitly that their satisfaction on a daily basis is largely dependent upon the disposition of their coworkers.

The people you work with. A lot of them are negative….If you put someone like really positive, around people that aren’t so positive, you’re going to pick up people’s negativity. (Jack)

Their negative energy is bound to come off on you in some way….Like I said, when there is all those people back there bitching and moaning, it’s hard to stay up….When I can come in there and be in a really good mood, and the minute you walk in there, people are screaming and you know fussing and you can get in an argument five times before you go out on the floor, and you just walked in. Those days I don’t enjoy. (Donna)

I’ve worked with people before that go to work and can find no positive thing about work. They’re just complaining and bitching and griping about everything, and I mean it makes, not only does it make them miserable but I makes everybody that has to work with them miserable. (Nate)
This finding makes it all the more important that management makes a conscious effort to provide a positive working environment. During the hiring process management should also be conscious of the influence that servers have on one another. If negativity is sensed, it obviously would be in the best interest of the restaurant to avoid hiring that individual. If servers work in a positive environment, it appears that their coworkers are a source of pleasure and ultimately enhances their level of satisfaction. This source of satisfaction is consistent with other studies of the importance of interpersonal relationship in work satisfaction (Fantasia 1989). The final source of satisfaction that the servers identified was the temporal interaction with the patrons they serve. Jackson, Rocky, Donna, Nate, and Georgia illustrate this source of satisfaction in the following statements:

The guests are the best part of the job. Not the management, not the friends because if they are true friends, they’ll still be there if I don’t talk to them for three hours or six hours at work. But, yeah, the guest are what, what makes it. (Georgia)

Sometimes it’s really cool. Some people are really cool....I mean, yeah, sometimes it’s cool hanging out talking with people. You can meet people waiting on tables. It’s kind of like if they’re cool, you end up talking to them and stuff and hanging out with them for an hour or however long they’re going to be there. I’ve met some cool people waiting on tables. (Nate)

Getting to meet all different types of people and talking to them. People that when they first come in they won’t talk to you and then...by the end of their meal they’re leaving and they’re making jokes with me and stuff like that....I’m a people person. I just like finding out about them. (Donna)

[Interacting with the guests) makes our job fun. You get to meet a lot of interesting people. A lot of different opinions and it’s kind of a cool part of the job. Just the meeting new people, and I always like to hear stories about where people have been and what they have done and where they have traveled and where they have lived. It just makes for interesting topics I guess. It makes the day go by faster. (Rocky)
I really like interacting with guests that I know and have seen before. It’s a lot better because you feel like you can actually, it’s not so much like you’re working. It’s almost like you’re kind of just having a conversation out somewhere. Some guests I can even talk about my problems. (Jackson)

The data suggest that interacting with the restaurants’ patrons, camaraderie with coworkers, and financial gain all interact with one another to yield job satisfaction. All of the respondents felt at minimum that these facets of the job made it, as Rocky puts it, “tolerable.” Although most of the servers felt that the positive aspects of their job outweighed the negative aspects, it is worth spending some time on the facets of serving that are dissatisfying. One recurring area of concern is the existence of preferential treatment on the part of management. Five respondents point out the inconsistencies in management/employee treatment. It is interesting to note that the five respondents (Lobo, Jack, Roxy, Jane, and Ozzie) are all employed at Sunny’s Seafood, which causes a degree of distress in this specific restaurant. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that favoritism is a prevalent problem in the entire restaurant industry.

I feel like there’s a lot of favoritism there, favoritism toward employees….It doesn’t matter how much I work; it’s still not going to impress them because they’re only going to see things their way, and there is favoritism in the way they see things. (Jack)

A lot of them are not very consistent on their actions and their behavior towards employees, I think they have a lot of favoritism toward certain people. (Jane)

It really annoys me because it’s so obvious, and it really affects everybody. And when they show it, or show their disfavoritism to certain people, it really makes it a miserable place to work there because then there’s arguments in the back and everything like that and people slamming stuff. And it’s just not a fun place to work then. (Roxy)

Management is definitely the most unprofessional. If you’re going to be favorites, give favoritism to everybody or nobody. (Ozzie)
Another area of concern is a lack of positive recognition. As Ann, Donna, Rocky, and Ozzie illustrate:

Like if a guest compliments you to a manager, then a manager will come up and say, "Oh good. This guest just walked out the door and stopped me and told me that you were a great server." You know, and they will recognize you for that, but most you don't get recognized for anything you do. (Ann)

When somebody compliments us or something like a guest on the way out, it would be nice if they told us. If they walk by and think we are doing a good job or like with add ons or you know, just whenever, just little things....I'd like it to be a more friendly place to work and get treated better. (Donna)

Try to, honestly, try to compliment people every once in awhile instead of criticizing all the time. It helps people do their job better and makes people feel better instead of just getting criticized for every little thing that you do wrong. People should try to play on the good plus of a person's work instead of just all the negative parts of it. (Rocky)

