YOUTH, LABOUR AND VALUE IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Introduction and Executive Summary

This report examines the working conditions of young hospitality workers, and explores their role in creating value in the hospitality industry. The report is based on a five-year program of research conducted in Melbourne and Newcastle that collected and analysed the voices and experiences of hospitality workers. This research approached hospitality labour from a unique perspective, exploring the relationship between workers' identities, value creation processes and labour practices in this industry, all in the context of challenging and precarious conditions for workers.

Hospitality is at the forefront of public discussions about issues such as exploitation, wage theft and precarity. In this report, workers describe the conditions in hospitality work as generally poor: informal and illegal employment conditions were described as relatively common within the industry. Despite this, our report emphasises how workers create value. Workers recognise that their task is not simply to serve food and drinks, but to cultivate a consumption experience that suits the expectations of consumers and management. We also show the skills that workers cultivate and deploy despite the designation of hospitality as 'unskilled' work.

Women and LGBTQ workers face specific challenges in the hospitality workplace. Amidst a requirement to be 'fun' in their interactions with consumers, women experience the constant possibility of sexual harassment and involvement in violent interactions within venues. Heterosexual gender expectations also intersect with racialisation, and workers of colour described particular ways being 'exotic' was important to help create the desired atmosphere in their workplaces. LGBTQ workers are cautious about their relationships at work and have usually experienced homophobia in the workplace from both customers, managers and co-workers, but regard it as their responsibility to provide a 'hospitable' environment for LGBTQ consumers. Workers were also aware of the dynamics of taste and privilege that are at work in hospitality venues and are critical of the role of the industry in the gentrification of inner-urban neighbourhoods.

This report makes three key recommendations for industry reform. First, for hospitality to offer sustainable employment to workers, casualisation must decrease, wages must increase and reflect the work performed. Workers must be recognised for their role in value creation and must be compensated for training staff and carrying out other managerial duties. Second, new policy is needed for addressing sexual harassment in front-of-house service labour,

including processes for registering and resolving complaints, investigations and outcomes developed in consultation with workers. New policy is also required to support LGBTQ workers. A ‘zero tolerance’ approach to sexual harassment and homophobia should be adopted and implemented explicitly. This policy should be consistent across the industry. It should be actively endorsed by employers and workers should be empowered to speak out when treated disrespectfully by consumers. Third, hospitality venues must offer adequate training to their staff rather than relying on the informal efforts of experienced workers. This must include both practical and relational aspects of the work. Experienced workers who train staff who are new to a venue should be recognised, materially compensated, and provided with time and resources to train others to the best of their ability.

Chapter 1: Young People in Hospitality: Social and Economic Context

Introduction

The hospitality industry is at the forefront of public debates about the nature of work. The industry has become synonymous with employment insecurity, poor wages, 'wage theft' and exploitation. It is popularly regarded as 'unskilled' labour, work that 'anyone' can do, and is remunerated accordingly, being amongst the most poorly paid forms of employment available. However, the hospitality industry is also critical to Australia's urban economies. For cities to be known as cosmopolitan cultural centres they must include a large and diverse offering of bars, cafes, restaurants and night-clubs, and cities such as Melbourne (one of the cities included in this project) are known for laneway bars and 'café culture'. These venues all need workers, and the hospitality industry is a significant employer, especially of young people.

These workers are fundamental to the value that is created in the hospitality industry. As well as serving food and drinks and cleaning up after patrons, workers are expected to facilitate the consumption experience that their employer offers to consumers. Their interactive styles and personal appearance must reflect this – they must 'look good and sound right' (Williams and Connell, 2010). As this report will show, workers know that it is their task to facilitate the right 'atmosphere' for consumption, and take this seriously as a significant aspect of their work. Hospitality labour is demanding, requiring constant physical exertion and relentless social interaction on terms that workers have limited control over. Moreover, as this report is being written the dynamics of the industry are transforming: hospitality employers are complaining of a labour shortage in the industry, although the wages and conditions they are offering remain poor and fail to reflect the value created by their employees. In this report we examine and explain this situation. We explore the complex, poorly understood working capacities and practices that make up hospitality labour and situate these within transformations in the relationship between labour, value and identity in contemporary service employment.

To do this, we begin this report by introducing our project and discussing the social and economic context for hospitality labour. We discuss the rationale, research questions and method for our study, and introduce the project's key concern: the relationship between

labour and value, and the critical role that youth identities play in generating value for hospitality venues. By situating the project in this way, we then introduce the key social and economic dynamics that shape the relationship between identity, labour and value. These include the complex and politically contested nature of 'skilled' as opposed to 'unskilled' labour, the relationship between venues and the labouring practices required of different workers, and issues connected with gender and sexuality, including sexual harassment and the complex politics of 'diversity' in the night-time economy. Across all of these issues we are going to provide a framework for understanding how workers' labour creates value, focusing on how they produce the atmospheres of enjoyment and convivial consumption that are critical to the hospitality experience offered to consumers.

The Youth, Labour and Value Research Program

Since 2017, our research team has been exploring how young hospitality workers labour and create value at work. Our research is qualitative, using in-depth interviews and innovative photographic and visual methods to inquire into the experiences and working practices of young hospitality workers. In this way, the Youth, Labour and Value program is unique in exploring hospitality labour from the perspective of workers, and exploring how workers' sense of self is connected to their position as workers. This method is necessary due to the nature of hospitality work, which is focused on adding meaning to consumption through face-to-face interactions.

Our research program is made up of three research projects conducted between 2017 and 2022. The first, a small-scale pilot study, focused primarily on bar workers in venues located in gentrified suburbs in Melbourne's inner north known for restaurants and bars with late-night licences. The second is a three-year project conducted between 2019-2021 funded by the Australian Research Council which has interviewed bar and café workers across Melbourne, and expanded our program to Newcastle in New South Wales, a post-industrial city transitioning to a mixed service economy with an enhanced role for services and tourism following its rapid deindustrialisation in the early 1990s. The third is a project that focused on the experiences of hospitality workers during COVID-19 lockdowns which led to widespread venue closures across the hospitality industry. Together, these projects have involved 124 workers. Participants included 67 women, 51 men , and 6 non-binary or gender-fluid participants who were aged between 18 and 30 years old, and identified their ethnic cultural backgrounds as Asian, Indian, Italian-Australian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Singapore, Chinese,

Burmese, Polish-Australian, Sri-Lankan, Bangladeshi, Greek, Lebanese, and 'White Australian'. Participants possessed a range of educational qualifications, from those who had not finished the final year of high school (year 12 in Australia) to those with postgraduate qualifications. All data was collected with ethics approval from the University of Newcastle (H-2019-0088).

Data was collected primarily through qualitative interviews, and complemented by visual and participatory methods including digital diaries[i], ethnography through observation of venues and hospitality settings, and photo elicitation interviews. Interviews with workers about their working biographies were expansive and lasted between 40 minutes and over three hours. Interviews covered a workers' engagement with the labour market, their entry into the industry, the different venues they had worked in, the kinds of work expected of them in different venues, their relationship with their co-workers, their attitudes towards their venues, and the skills and capacities they felt were required to be a good hospitality worker.

Interviews also asked about the nexus between work and the rest of our participants' lives, including their own taste and consumption patterns and the nature of their social networks. We also visited eleven venues in Melbourne similar in aesthetic to participants' workplaces to gain a sense of the sorts of interactions and working styles required by hospitality staff. We took a series of photographs during these observations. These photos were then used in the final stage of the project through a visual method called 'photo elicitation' in which we asked workers to respond to anonymised images of hospitality venues. In these photovoice discussions we asked workers what they thought working in these venues might be like, who would be best suited to work there, and what kind of clientele they would attract. In this way we explored how our participants made sense of different venues in the industry using their own experiences as workers, as well as their own consumer tastes.

This program of work has created a large and unique data-set that we have been analysing and discussing in peer-reviewed publications since 2018 (Farrugia, 2018; Farrugia et al, 2018; Coffey et al, 2018; Threadgold et al, 2021; Sharp et al, 2022; Coffey et al, 2023; Farrugia et al, 2023). The range of issues covered in this data-set is expansive, but is united by a concern with working conditions and practices, the relationship between labour and value, the role of identity in value creation, and the strategic and reflexive way that workers perform their work. In what remains of this chapter of the report we describe these issues

through a sociologically informed discussion of the relationship between labour and value in hospitality work.

Hospitality in Context – Labour and Value in Interactive Service Work

In this section of the report we discuss the nature of hospitality work, and provide a framework for understanding how labour produces value in the context of the hospitality industry. Hospitality is poorly remunerated and workers are typically precariously employed. It offers effectively no career advancement and very little variation in wages between one employer and another. Hospitality labour usually requires no formal qualifications beyond a certification for the service of alcohol, and indeed the participants in our research have suggested that what qualifications are available are largely irrelevant to front-of-house hospitality work – a finding we will explore later in chapter three when we discuss the skills and capacities that workers apply to their labour. However, in order to understand the relationship between labour, value and employment conditions in the hospitality industry we must look further than simply characterising hospitality as 'unskilled' labour.

Hospitality is an example of 'interactive service labour', in which social interactions are the key task and 'product' of the work. Even during the heyday of industrial capitalism when secure employment was more easily available to (male) workers, interactive service work was relatively poorly paid and precarious. To understand this, we need to consider the historical relationship between *who* does interactive service work, and the conditions in which they work. Interactive service work is an example of 'feminised' labour – that is work historically performed by women, although workers of all genders now participate in the industry. Interactive service labour was regarded as 'women's work' because it requires capacities that were traditionally seen as intrinsic to women, such as a concern with personal appearance and a capacity to interact with others in a way that makes them feel good, usually in a deferential and accommodating manner. Feminised work is poorly remunerated, not simply because it is considered 'unskilled', but because there is a sense in which it is not considered to be 'real work'. Women were preferred in feminised occupations because interactive service labour was seen as the natural expression of a worker's intrinsic femininity, rather than deliberate, effortful and strategic action. As Adkins (1995) showed in an analysis of the division of service labour within an amusement park, women were

employed not as generic workers, but *as women*, and performing traditional femininity was regarded as intrinsic to their labour and their position as workers. This assessment is of course based on sexist assumptions about the 'essential' nature of women. However, it speaks to a broader relationship between identity, labour and value, in which workers are hired on the assumption that their interactions with customers will be spontaneous and natural reflections of their inner identities, rather than the strategic and deliberate deployment of skills (Adkins, 1995; Morini, 2007).

While the hospitality workforce is still disproportionately comprised of women (67%, AGLMI, 2022), the key defining characteristic of the hospitality workforce is now its youth. The average age of a hospitality worker in Australia is 22 years old, well below the workforce average of 40, and over 40% of the workforce is between 15 and 19 years old, with a further 35% under the age of 34 (National Skills Commission, 2022). In his discussion of the expansion of the service sector, Paul du Gay (1996) showed that employers sought out women and young people as workers, because they are regarded as flexible and relatively cheap sources of labour. This is connected to the labour-intensive nature of interactive service work, in which an interaction with a customer is fundamental to the experience of a consumer. This means that expanding a hospitality business necessarily requires new workers.

Young people are preferred workers in service industries because they can be legally paid less than the adult minimum wage, and because they are assumed to adopt a 'stopgap' approach to work in which their engagement with employment is transitory and unserious (Mizen, 2004; Tannock, 2001). Moreover, a particular kind of young worker is particularly valued in hospitality venues that are associated with cultural cool or cutting-edge forms of consumption. The cultural association of 'youthfulness' with up-to-date style and spontaneous enjoyment means that young people who can properly mobilise these qualities at work contribute enormously to the image and branding strategies of employers who are aiming to position their products and venues as cool places to consume (Farrugia, 2018). It is for this reason that young people who participate in music scenes and other kinds of taste cultures can be found working in the night-time economies of 'bohemian' and gentrifying inner-city areas (Lloyd, 2010; Farrugia, 2018; Farrugia et al, 2018) – they 'look good and sound right' (Williams and Connell, 2010) because of aspects of their identity – their cultural tastes and aesthetic styles. The assumption is that they will naturally and effortlessly produce the experience that employers wish to offer consumers, and that interactions with these

workers will contribute to the consumption experience in a way that adds value. And since this labour is regarded as a natural expression of a youthful identity (rather than deliberate or strategic action), it is not remunerated as serious or skilled work.