If you get more positive input, then it makes you work more. I know like even if my dad would say something positive, you take like three positive and put one negative in there, I'm still going to be happy that at least I did this right. But if you put all negative, it just makes you feel like you're not accomplishing anything....They definitely need more positive. Most of them are negative. (Ozzie)

Shit, I don't know, maybe, you know, give some gratitude toward the servers because a lot of them are in need of a pat on the back. Or even just saying, "Hey you've done a good job," rather than being called out when you do a bad job, or you get secret shopped and it comes back bad. [Secret shopping is the process that servers are secretly evaluated by an individual who is disguised as a restaurant patron.] (Eva)

Still others just wish that management would be more attentive to their ideas and concerns. For example:

I'd like them to be a little more laid back and trust us a lot more....We know what we are doing and sometimes they like doubt us....We're the ones that are out there most of the time....I just wish they'd listen to us a little bit more than they do. (Jane)

I wish at times that they would actually listen to us and value our opinions and actually try to work with us instead of more so against us. I believe that it could
help the restaurant run better as a whole if everybody could just work together instead of sort of segregated, like management and then employees. (Rocky)

I would like to have them ask for suggestions about changes in the restaurant and have an open exchange of ideas on how to improve our work experience there. I feel like a lot of times they have instituted change in the way that things are run, that they’ve done it without asking. It seems like they come to a unilateral decision; they’ve decided that this is the way it would be best for the restaurant to run without asking the people who actually have to do the work. So I think that line of communication ought to be opened up a little bit. (Morgan)

A final recurring source of dissatisfaction and frustration appears to be hiring and reprimanding practices. When the participants were asked what they would like to see management do differently, seven respondents expressed a great deal of frustration about working with “lazy” coworkers and not seeing management sufficiently sanction them.

I’d like to see management follow through. Say they’re going to write you up or if somebody is late and they keep on being late, just write them up. You know not just threatening them. (Ken)

I would change the hiring process a little bit. I think I would be a little bit more picky with my staff decisions. I know they’re in tight situations; a lot of times they’re short staffed, and they just have to take anybody they can get, but I think that hurts you in the long run. (Morgan)

I’d like to see management make people do their work….Don’t let people get away with things they get away with. I think those should be the people that should get fired. People that come in late, the people that don’t do their stuff, you know, on a regular basis. (Donna)

First and foremost I’d like to see them reprimanding the people that don’t do their job. Like people that are always calling out, people that are not prebussing their tables, not giving good customer service. You need to scare them a little, dude. You need to make them think that if they don’t stop screwing up, that it is going to mean their job. That’s the only way you can get people to, you know, it’s a bad way to motivate, people but it works. (Lobo)

They’re really bad at hiring people that would be worth a damn. I mean they hire some people that you can just tell from the first day that they’re completely useless in the kitchen or as a server. They’re really not choosy enough. (Roxy)
The areas of dissatisfaction that the servers have raised are all problems that could be rectified with very little effort. They have more to do with treating workers with dignity and respect that have been linked to greater worker loyalty (Hodson 2001). It is not unreasonable to desire more power in making decisions that affect your work role. It is also not unreasonable to desire equal treatment among one’s coworkers, nor is it asking too much to alter the hiring and reprimanding policies to insure that all are carrying their fair weight. The possibility that these areas of concern could be positively changed is reassuring. However, if management does not adequately listen to their servers’ concerns and suggestions, it is likely that the issues that have been raised will continue to be unnoticed and the status quo will remain. Overall, the results of this research show that job satisfaction is contingent upon relationships that are dignified rather than upon the fulfillment of the essential societal means of serving.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of the present research was to investigate the subjective working experiences of individuals employed as waitresses and waiters within the restaurant industry. Of specific concern was the degree to which these individuals felt power, meaning, self-connectedness, and fairly compensated in their employment environment. Using conflict theory as a theoretical foundation the research has demonstrated that there is a notable level of discord between the subordinate servers and the superordinate middle managers and corporate executives. Rather than any job specific tasks that are associated with waiting on dining guests, as has been shown, it is this antagonistic relationship between servers and middle/upper management that is the source of servers’ feelings of alienation and exploitation in the work setting.

The sample was selected from two local Southeast restaurant corporations that varied from one another in socioeconomic statuses in order to explore any possible SES affects. Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the small sample size (n=15), the findings can not be confidently generalized across time and space. The primary purpose was to uncover servers’ employment experience based on their perception, which this research has done. Beyond this study’s obvious limitations, a note worthy insight has been gained into the working life world of servers.