There is of course nothing 'natural' about the interactive service labour performed by women, young people or anyone else. Workers are under no illusions that they are at work, a situation that involves a set of power relationships between themselves, customers and employers that compel them to behave in ways that they otherwise would not in order to remain employed. In a classic analysis of flight attendants in the 1980s, Hochschild (1983) coined the term 'emotional labour' to describe the disciplined and deliberate manner in which service workers aimed to elicit positive feelings in consumers in line with the expectations of their employers and the branding strategies of the companies they worked for. While women were preferred as flight attendants because of assumptions about their natural capacity to interact with others in a pleasant way, Hochschild emphasised the careful and reflexive ways that flight attendants present themselves and interacted with consumers to achieve the desired 'customer service experience'. Hochschild also suggested that these workers felt divorced from their own emotions due to the requirement that they remain happy, pleasant and smiling even when experiencing incivility or sexual harassment – both of which remain routine experiences for contemporary hospitality workers (Coffey et al, 2018). Her workers describe the effort of having to smile through demeaning experiences which their employers regarded as part of the job. Rather than the spontaneous expression of femininity (or any other attribute), emotional labour requires workers to skilfully enact disciplined interactive performances to convey the impression of authenticity in a customer service experience characterised by profound power imbalances between workers and consumers.

Indeed, interactive service labour makes expansive demands on workers. Workers are required to modulate their facial expressions, bodily comportment, vocal tone, personal bodily aesthetics and overall interactive style in order to facilitate consumption. As Hochschild (1985) also showed, this includes reflexive attempts to self-regulate their emotions, in which a worker deliberately tries to feel differently about an interaction to convey the required outward appearance. Beyond this, in this report we will show that young people's personal tastes, leisure practices and personal friendship networks are part of the way they create value for their employers. This social connections and personal dispositions allow them to 'fit in' within a venue and project the right image in a way that appears authentic and spontaneous to consumers. In this context, drawing distinctions between skilled

and unskilled labour is of limited use, since the issue is not simply the 'skills' a worker brings to work, but the way their entire identities, including private, intimate aspects of their selves, personal expressions and emotional worlds, are drawn into the employment relation and mobilised at work.

While this is not recognised in public debates about the nature of work or the wages and conditions of service workers, it is increasingly recognised by some sociologists. To contend with this, the term 'immaterial labour' has been used (Hardt and Negri, 2004; Lazzarato, 1996) to describe work in which the product is not a tangible commodity, but a symbol, relationship, or experience. One aspect of immaterial labour is the production of bodily sensations ('affects') – feelings of enjoyment or 'atmospheres' of conviviality, fun, pleasure and togetherness (Hardt, 2004). This is a useful way of understanding the hospitality industry because it captures the relationship between labour, identity and value we have just been discussing. Affects are produced from the entirety of a workers' identity, incorporating their capacity to experience affects and emotions, relate to others, and present themselves in a cultivated and reflexive manner in face-to-face interactions. These are basic to human identity, but they are mobilised in specific ways within service labour, shaped by the way that workers are positioned within the labour force in relation to gender, youthfulness, and other socially ascribed attributes such as sexuality, ethnicity and social class.

Affective labour is useful also because it draws attention to the complex 'product' of hospitality labour – the 'consumption experience' (Dowling, 2007). Of course, workers must perform a range of tasks while they are at work, including cleaning up, pouring beverages and carrying food and drink. However, as both employers and workers understand very well, the value created in a hospitality venue depends not only on the products being served, which in the case of some bars are often generic drinks that can be purchased in a local supermarket (such as popular brands of beer), or easily made at home (such as simple mixed drinks). As Dowling's (2007) account of her time spent as a restaurant waitress emphasises, what is on offer within hospitality venues is not simply food and drink, but a particular experience that is deliberately cultivated by a venue as a branding and differentiation strategy within this competitive industry. Along with a venue's geographical location, décor, music, internal layout, and menu, hospitality workers must fit into and contribute to the image and experience on offer. Dowling discusses how waitresses create a 'dining experience' through their carefully managed and deliberate interactions with customers. She describes the feeling of ease and spontaneous 'fun' that she deliberately facilitates as she encourages customers to

buy cocktails and advises them on their dishes. What matters here is not simply the tangible commodity on offer, but the relational practices that workers use to create the dining experience.

In this project we explore what is required to create this complex and intangible product – the atmosphere of enjoyment or the hospitality experience. We ask what constitutes the key product of hospitality labour, and we take seriously the effortful and reflexive labouring practices that workers mobilise in order to create value at work. We focus in particular on the relationship between identity, labour and value because it is here – in the labour of the hospitality experience – that workers' identities become critical sources of value for employers. Workers are asked to mobilise every aspect of their identity and capacity to relate to others to produce the kinds of interactions required of them by their venue. How their identities are incorporated into their work, and how they reflexively manage the relationship between work and the self in general, is a key concern for this report.

Service Employment and Social Inequality

As we have discussed above, hospitality workers are not simply generic workers equipped with skills, but enter the workforce with a series of socially meaningful characteristics that are incorporated into their labour. Gender, sexuality, ethnicity and social class are all incorporated into service labour differently, and examining labouring practices in terms of the relationship between identity, labour and value means exploring how these social differences are lived and enacted at work, and how they related to broader social inequalities organising the labour force and society at large.

Gender and Whiteness in Hospitality

As historically feminised labour, the issue of gender inequalities in workers' experiences of hospitality labour is widely documented. Sexual harassment in the industry is a major problem (Coffey et al, 2018; Bruner and Dever 2014; Good and Cooper, 2016; Sharp et al, 2022), and as we discuss later on, virtually all of the women who participated in this study had experienced sexual harassment and regarded it as endemic in the industry. While sexual harassment is an ongoing problem throughout workplaces in many different industries, the nature of interactive service work and the history of service jobs as feminized means that this harassment takes on a specific form. Hospitality requires workers to appear deferential and to serve customers. In this context, women are often approached and perceived as though they

are sexually available, which makes them targets of sexual harassment. The essentialisation of interactive service labour as a reflection of femininity devalues women's labour and forces them to remind employers and consumers that they are not present simply to be sexually available (Adkins, 1995; Coffey et al, 2018). At the same time, young women are often hired explicitly because they are attractive to men and placed in customer facing roles for this reason. Racialisation and the valorisation of white femininity in front of house service roles was also an important dimension for understanding how women workers were positioned to create appeal and pleasurable atmospheres. Workers of colour described being either relegated to back of house roles, or being strategically placed to signal a venue's diversity, or leveraged for a perceived exoticised sexual appeal.

We discuss how young women managed this in chapter four of this report. Our analysis shows these problematic gendered dynamics are connected with the specific 'product' of hospitality work – that is an atmosphere of enjoyment and convivial consumption. We foreground the gendered dimensions of the practices that workers use in order to create this atmosphere in their venues, and discuss how these practices relate to issues such as sexual harassment and violence.

Sexuality in Hospitality

The dynamics of sexuality and the experiences of LGBTQ workers in hospitality venues is less widely documented but explored in this project. Existing literature on LGBTQ workers focuses primarily on issues such as homophobia at work, and advocates for an increased emphasis on diversity and inclusion to enhance queer workers' labour market participation (Lloren and Parini, 2017; Priola et al., 2014; Webster et al., 2018). Researching the experiences of young, lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) workers new to the Australian labour market, Willis (2009) found that LGBQ workers across a range of industries experienced substantial homophobia and violence, and became anxious about publicly expressing their sexualities at work unless their workplace took an openly pro-diversity stance for fear of vilification or limited career progression. However, where queer workers are accepted, this is often within definitions of 'acceptable' queerness that rest on stereotypes. These findings have been described as 'homonormativity' in the workplace, where queer workers are expected - by managers, co-workers and clientele - to align expressions of gender and sexuality with heterosexual values in order for acceptance (Ward, 2008). According to Williams and Guiffre (2011, 553) homonormativity allows 'gays and

lesbians to succeed but only if they enact a narrowly circumscribed and conventional performance of gender, family, and politics in the workplace.' At the same time, the presence and visibility of queer workers has become part of what Kanai and Gill (2020) have called 'woke capitalism', in which branding strategies co-opt narrow definitions of 'diversity' as an aspect of cool consumption.

In this report we discuss how queer workers negotiated their positioning in a range of venues, including those located in areas known to be progressive on issues of gender and sexuality, and show how they respond to stereotypical definitions of acceptable queer identities at work. We also discuss the way that queer identities are enacted within the specific demands of the hospitality labour process, which requires constant face to face interaction and public visibility.

Social Class in Hospitality

The role of social class in the hospitality industry is also poorly understood. It is a complex question given the enormous heterogeneity of the labour force and the role that the industry plays in classed patterns of urban consumption. In its remuneration and working conditions, hospitality labour is working-class work and amongst the most poorly paid occupations in the Australian labour market. However, the hospitality labour force includes people from a range of class backgrounds, in which workers who are also students and aspiring to professional employment in their future, work alongside those for whom hospitality employment is their main commitment. The industry offers effectively no career pathway, and while it is not statistically representative, our qualitative research suggests that students and workers from more advantaged family backgrounds tend to eventually move on from the industry, while some workers can feel 'trapped' due to a lack of qualifications and a demanding hospitality job that leaves little room for further education or training (Farrugia et al, 2018).

In this report we explore the class dynamics of hospitality labour beyond the socioeconomic background of workers, examining the relationship between labouring practices and the way that taste and aesthetics vary within the competitive dynamics of the hospitality industry. Different venues deliberately cultivate clientele of different socioeconomic backgrounds and tastes, and workers must be aware of this and able to recognise and perform their jobs in relation to the aesthetics and modes of interaction associated with different forms of consumption. This might include popular and widely available forms of consumption in pubs

and cafés with relatively informal forms of service through to fine dining establishments which attract a socioeconomically privileged clientele and require carefully disciplined interactions that reflect the air of refinement cultivated by the venue. The hospitality industry is also part of the transformation of class relationships in urban areas. Bars, restaurants and cafes are crucial to processes of gentrification, in which formerly working-class areas are transformed into spaces of middle-class consumption. Quite often, the aesthetics of venues in gentrified areas deliberately reflect the working-class roots of the area to create a feeling of authenticity and connection to the past (Lloyd, 2010). Workers are implicated in this in that they are required to fit into the image of these venues – to 'look good and sound right' – and must have the tastes appropriate to do this. Therefore, in general, the hospitality industry includes a labour force from a diverse range of class backgrounds who must mobilise a diverse range of classed tastes, all within the competitive dynamics of the industry and the branding strategy adopted by their employer.

Next Steps

The relationship between identity, labour and value in hospitality is poorly understood, largely because it is dismissed as unskilled labour. The framework we have discussed so far opens up hospitality work for serious analysis, and situates hospitality as an aspect of immaterial or affective labour in the economy more broadly. We have stressed the expansive demands that hospitality labour makes on workers, and the way that different workers from different backgrounds are positioned within the industry. In the remainder of this report we focus on issues such as the distinction between skilled and unskilled work, the role of identities such as youth and gender in the creation of value, the significance of sexuality and the experience of queer workers, and the classed distinctions through which taste is mobilized as an aspect of work.

The next chapter (chapter two) of the report examines working conditions in hospitality and the role of youthful identities in the hospitality labour force. We focus on the disjuncture between wages, working conditions, labour practices and the demands placed upon workers. We then discuss the social characteristics that make ideal hospitality workers in order to stress the significant role of personal identity in the hospitality labour process. This section then leads into a substantial analysis of skills and learning in hospitality workplaces in chapter three.

Chapter 2: Working in Hospitality: Wages, Hours and Conditions

Introduction

Hospitality is labour intensive work and workers' interactions and relationships with customers are the basis for value creation in the industry, but as detailed in this chapter, working conditions in many hospitality workplaces leave much to be desired. This chapter discusses workers' narratives about conditions within the industry and workers' sense of the value they represented to their employers. Our findings suggest that informal, exploitative and often illegal conditions are endemic within the industry, and also demonstrates the impact that precarious working conditions have on young workers despite the commitments they make to their venues and their co-workers.

Money: Underpayment and On or Off 'the Books' Work

Greg was an experienced hospitality worker and was working at a pub in the inner north of Melbourne when he was interviewed. He had worked in multiple venues including bars, restaurants and cafes throughout Melbourne's CBD and inner north and had over a decade of experience in the industry. Despite this, Greg reported that he had never seen or signed a written contract of employment:

> Most places do you – when you get employed by them do you ever sign a contract? [To say] I'm now working for you?
>
> *Nope never.*
>
> You've never done that?
>
> *I've never signed a contract.* [Greg, 29, Melbourne bar worker]

This was not unusual. Many workers had either never signed a contract, or had experience of working 'off the books' at some venues. Workers' attitudes towards this, and the consequences it had on their lives varied. Some took off the books work for granted as a standard practice in the industry and did not regard it as remarkable. For others, working off the books contributed to a general feeling of insecurity and the sense that they were disposable and disempowered at work:

> *Because I'm cash in hand, it is quite flexible…The thing is, I don't pay tax but I have no job security and I don't get super and I don't have any sort of rights or any*

> *bargaining power. I'd pay a little bit of tax for that, I don't care.* [Jon, 21, Newcastle bar worker]

Indeed, being paid off the books was often connected to other issues, including underpayment, unpredictable hours, and a lack of managerial accountability that facilitated problems like sexual harassment:

> *You have to be okay with the fact that everything's just a little bit fucked. There's no management you can report to, there's no hours designated, there's nothing written, the reason I quit was because there was sexual harassment from the boss and there's nobody you can go to for that.*
>
> Did you ever sign a contract?
>
> *I gave him a photocopy of my RSA…All cash in hand.* [Christine, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

Christine emphasises the way that workers are disempowered by off the books employment, in this instance as part of a broader organisational structure that left her with no way of responding to sexual harassment other than quitting her job. We discuss the important issue of sexual harassment later in chapter four, which explores the dynamics of gender in hospitality venues in detail.