This study did not uncover any SES effects, but several commonalties regarding
aspects of their work did emerge. Although it is difficult to qualitatively determine the
degree to which servers suffer from feelings of powerlessness, this study has suggested
several specific facets of serving that do provoke powerlessness and several facets that
mediate these feelings. Servers expressed little power in changing aspects of their
employment that they felt were unsatisfactory. Despite their willingness to approach
management with suggestions or concerns, the data show that management is not very
receptive to these suggestions and concerns. Management does, however, give servers
the power to solve problems with their guests. This freedom, coupled with servers’
ability to “read” their patrons and manipulate their dining experience, appears to
counteract a great deal of the powerlessness associated with the structural features of the
restaurant’s operations. When “reading” the guests is accompanied by the use of
impression management (Goffman 1959) techniques, the servers explain that they are
able to achieve a high level of power with their guests despite their acknowledged wage
vulnerability.

When examining meaningfulness among servers, this study has found that the
greatest and most influential source of these feelings is provoked by social sentiments.
Although the servers obtained some sense of meaning through interpersonal interaction
with their coworkers, that alone does not appear to overcome the negativity that they
receive from the general public. As individuals age and are no longer employed as
servers for educational purposes, stigmatization appears to increase. While actually in
the work setting, however, servers do regain a significant amount of meaning through
coworker support and awareness of their specific function to the restaurant’s operations.
What is most disconcerting about these findings is that many of the servers expressed a
level of shame or embarrassment about their employment. One can only assume, while it can not adequately be determined from the current research, that this sense of occupational shame has an impact on these individuals' wellbeing and sense of worth. Yet this study has demonstrated that self-worth remains to some extent unaffected by the “acting-self” of servers.

This research has also determined that restaurant servers become self-estranged in their work setting. The data suggest that servers experience very little intrinsic meaning in their work. This lack of intrinsic meaning is especially true among waiters. The primary driving force behind the servers’ occupation is to make money and leave as quickly as possible after their shift has ended. Increased job responsibility such as being a trainer or a bartender appears to mediate self-estrangement to a degree. In addition, consistent with cultural values, waitresses appear to be less affected by self-estrangement than their male coworkers. Findings suggest that, although they report feeling that they are connected to their work, it appears that this connection is a personality characteristic or is superficial and temporal at best. This surface sense of connection is indicated by servers’ ability to “act” while interacting with their guests. In acting servers are engaging in the manipulation of their own emotions but seem do to so with few ill effects.

In addition to suffering from a significant amount of meaninglessness and self-estrangement, servers also indicate that they oftentimes feel exploited while at work. Feelings of exploitation are most often created through management’s expectation that they perform duties beyond those associated with taking care of the guests. These duties include such responsibilities as side work, cleaning, and food preparation. While they perform these duties, they are receiving a financial compensation of $2.13 an hour.
Feelings of exploitation are exacerbated because servers do not anticipate the possibility of receiving pay raises. The servers rationalized working in an exploiting occupation based on limited opportunities by considering their education and skill levels. Thus, feelings of exploitation were dependent upon job specific task and management policies, rather than anything inherent in the nature of the work itself.

When the various forms of alienation and exploitation are evaluated in terms of their moderating effects on self-reported job satisfaction, no firm conclusions can be reached. The data suggest that despite some degree of meaningfulness, self-estrangement, and exploitation, servers report surprisingly high levels of job satisfaction. This satisfaction is largely explained by the same employment factor that mediates self-estrangement, financial gain. Beyond the contribution money makes to job satisfaction, servers report their fellow coworkers and their guests as being significant sources of pleasure. This research suggests that satisfaction could be enhanced if management would give their employees more adulation, listen to their ideas and concerns regarding the restaurant’s operations, and be more selective in their hiring practices to eliminate employees who are “lazy” or incompetent (Hodson 2001). If these types of workers are already currently employed, the servers point out the necessity to be consistent and firm in their reprimanding techniques.

This research has been exploratory and descriptive in nature; therefore, findings should be interpreted as suggestive, rather, than conclusive. It has added to the comparatively small amount of literature on service work in general and has specifically added to the literature on restaurant servers, who are arguably the most prominent and
least studied occupation. The findings of this research should provide a starting point for much needed research in this area.

Future research should continue to explore the areas of concern that have been raised here. The only way to identify and thus address areas that create antagonistic feelings toward work among restaurant servers is to place continued research emphasis in this area. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the interactional effects of age and gender on perceived alienation and exploitation as well. While this research has found no qualitatively significant SES effect, future research should explore the effects when polar socioeconomic establishments are examined. The working experiences of servers who are of different races and ethnicities must also be examined. Finally more “test restaurants” with managerial staff willing to work with researchers are needed to evaluate various alternative techniques to enhance the overall working experience of servers.