As well as off the books work, workers reported that underpayment was endemic in the industry despite the already low wages to which hospitality workers are legally entitled:

> *I got taken advantage of heaps of times by bosses. That's just the cold hard truth. Ripped off left, right and centre. Super, not getting paid the right award, stuff like that.* [Jessica, 29, Newcastle café and bar worker]

In this our findings are in tune with public scandals about wage theft in the hospitality industry, which has only recently been a criminal offense in Victoria. Because of these conditions, being paid according to the award was sometimes discussed as a perk of employment in a specific venue rather than a taken for granted entitlement:

> *If they pay you award wages it's not that bad these days. It's still kind of shit, like everyone should be getting paid more, but it's better than other bars where I've got*

> *like $15 cash in hand or something like that. That's pretty bad.* [Cassie, 29, Melbourne bar worker]

As well as underpayment, workers also discussed not being remunerated when they took up extra duties at work, such as managerial duties that would typically involve a higher rate of pay. This was the case even for those who had signed formal contracts:

> *To be honest the owners are quite stingy. So, they don't really have any hospitality experience…they don't want to pay me too much or management wage, so they say I'm just the full timer or just someone to kind of step in and help. So, there's no actual title for what I'm doing. But essentially I am like managing the team when they're there and managing - making sure stock is all there and making sure there's customer satisfaction.* [Amanda, 25, Melbourne café and bar worker]

Whilst workers were resentful of these conditions, they were also cautious about the prospect of being placed on the books, especially as a salaried worker. While casual employees are paid by the hour and therefore receive more pay for more hours worked, our participants had seen that salaried employees were often required to work more hours than stipulated in their contracts without receiving any extra pay. Working casually was paradoxically regarded as *less* exploitative despite the insecurity involved, a finding that speaks more to the generally exploitative conditions in the industry rather than workers' preferences for casual employment:

> *I've worked lots of places where you get taken advantage of. Lots. Especially if you're on salary…the amount of hours that you're on, like you know, you're being paid for 38 hours but doing a minimum of 60…At [venue] it was the people that were on full time that ended up doing minimum 50 hours every week. [But] you got paid your 38 hours.* [Karen, 26, Melbourne bar worker]

Overall, informal and illegal employment and remuneration arrangements were described as commonplace in the hospitality industry. Workers also described hostile working hours and an inability to take time off work as a series problem in the industry, which combined with insecurity and underpayment leads to a difficult and exhausting working environment. The issue of working hours and time off work is discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

Hours, Leave and Time Off Work

Working hours and time off work were important issues for our participants. Participants described being obliged to work extremely long hours, having their hours unexpectedly cut (including being 'knocked off' in the middle of a shift), and general unpredictability in the hours they would be offered. Despite their formally casual and flexible status, participants felt obliged to accept shifts that led to overwork and exhaustion in order to make enough money:

> *Because if they can give me seven shifts, or even sometimes nine to 10 shifts over a week, between dishy or bar, then I can just earn more money. But that takes away from - like even if I do get one day off, I'm sleeping all day…So you burn the candles at both ends with hospitality. Because - I was doing shifts where I'd start on dish at 12:30, at like midday kind of thing. That was until 3:30…Then back on dish again at 5:00. So an hour and a half gap. Then from 5:00 until 10:00 or 10:30, however busy it was, on dish again and then straight over to bar in [venue] until like 4:00 in the morning until we close…It was less money for dishy shifts but harder work.* [Harry, 31, fast food and bar worker]

Participants were also afraid that turning down offers of work would mean they would not be offered shifts in the future:

> *If I don't go in, I don't - I risk the job if I don't go in. Right?... If I had enough sick days or took enough time off, he could easily just replace me and I wouldn't have anything…I feel very replaceable and no sort of security…* [Jon, 21, Newcastle bar worker]

> *If you get rid of too many shifts then they won't give you anymore shifts, because they'll be like no, too hard…I think that's an unspoken thing in hospitality is like if you say no, then they'll get someone else who will say yes more often, yeah, I guess.* [Cassie, 29, Melbourne bar worker]

As well as the obligation to work more than they felt they were able, participants also discussed constant fluctuations in the hours they were offered which compounded their feelings of insecurity. They may be offered more than they could reasonably work in one week, and then only a few hours or none at all the next:

Every new chef that came in would have their own idea of what the roster should look like and there were some chefs where I worked one singular shift a week even though I'd been there, at that point, eight years. Then there were some chefs where I worked 38, 40, 45 hours a week. It really fluctuated.

The majority of the time I was like yeah, this is fine but with the - working all the time just because I was broke so I was like yeah, money's great. That was just exhausting. [Vanessa, 25, Newcastle bar worker]

Participants also discussed being sent home in the middle of a shift, or having their shifts extended without warning:

It's just like - it's annoying when you were hoping that you'd be getting three hours' worth of money and you only got two and a half because it ended up being slow but that's the name of the game, is unreliability.

The standard is meant to be for a three hour shift but flexible, depending on what happens. The other night, I worked from 5:00 till 9:30, I think, because we just - we were really busy and weren't expecting it and it just continued on…I wanted to go home but I got a fair bit extra cash; the money side of things. [Harry, 31, fast food and bar worker]

They say sweet like we got heaps of work, but the heaps of work was like getting start times that were nine o'clock [at night] and then if it was dead you'd be knocked off after two hours. You might be scratching your head going like you know…You got the same story on Sunday and you [end up with] you know six, seven hours for the week and then you know, you're chasing your tail. You're stressed and it's not good in that aspect.

You can tell yourself you're a night owl or whatever but whether that's really a true thing or whatever. I don't know and working late nights - I work til 3:00 am four out of the five nights that I work. The other night I worked til midnight you know it's late, it's arduous. [Elijah, 34, Newcastle bar worker]

As well as these issues with working hours, participants discussed problems with taking time off work due to illness. This was for two reasons. First, unsympathetic venue managers often expected workers to work their shifts even if sick, and secondly, workers felt obliged to work

while sick to support their co-workers, who would be understaffed and have to work harder or for longer hours in order to make up for their absence.

Hannah described working in a venue in which the managerial expectation was that she would come to work even if sick:

> *I think that's also a thing that [the hospitality industry is] a bit notorious for, is that you're going to get underpaid. You're going to get made feel bad if you're sick…if I was genuinely sick, they would get angry at me and so I'd feel too anxious to call in sick…I've had glandular fever [laughs] and I'm at work. Especially being in back of house and even when you're in front of house and you're sick as a dog, you're making other people sick. I've had it in both sides of things where I've worked front of house and I've been just what feels like close to death…* [Hannah, 25, Newcastle hotel, café and bar worker]

As well as managerial expectations, participants were also reluctant to call in sick to work because they did not want to let their co-workers down. This was compounded by the generally tight staffing arrangements within hospitality venues, which would engage the minimum number of staff required to let the venue operate. This meant that every worker made a difference to the work of others and felt obliged to work while sick:

> *I have missed funerals, weddings, birthdays, you name it I've missed it. I have been sent home from work sick more times than I would like to count because the idea of calling in sick was, you know, I'm going to let everyone down.* [Felicity, 29, Newcastle bar worker and manager]

> *You have to be a team player. So, not letting people down is huge. If you can get through your first three or four months without letting anybody down by swapping a shift suddenly or not coming in for a shift or whatever, then you'd probably be considered valuable because you're going to do the shifts that you're given…I don't know what the solution is but something needs to change in the industry in terms of managing leave. It's really unfair on the workers* [Jessica, 29, Newcastle café and bar worker]

This is illustrated by those participants who worked in large venues, or for companies such as catering firms which service large events. Participants working for these employers did not describe the same issues with remuneration or taking time off work. In general, these larger

employers engaged more staff, so being understaffed was not a concern for workers. For this reason, workers did not feel guilty about taking time off, and did not feel so obliged to come to work when sick to support their co-workers:

> *[In a smaller venue] it was a lot more intense and difficult. Now, because this company I work for now is obviously a pretty big catering company, they cover the whole [large sporting and function venue], everything's very - they have just a tonne of OH&S regulations…never understaffed, ever. You could seriously just remove three people and service wouldn't change. Never understaffed.* [Alex, 22, Melbourne catering worker]

> *My work is - because we have such a large team of staff, it's quite easy to say hey, can someone take this shift or swap this shift? That happens pretty regularly.* [Rolo, 22, Melbourne café worker]

In a recently published article our team has discussed the strong relationships that hospitality workers form with one another despite the precarity and fluidity of the labour force (Farrugia et al, 2022). Hospitality workers are interacting with one another constantly during a shift – they become friends and come to rely on each other for support while at work. These relationships are valued by workers, but they also contribute to a workplace culture in which taking time off due to unforeseen emergencies or illness is regarded as unacceptable. Ultimately this also benefits many venues: it reduces the need to engage extra staff or organise replacements, and when workers do take time off, they are often responsible for finding their replacement. In general, the way that working hours are allocated mean that workers felt a mixture of insecurity and obligation which created overwork, working while sick, and anxiety about making ends meet. This insecurity also means that despite feelings of resentment and the knowledge that many of these practices are exploitative and illegal, workers felt unable to speak up at work. They generally felt devalued by management and by their participation in the industry.

Insecurity, resentment and disempowerment

In general, the only real recourse available to workers in dealing with poor working conditions was to leave a venue. However, since the problems we are describing are endemic in the industry, this was not always an attractive option. Workers often persisted in venues where they felt undervalued, poorly treated, or even unsafe:

> *I always worry, if I pipe up and I start asking questions - and it's actually happened - I remember when I got the job at [venue] they wanted to pay me like $17 an hour. I was like, 26 or 27. I was like, sorry but I'm highly skilled [laughs]. It's like - I've been doing this for years, I've had real training, I've managed venues. I argued with him about it. He ended up paying me like an extra dollar and then he treated me like garbage, you know…Yeah, like that didn't go very well, because I'd asked questions, because I was like no. I demanded things and then after that he was just like, well. He was really horrible to me.* [Jessica, 29, Newcastle café and bar worker]

As Jessica describes above, speaking up about working conditions could lead to a more difficult working life in an industry where face-to-face contact with management is often a constant part of the job, and where staff rely on relationships with managers in order to gain access to shifts. Generally, staff felt that their wellbeing was not a concern within the industry, and that they were regarded as largely disposable. Stories like the following were common amongst experienced workers:

> *There was a venue I worked in where I was expected to work by myself in a very large venue that had a capacity of 400 or 500 people, to work by myself on weeknights without security guards…It's against a lot of laws. That was also just really unsafe. There were a few nights where I had to call the cops because dudes would be in there that were harassing or hassling me or threatening me with violence or other stuff like that. So you're just not taken seriously, your safety is really not a consideration, your physical health is not valued and none of your other skills are either.* [Jenny, 28, Melbourne bar worker]

We return to the issue of safety, and the skills possessed by experienced workers, later in this report. We conclude our discussion of working conditions by emphasising that workers are aware of their importance within hospitality venues:

> *But you're giving so much to them. You think of the profiteering they're doing. I mean how much they're making per hour to what you're making per hour and you're the one making that machine and those cogs tick.* [Chris, 29, Melbourne bar worker]

> *You were just a pawn, like most people in the low end of the hospitality industry. You're the little bitch behind the bar who makes us all the money, but we'll treat you like shit.* [Stan, 22, Newcastle restaurant and bar worker]

Sentiments like this were common, even from workers who discussed enjoying other aspects of the work, as we will discuss later in this report. Hospitality workers feel undervalued and unrecognised, despite the value they create for their employers.

Conclusion

Conditions like this make it difficult for hospitality workers to reliably make a living. Workers are accorded limited formal autonomy over their working conditions, with little say about when they work or how long their shifts last, and often obliged to work while sick. Despite this, as a labour-intensive industry, hospitality venues rely on workers to produce the kind of customer service experience that will encourage patrons to return to the venue. There is therefore a significant gap between the importance of workers to venues, and the conditions they work within. Despite concerns about labour shortages in the hospitality industry following the COVID-19 pandemic, there appears to be little acknowledgement within the industry about the generally poor conditions offered to workers, despite repeated public comments by venue owners along the lines of ‘no one wants to work’. What is needed is an industry-wide recognition of the historically poor quality of hospitality work and a re-evaluation of employment practices within the industry.