The findings of this study and future studies can potentially have considerable implications regarding the functioning and managing of restaurants and their employees. Many servers recognize the importance of repeat patronage and also recognize their role in obtaining and maintaining these patrons. It is, therefore, possible that, if given more respect and a more active role in the administrative end of the business, servers would stay with the same restaurant for longer periods of time and, thus, would have more time to attract a steady, repeat clientele. Another possible and related suggestion is to increase the hourly pay rate of servers. This increase in wages would not have to increase the price of food, as has been argued, but rather could potentially increase the revenue of the restaurant while maintaining or even lowering the current prices. Servers know that they can go to virtually any restaurant and be hired at a comparable wage. If, however, they
worked at a restaurant that awarded performance-based raises, they most likely would think twice about making any transition, especially once they have worked their way up the pay scale. This opportunity for advancement would certainly increase servers' loyalty to both the restaurant and its management, and this loyalty would certainly be extended to the guests.

In conducting future research in this area there are several things that can be learned from this researcher's experience. While performing the observation portion of data collection, despite a conscious effort, the researcher encountered difficulty distinguishing between research and patron roles. It is possible that some form of completely unobtrusive research role such as analysis of VHS recordings would be beneficial. The researcher also had a difficult time arranging and obtaining interviews due to the length of the data collection instrument used. The servers in this study have very colorful lives; and they expressed countless concerns, ideas, and opinions, but one phrase I never heard was "I have a lot of spare time." Servers, for the most part, are very busy; and when busy schedules are coupled with unpredictable schedules, arranging time to be interviewed becomes problematic. Although the detail and depth of data obtained is substantial in the current study, it would possibly be more beneficial if future research were focused more narrowly. Having a narrower aspect of investigation would necessitate a data gathering instrument that is efficient and precise.

In conclusion, this research has just scratched the surface of the working experiences of restaurant servers and illustrated the need to continue research in this area. The findings of this research and future research will be of interest to a wide range of professionals both inside and outside the restaurant industry. It appears that individuals
who have the opportunity and authority to make positive changes in servers’ working experience are the ones least likely to read the emerging literature in this area. In this sense there is an increasing need to verbally extend research findings to anyone in the restaurant industry who will listen.
APPENDIX A

Western Kentucky University 2002
------------------------Respondent Consent Form------------------------

The purpose of this study is to examine the working experience of restaurant servers in an attempt to gain an increased understanding of this vital population. Zachary W. Brewster is conducting this study. The study being done is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Sociology. This interview will take approximately one and one-half hours of your time.

The following issues will be addressed during an audiotaped interview:

- Demographics
- Your employment history
- Your current employment
- General working experiences

I understand the following aspects as they pertain to this interview.

- I understand that my participation in this research is completely voluntary.
- I understand that I may withdraw my participation from this interview at any time.
- I understand that this interview will take approximately 1.5 hours of my time to complete.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any question during the interview, including those that are personal/sensitive in nature and/or those that ask you to identify illegal behavior.
- I understand that at any time during this interview I may stop the interviewer to ask any questions that I might have regarding this study.
- I understand that my identity will remain confidential; any identifying characteristics including my name and location will be replaced with pseudonyms in the final report.
- I understand that the information that I provide in this interview will not be shared with anyone at the restaurant where I am employed.
- I understand that only those involved in the research project will listen to the tape of this interview.
- I understand that there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study; but if I do experience any negative consequences, I will contact the researcher or thesis chair immediately.
• I understand that the researcher, Zachary W. Brewster, may contact me if there are any follow up questions that are pertinent to the research in which I have agreed to participate.

• By agreeing to participate in this research study I am granting the researcher the right to use any information obtained for final analysis and for future research endeavors. I understand that direct quotations and paraphrasing of my words, excluding my name and specific information that could identify me, may be used in completing the researcher’s master’s thesis or for future publication purposes.

• I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

• I have a clear understanding of the fact that this interview will be audiotape recorded and that tapes will be placed in a secure location once transcribed.

• The researcher has explained to me what this interviewing process entails, and I agree to participate based on the information I have been provided.

You can obtain additional information by contacting Zachary W. Brewster at (270) 842-9385 or via e-mail at brewszw@wku.edu. Additional information can also be obtained by contacting Dr. Groce or Dr. Myers. Dr. Groce can be reached at (270) 745-3759 or via e-mail at Steve.groce@wku.edu. Dr. Myers can be reached at (270) 745-46-52 or via e-mail at Phillip.Myers@wku.edu. Dr. Groce is the researcher’s thesis chair, and Dr. Myers is Director of Sponsored Programs and Human Protections Administrator.

RESPONDENT’S NAME

RESPONDENT’S SIGNATURE

RESEARCHER’S SIGNATURE

DATE  

APPENDIX B

Western Kentucky University 2002
-------------------Management Consent Form----------------

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree Master of Arts I will be conducting a master's thesis on restaurant servers. Using both overt non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews as a means of data collection, the proposed research will examine the subjective experience of restaurant servers. More specifically, I will be examining the extent to which servers feel connected with their work and the degree to which they feel that they are compensated for the work that they conduct. From this information I will explore the moderating effects that servers’ subjective feelings have on overall job satisfaction.

In order to conduct this study I am seeking the cooperation of you and your restaurant. I will be conducting unobtrusive observation within the dining room area and the bar area. These observations will focus on the interaction between the servers and their patrons. To a lesser extent the observations will examine server/server and server/management interaction. Observations will be conducted during the evening hours of the week, but I will not prohibit paying patrons from being seated; therefore, observations will be conducted when there is no wait to be seated. Approximately 15 hours of observations will be conducted in this restaurant.

I also will be using your restaurant to recruit participants to be interviewed. The interviews will be arranged with the server and conducted during non-working hours at an unspecified location. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. In these transcriptions the name of your restaurant and the interviewee’s name as well as any specific information that could identify the restaurant or the interviewee will be altered. The same measures to maintain confidentiality will be taken when expanding, my field notes derived from the observation periods. After these field notes are expanded they will be stored in a secure location. All data will be secured in a locked location in the sociology department for three years after the project has ended.

• I have read the above information regarding this research, and I agree to allow the researcher, Zachary W. Brewster, to conduct observations and recruit interviewees from within this restaurant establishment.

Print Name

Job Title

Name of Restaurant
Signature

Date

Researcher’s Signature

Date

You can obtain additional information by contacting Zachary W. Brewster at (270) 842-9385 or via e-mail at brewszw@wku.edu. Additional information can also be obtained by contacting Dr. Groce or Dr. Myers. Dr. Groce can be reached at (270) 745-3759 or via e-mail at Steve.groce@wku.edu. Dr. Myers can be reached at (270) 745-4652 or via e-mail at Phillip.Myers@wku.edu. Dr. Groce is the researcher’s thesis chair, and Dr. Myers is Director of Sponsored Programs and Human Protections Administrator.
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Pseudonym ____________

Race ____________

Gender ____________

Age ____________

Demographics

1. How long have you worked in this city?
1b. How long have you lived in this city?

2. What is the highest educational level obtained?

3. What is your family income per year?

4. Are you married? If yes, how long have you been married? How many different people have you been married to?

5. If you are not married, have you ever been married? If so, how long have you been divorced?

6. Do you have any children? If yes, how many do you have? How old are they? Do they live with you?

Parents’ work history

7. Are your parents living?

8. What was your family income while you were growing up? Estimate to the best of your ability. How did you feel about the standard of living your family income afforded.

9. What is/was your father’s educational background?

10. What is/was your mother’s educational background?

11. What did your father figure do for employment? How did you feel about his employment? Explain. Did he seem to like his job? Why or why not?
12. How many hours per week did your father work? How did you feel about the amount of time your father spent at work?

13. What did your mother do for employment? How did you feel about her employment? Explain. Did she seem to like her job? Why or why not?

14. How many hours per week did your mother work? How did you feel about the amount of time your mother spent at work?

**Participant restaurant work history**

15. What was your first restaurant job? What was your position? How did you feel about this job? How old were you? Explain the circumstances that led you to get this job.

16. Explain what your first job entailed? What was your position in the restaurant? How long did or do you plan on working in this position? What primarily motivated you to take this job in the restaurant? Explain.

17. How much did you get paid for doing this job? Do you feel that what you earned was fair? Why or why not?

18. With approximately how many different restaurants have you been employed? What different positions have you held within the restaurant industry? Briefly explain the circumstances leading you to leave one restaurant for another?

19. At what restaurant did you make the most money? If different from your current job, why did you leave this job? Explain the circumstances that surrounded the ending of this job?

20. What restaurant did you enjoy working for the most? Explain what you liked about this restaurant? What was your position at this restaurant?

21. What restaurant did you least enjoy working at? Explain why you disliked this job?

22. At any time during your work history have you wished you could be doing a different kind of work? Explain why.

**Current employment**

23. How long have you been a server? How long have you served here? Besides serving what does your job entail? Can you estimate the amount of money you make per month working here? What is your hourly pay rate? How much do you make in tips on the average shift?

23.5 How do you feel about your success in this job thus far? Explain. Why do you feel this way?

Indicators of Powerlessness

24. Do you feel you have the power to change aspects of your employment that you feel are unsatisfactory? Why or Why not? Explain.

25. Do you feel you have a great deal of freedom in performing the daily task involved in being a server, or do you feel you are oftentimes pushed around? Why or Why not? Explain.

26. Do you feel you can use your own judgment to solve problems you encounter, rather than contacting the supervisor? Why or Why not? Explain.

27. Do you feel you have freedom in how you interact with patrons? Why or why not? Explain.

28. Do you feel you have control over the size of tip you are left by patrons, or do you feel helpless and leave the size of tip to fate? Why or why not? Explain.

28b. What do you do, if anything, to try to increase the size of tip that you are left by a patron? Explain.