Chapter 3: How Hospitality Workers Create Value: Identity and Relationships

Introduction

Hospitality venues offer consumers more than simply food and drinks, and many venues (such as bars) offer products that can be bought more cheaply elsewhere to be consumed at home. However, what venues offer, and what creates value and profit within the industry, is a cultivated and carefully managed consumption experience – what in chapter one of this report we described as an 'affect' of enjoyment and leisure. Hospitality is a competitive industry in which venues attract patrons by branding the experiences on offer and appealing to the tastes of a segment of consumers. They may be positioned as elegant and sophisticated, or laid back, 'edgy' or bohemian. The consumption experience within a venue must match the way that a venue is positioned within the competitive dynamics of the sector, and it is up to workers to facilitate this experience. In this chapter we describe how hospitality workers go about this task, and thereby how their labour creates value by creating affects of enjoyment. We focus in particular on the role of workers' identities and social relationships in the hospitality labour process, and show how these relationships help workers become perceived as valuable and appropriate for a venue, and therefore find employment.

In this we discuss two key findings: First, we show that hospitality workers see their key task as the creation of an atmosphere or 'vibe'. This atmosphere is created through interactions and moments of enjoyment, both between workers and consumers, and amongst workers themselves, whose interactions with one another can facilitate enjoyment for patrons. In these practices, workers capitalise on aspects of their identity, such as their membership of taste cultures that match those of consumers, in order to create the 'right' experience for a venue. This means that workers' identities are of enormous value to venues. Second, we show that this process is dependent on workers' relationships with one another, relationships which take place both inside and outside of work. Workers find employment through social networks made up of other hospitality workers, which increases the likelihood that their identity will match the image of a bar. For this reason, hospitality venues are also producing value from workers' private social relationships, even if these are practiced outside of the actual employment relation.

Value in Hospitality: Creating the Vibe

Front of house hospitality workers described the key task of their work as the creation of atmospheres of enjoyment, or what one worker called a 'vibe'. In participants' narratives, the process of serving food and drink (for example pouring drinks or carrying plates) took a back seat to the importance of creating these atmospheres, or feelings of relaxation and enjoyment. As Greg says, vibe is the key product of hospitality labour:

> *Vibe is like...Okay, put it this way: can you define the word je ne sais quoi? In conversation when people talk about je ne sais quoi what they're talking about is the indescribable something that makes something what it is, the moment of enjoyment. Vibe is that.* [Greg, 29, Melbourne bar worker]

As Greg says, 'vibes' are 'that indescribable something…the moment of enjoyment' that circulate in spaces like bars, and which participants contributed to in the course of their labour. However, atmospheres or 'vibes' are complex and poorly understood products. This is because they are immaterial, and because they consist of moments of enjoyment that may be fleeting. However, participants understood the nature of vibes very well, and knew how to produce them in the right way. They described their work as consisting of interactions and bodily presentations which create the right 'energy':

> *I'm very good at bartending not in terms of pouring drinks or knowing the prices of anything, because I don't. Even after two years, I'm like "how much is this, how much is that", and all the prices went up and I didn't realise for six months and I was still charging people the old prices. For most of the time I think I raised the energy. I'm generally a very positive person and was having fun and people kind of vibed off that...A lot of clientele would come back and say, "where's that girl tonight, she's really great she's a lot of fun".*
>
> You raised the energy of the bar? Is that something you're doing on purpose?
>
> *Yes.*
>
> Really yeah so what do you do?
>
> *Dance, dance a lot, sing along to the music, chat to people while I'm pouring their drinks.* [Christine, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

Here, Christine suggests that she is a good bartender not because of the practicalities of serving drinks, but because she is able to be 'fun' in her interactions with others. She also

emphasises that this task is about the fleeting relationships she cultivates with consumers in the interactions she has with them at her bar. She also dances and sings as she works, which creates the kind of 'energy' that patrons will enjoy during an evening out. What matters here is Christine's capacity to be 'fun', and the role she adopts within in the constant flow of interaction that shapes consumption in venues.

As well as interactions with consumers, workers also interact with one another to create a fun atmosphere. Workers knew that if patrons saw them enjoying themselves or appearing to enjoy themselves, then they would feel part of the fun, and would enjoy their own time in the venue more. In bars with late night licences, workers would sometimes drink alcohol during shifts to stimulate a convivial atmosphere, and would interact with one another as though they were patrons of the bar:

> *[On] Friday and a Saturday night we're busy and we dance, we have fun, we joke around with each other. We don't really drink during a shift, but if we do it'll be like sort of communal shots between all of us and we'll sort of stop service for two seconds but they're okay with that because we do it in front of everyone.*
>
> *We will joke around with each other because we know that people are watching to sort of I guess set the mood for what they're going to do…We just like creating that vibe and we dance together, we sing together, we crack jokes all the while still working but we interact with the customers because they can see we're having fun then it makes for their experience. So that's obviously what the management want…* [Catherine, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

In this sense, front of house workers in bars are performing enjoyment, and their labour (at least superficially) appears to resemble leisure. However, as Catherine emphasises, workers are well aware that this is what management would want them to be doing, and are working deliberately to cultivate the kind of experience that will encourage patrons to buy drinks and return to the bar. The fact that their labour appears at times to resemble leisure is therefore deliberate and a routine part of the shift.

At times, workers enjoyed their work. They felt that they could be part of the enjoyment on offer in a venue, and this motivated them during their shifts and created a personal connection or identification with the venue.

> *One night I remember at [venue], which was awesome … this couple – They met at the [venue] … and it was their wedding night and they decided after the reception to kick on at the [venue]. The whole wedding party came down. It was pretty much only them in the bar and I just like was DJing for them. Everyone was having a great time. No trouble. Just like everyone dancing and everyone having a really good time. I loved that…Yeah, it was good. It was fun.* [Sam, 27, Melbourne bar worker]

Later in the interview Sam went on to describe what made a good hospitality shift. Sam worked in a bar and music venue, and said that for him a good shift was one where he felt part of the community of people who were consuming and enjoying themselves in the venue:

> *For me it's when it's bands I like are playing here because it usually brings in people who I like, people I know, that kind of stuff, people I feel comfortable around...I feel like for one it feels a bit more like a community, people aren't rubbing up the wrong way, they're sort of all within vaguely the same community depending on the gig.* [Sam, 27, Melbourne bar worker]

As well as a bartender Sam also played in a band, and in this sense was part of the community that constituted his venue's consumer base. Sam's membership of this community is also of value to his employers, since it means that he will fit in and understand how people would prefer to interact and enjoy themselves. In this sense Sam's value to his employer is not simply a reflection of his skills or experience as a bartender, but rather encapsulates other aspects of his identity that are not usually regarded as relevant to hospitality labour, in this case musical pursuits carried on outside of work.