29. Do you feel that the harder you work, the more money you will make either in the form of tips or management raises? Why or why not? Explain.

30. In general, do you feel that you have control over how you are treated by patrons? Why or why not? Explain.

31. Do you feel that you work with management to run the restaurant, or do you feel that management runs the restaurant and you just do what they tell you to do? Why or why not? Explain.

32. Do you feel you could go to your supervisor and make suggestions or raise concerns about work-related issues? Why or why not? Do you think these suggestions would be taken seriously? Why or why not?

33. Does your supervisor ever ask for your opinion on work-related issues? Has your supervisor ever asked how things were going regarding your job? Explain.

34. When you are working, can you decide when to take a break? Explain.
Indicators of Meaninglessness

35. Do you feel that you make significant contributions to the success of the restaurant? Why or why not? Explain.

36. Do you feel that the restaurant’s success would suffer if you left? Why or why not? Explain.

37. Do you think that you as an individual are in a position that is a vital link in the restaurant’s day to day operations? Why or why not? Explain.

38. What position in the restaurant depends on you, as a server, the most? Why do you feel this position is dependent on you? Explain.

39. In general do you feel that restaurant serving is an important job? Why or why not? Explain.

40. Do you think that other people in general think restaurant serving is an important job? Why or why not? Explain.

41. In general do you feel important at work? Why or why not? Explain.

42. Do you feel that management really values your input regarding the restaurant’s functioning? Why or why not?

Indicators of Self-Estrangement

43. At the end of your shift do you feel a sense of accomplishment? Why or why not? Explain.

44. What made you become a restaurant sever? What makes you stay? Explain.

45. What is the most rewarding aspect of your work? Why do you find this facet of your job rewarding? Explain.

46. In general what is the best part of being a server? Why is this the best part of your occupation? Explain.

47. What is the most rewarding thing that happens to you on a daily basis? Explain.

48. What is the most rewarding thing that has ever happened to you? Explain.

49. Do you feel a personal connection with the work you do? Why or why not? Explain.
50. Do you feel that your work is interesting and challenging or routine and dull? Why do you feel this way? Explain.

51. When interacting with patrons what is your primary goal? Explain.

52. When interacting with patrons do you always act like yourself? In other words, do you act like you are feeling at any given time or in any given situation? Explain.

53. When a patron is rude to you, how do you react? Do you have to try to act this way, or does it come as second nature? Explain.

54. If you could work any other job and receive the same amount of money as you do serving, would you switch jobs or remain a server? Why or why not? Explain.

55. Would you want your child to be a restaurant server for a living? Why or why not? Explain.

Indicators of Exploitation

56. Do you receive any benefits from your employer? If so, explain the benefits you receive from your current employer. Are you happy with these benefits? Explain why or why not?

57. What are your working conditions? How do you feel about these conditions? Explain.

58. How many hours do you work each week? How do you feel about the amount of time you spend working? Explain.

59. Do you feel that the hourly wage you are paid is a fair amount for the work you do? Why or why not? Explain.

60. In general do you feel that you make the amount of money that you deserve for doing your job? Explain why you feel this way. How much do you think you should get paid for doing the job you do? Explain.

61. Do you feel you are treated fairly at work? Why or why not? Explain.

62. Do you feel you are compensated for the physical and emotional demands that restaurant serving entails? Explain.

63. What is the least rewarding aspect of your employment? Why is this aspect of your job so unrewarding? Explain.
64. Do you feel you are compensated for the least rewarding aspect of your employment? In other words do you feel that the positive aspects of your job outweigh the negative aspects? Why or why not? Explain.

**Indicators of Job Satisfaction**

65. Do you enjoy your work? Why or why not?

66. Do you respect your supervisors? Why or why not? Do you think they respect you? Explain what your relationship is like with your supervisor?

67. Do you feel your supervisors are fair to you? Why or why not? Explain.

68. Do you feel that your supervisors do a good job supervising? Why or why not? Explain.

69. In one or two sentences explain your thoughts and feelings toward your supervisor?

70. What would you like your supervisor to do differently? Why?

71. Do you feel you have a great deal of room for creativity when performing the task associated with your daily work role? Why or why not? Explain.

72. How do you feel about the amount of work that you are expected to do? Explain.

73. Do you feel your job is secure? Why or why not?

74. Do you feel that there is room for upward mobility? Why or why not?

75. How do you feel when you are getting ready for work on a normal day? How do you feel when you get to work? How do you feel when you are almost done working for the day? Explain.

76. Do you feel that management closely monitors your work activities? Why or why not? Explain.

77. Do you feel that management gives you credit for your job achievements? Why or why not? Explain.

78. When changes on the job that directly affect you are made, do you feel you are consulted before these changes are implemented? Explain.

79. If you had a friend looking for a job, would you recommend this restaurant to him or her? Why or why not? Explain.
80. Do you enjoy working with your coworkers? Why or why not?

81. Do you enjoy interacting with patrons? Why or why not?

82. In general how satisfied are you with your employment as a server? Explain.

83. In general how satisfied are you with your employment at this restaurant? Explain.

Indicators of Physical and Mental Health

84. Describe your work in physical terms. In other words, how physical is restaurant serving?

85. Do you have any physical problems that you think might be related to the work that you do? Explain.

86. Have you ever been so physically worn out after work that it has prevented you from participating in another activity? How often does this happen? Explain.

87. How often do you get stressed while at work? How do you handle work-related stress? Explain.

88. Do you ever leave work in a bad mood? Does this bad mood affect your relationship with your family or friends when you are not at work? Explain.

89. Have you ever cried during your shift? Approximately how many times have you cried while at work? What events provoke you to cry? Did anybody at work see you crying? Explain.

90. Have you ever left work and cried about the events that took place on your shift? Explain.

91. How often do you feel exhausted? Do you think it is your work or other factors outside of work that make you exhausted? Explain.

92. After work do you ever have a difficult time relaxing or sleeping? Do you think that your difficulty in relaxing or sleeping is work-related? Explain.

93. How often do you drink alcohol? Approximately how many days out of the week do you have one or more drinks?

94. Do you use any controlled substances? If so what do you use? How often do you use this substance? Explain.

95. Do you feel you have a substance-abuse problem? Explain.
Comprehensibility (The following indicators of comprehensibility are adaptations of Antonovsky (1987) "Sense of Coherence Questionnaire.")

96. When you talk to patrons, do you ever feel that they don’t understand what you are trying to say? If yes, explain.

97. When you talk to management about work related issues, do you ever feel that they don’t understand what you are trying to say? If yes, explain.

98. In the past year have you ever been surprised by the behavior of people at work whom you thought you knew well? How often has this occurred? Explain.

99. When you are working, do you ever have the feeling that you are in an unfamiliar situation and don’t know what to do? How often does this occur? Explain.

100. Do you ever have mixed-up feelings and ideas about your work role? If so, how often do you have these feelings? Explain.

101. Do you ever have work-related feelings inside that you would rather not feel? If you do have these types of feelings, how often do they occur? What types of feelings are they? Explain.

102. When something at work goes wrong, do you feel you keep it in perspective or do you overestimate or underestimate its importance? Explain.

Indicators of Manageability (The following indicators of comprehensibility are adaptations of Antonovsky (1987) "Sense of Coherence Questionnaire.")

103. While at work how often do you worry that something will not get done when you have to depend on the kitchen staff to do it? Explain.

104. While at work how often do you worry that something will not get done when you have to depend on the bar staff to do it? Explain.

105. While at work how often do you worry that something will not get done when you have to depend on a fellow server to do it? Explain.

106. While at work how often do you worry that something will not get done when you have to depend on management to do it? Explain.


108. How often do you feel you are treated unfairly by patrons? Explain.

109. How often do you feel you are treated unfairly by management? Explain.
110. How often do you have feelings at work that you’re not sure you can keep under control? Explain.

111. While at work how often do you feel inadequate at performing your job? Explain.

**Indicators of Meaninglessness** (The following indicators of comprehensibility are adaptations of Antonovsky (1987) “Sense of Coherence Questionnaire.”)

112. How often do you feel as if you really don’t care about what is going on around you at work? Explain.

113. How often do you feel that clear goals and purposes drive your work? Explain.

114. Looking ahead into your future as a server, do you feel that your work will become increasingly fascinating or deadly boring? Explain.

115. How often do you feel your daily work tasks are a source of deep pleasure and satisfaction? Explain.

116. How often do you feel that there is little meaning in your daily work tasks? Explain.

**Final Questions**

117. If you had the authority to change aspects of your job, what types of things would you have changed? Explain your answer?

118. If you could work any job you wanted to and not have to worry about money, what would this job be? Why did you choose this job? Explain.


120. Do you have anything you would like to add that we have not addressed, or would you care to expand on an issue that we have addressed?

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS INTERVIEW!!!**
APPENDIX D

RESPONDENTS’ DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Ann
Ann is twenty-four years old and has completed two and a half years of college but is currently not taking college classes. She is working full time as a server at Silvers Bar and Grill. She reportedly earns an annual income of approximately $12,000 a year. Ann is not married and has no children. She began working in the restaurant industry when she was twenty years old and has been employed with three different restaurant establishments for a total of four years. Ann has been with Silvers Bar and Grill for a little over one year.

Georgia
Georgia is twenty-five years old and has a high school education. She reportedly earns an annual income of approximately $15,000 a year. Georgia is not married and lives with her young daughter. She started working in the food industry when she was twenty-one years old. Georgia has been employed with two different restaurants for a total of two and one-half years. She has been working at Sunny’s Seafood for approximately a year and is a certified server trainer.

Missy
Missy is twenty-four years old and is a college graduate. Missy is currently engaged to be married, but no definite date has been set. Missy does not have any children and she earns approximately $16,000 a year. Missy has been employed with four different restaurants over the course of four years. She began working in the restaurant industry when she was twenty years old. Missy recently started working at Silvers Bar and Grill and has been there for three months.

Ken
Ken is thirty-three years old and has completed two years of college but is not currently enrolled nor has he earned a post high school degree. Ken reportedly makes approximately $22,000 a year. He is not married but has one child who does not reside with him. Ken began working in the restaurant industry when he was sixteen years old and has been employed with eight different restaurants for a total of seven years. He has been employed with Silvers Bar and Grill for five years and is a certified server trainer.

Nate
Nate is twenty-three years old, has completed three years of college, and is currently taking classes. He reportedly earns approximately $20,000 a year. Nate is married and lives with his wife. Currently they have no children. Nate began working in the restaurant industry when he was sixteen years old and has been employed with two different establishments where he has worked a total of four and one-half years. Nate has worked at Silvers Bar and Grill for approximately three and one-half years.
Morgan

Morgan is a thirty-three-year-old college graduate. He earns approximately $21,000 a year and is engaged to be married. Morgan does not have any children at this time. He began working in the restaurant industry when he was nineteen years old and has worked for nine different food establishments where he has served for a total of seven years. Morgan is a certified server trainer at Silvers Bar and Grill, where he has worked for the past two years.

Donna

Donna is forty-two years old and has completed three years of college but is not currently taking classes. With her husband she makes approximately $52,000 a year. Donna has four children, two of whom live with her husband and her. Donna took her first job in the restaurant industry when she was seventeen years old and has worked in the industry a total of eleven years. She has worked for two different restaurants during this time but has been with Silvers Bar and Grill for ten and one-half years.

Lobo

Lobo is twenty-five years old and has five years of college but has yet to earn a degree. He is currently not enrolled in school. Lobo reports that he earns approximately $24,000 a year, has no children, and is not married. Lobo began working in the restaurant industry when he was thirteen years old and has worked at seven different restaurants for a total of seven years. Lobo is a certified server trainer at Sunny’s Seafood where he has been employed for eleven months.

Rocky

Rocky is twenty-three years old and has completed three years of college but is currently not enrolled in school. Rocky reports that he earns approximately $23,000 a year and is not married, nor does he have any children. Rocky began working in the food industry when he was fifteen years old and has worked for two restaurants for a total of two years. Rocky has been with Silvers Bar and Grill for the past two years.

Jack

Jack is twenty-two years old, has completed three years of college, and is currently enrolled in classes. Jack reportedly earns approximately $20,000 a year and is not married, nor does he have any children. Jack began working in the restaurant industry when he was twenty years old and has been employed only with Sunny’s Seafood where he has worked for a year and a half.

Jane

Jane is twenty-one years old, has completed three years of college, and will be beginning her fourth year in the fall. Jane reports that she earns approximately $10,000 a year. Jane is not married, nor does she have any children. Jane started working in the restaurant industry when she was sixteen years old and has worked for two different restaurants. Jane’s employment at Sunny’s Seafood was her first serving position, and she has been with Sunny’s Seafood for eleven months.
Roxy
Roxy is twenty-five years old and is a college graduate. She reportedly earns $8,000 a year, is not married, nor does she have any children. Sunny’s Seafood is Roxy’s first restaurant job, and she has been working there for seven months.

Jackson
Jackson is twenty-four years old and has had one year of college but is not currently enrolled in school. Jackson reportedly earns approximately $20,000 a year. He began working in the restaurant industry when he was eighteen years old and has been employed with four different restaurants for a total of six years. Jackson has been employed with Sunny’s Seafood for three years and is a certified server trainer. Jackson also has bartending responsibilities in addition to his serving responsibilities.

Ozzie
Ozzie is twenty-six years old and has a two-year associate degree. He reportedly earns $16,000 a year. As of the last six months only a small portion of this income comes from serving. Ozzie works part time at Sunny’s Seafood and part time in a position associated with his education. Ozzie is not married and does not have any children. He started working in the restaurant industry when he was sixteen years old and has worked for three different restaurants for a total of four years. He has worked at Sunny’s Seafood for two years and is a certified server trainer.

Eva
Eva is thirty-five years old and has completed one year of college but is currently not enrolled in school. Eva states that she earns approximately $30,000 a year. She is not married and does not have any children. Eva began working in the restaurant industry when she was seventeen years old and has worked at ten different restaurants for a total of eighteen years. Eva has been employed with Sunny’s Seafood for two and one-half years and is a certified server trainer. In addition to her serving responsibilities Eva also bartends and for one shift a month performs managerial duties.
REFERENCES