Together, these narratives also indicate the particular value that young workers offer to hospitality venues. Youth is culturally associated with energy, spontaneous enjoyment and 'fun'. Taste cultures connected with music or fashion are also popularly associated with youth. Youth can therefore be seen not simply as an attribute of young bodies or workers, but as a quality or an affect that contributes to the value of a commodity or a service interaction. The hospitality industry capitalises on all the attributes popularly associated with youth – fun and culturally up-to-date consumption. Workers' capacity to perform youthful identities in line with the forms of consumption and interaction that are taking place within a venue therefore contributes in important ways to the value created through their labour and the profit thereby generated.

Relationships and the Labour Process

As well as their identities, one of the key findings in this project was the significance of workers' relationships and interactions with one another for the successful creation of pleasurable consumption experiences. Hospitality labour is intrinsically relational – it consists of social interactions that produce moments of enjoyment that are experienced with others. However, as our discussion above starts to indicate, workers are not simply interacting with customers, but with one another, and the way that they do this is an important part of both labour practices and labour market engagement strategies within the hospitality industry. In other words, it is an important aspect of working in a venue, and of finding work within the industry.

The hospitality labour force is precarious and fluid, but our participants said that the key factor determining how long they would stay working in a venue was their relationships with their co-workers. This was due to the relationally intensive nature of hospitality work, in which workers are interacting with one another in close quarters for much of their shift. Because of this, workers are in a position to support one another during their shifts in ways that have a direct impact on the experience of the work, and the energy that workers bring to their labour. Olivia describes the key attribute of a good hospitality worker as someone who can 'hang':

> *There are lots of really cool people that walk through those doors and there's lots of really cool people that ask for jobs. But to get a job behind that bar, you kind of have to be able to hang.*
>
> *It was just always a level of whether you could hang. Whether you were cool enough, chill enough to get by, having a laugh on shift when things are getting tense. If you're able to break the ice in those heated moments, that's always going to take you a long way. Also, yeah, when I say you can hang, I mean it's a tense job that can often be quick-paced and if you can keep a cool head and a good disposition while you're doing that, that's often the crux of what they're looking for.*
>
> *I think they thought - look, I'm a pretty chilled, laidback, jokey type…That makes sense to me in that you hire people you know are going to be good at the job and enjoyable to be around.* [Olivia, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

For Olivia, the reason that she is considered a desirable hospitality worker is that she can 'hang', relating to her co-workers in a way that appears easy, natural, and fun. Olivia says she wants to be fun to work with and break the ice during tense moments in a shift. A worker who can do this facilitates the labour of their co-workers by creating an atmosphere of enjoyment. This supports workers as they deal with high pressure moments or challenging interpersonal encounters, as well as the constant physical exertion required. Workers said that a person who is unsociable, low energy or is visibly feeling bad during a shift can make work unpleasant or more difficult for other workers:

> *I feel like it's easy to catch - it's like, when somebody is really lacking energy, or having a really shit time, that's - it's easy to sense and then it - everyone struggles a bit…When you're just - really don't want to be there and your brain is elsewhere and you're really not feeling very good and then you have to be doing all these tasks and you have to be engaging with customers…if you're feeling really shit in an office, you can just go for a walk, get a coffee, take a breather and people will be supportive of that generally. But when you're in a café and there's three of you on, you just have to suck it up and keep doing it, which can be really difficult.* [Jacqui, 27, Melbourne bakery and café worker]

In other words, the task of hospitality labour is not simply to facilitate consumption, but also to facilitate the labour of co-workers, by working in a way that is energetic and fun. When this was successful it created strong bonds between workers. Working well together created a sense of togetherness and a kind of buzz or pleasure in having successfully pulled through what could often be an exhausting shift:

> *It's that thing where it feels so high octane and it feels so high pressure, but it's actually so weird that it does…it is a real feeling… I guess a lot of people really enjoy that as well. A lot of people I know that work in hospo, like in bars really enjoy that manic-ness.*
>
> *How often are you in a team situation that feels - it's weird that it feels that way, but that it feels so high pressure. In your life day to day you work in an office or you work in whatever, you don't get that same feeling. This is different…it's this really bizarre thing where it's like a five or six hour stint where you're all running when it's busy and you're all like there's no time to stop. You barely have time to take a piss. When*

> *you finish that you have this adrenaline that comes out that feels like you've done something that's really important, or really hard.* [Karen, 26, Melbourne bar worker]

> *Working in hospitality does give you that kind of, like, comradeship I guess in a way. You'd be like, we're all in this together. We're all just in the shit together.* [Jenny, 28, Melbourne bar worker]

This sense of comradeship was important to workers and part of what they enjoyed about the work. However, it is also of enormous value to venues and employers, because it is a condition for the successful and smooth operation of venues. Workers said that they needed to 'click' with others for the work to flow well. When this happened it was mutually satisfying, but when it did not the labour process could become less efficient, with workers getting in one another's way due to a lack of communication. For this reason, forming good relationships with one another was not simply a perk of the job but an active requirement, and participants like Felicity who had worked in management positions nevertheless stressed the importance of participating in 'staff banter':

> *We have the lowest staff turnover of any venue in Newcastle…it just comes down to how they deal with people, how they deal with the staff. Like they've got to be able to muck in with the staff as well because we're all a tight-knit group and there's a certain amount of banter.* [Felicity, 30, Newcastle bar worker and manager]

Being able to 'hang' is therefore an important part of the hospitality labour process, and of the way that workers create value. By interacting with one another in an easy and energetic manner, workers facilitate the collective labour of the entire team and thereby contribute to the atmosphere of enjoyment within the venue in general.

These social relationships are solidified outside of work, and participants who had some experience in the industry also described a lively social scene made up of hospitality workers who were friends and who also sometimes helped in finding employment. The unsociable hours of hospitality work encouraged this because workers found it difficult to synchronise their free time with those outside of the industry. Socialising with co-workers during unusual times of the day or week was considered part of being a hospitality worker, in which workers wanted friends who could relate to their lifestyle and experiences:

We'd have staffie's [staff drinks] at the end of our shifts where we could have a few beers, depending on how hectic the night was, we could have a few more if we wanted to, if the manager would let us…especially if it was a bad night.

We work probably a fuck-ton all through the week, all late nights, we're knackered, we don't have time to go out and drink or socialise most of the time, unless it's a beer at home. So, if we have a Monday/Tuesday where the majority of other hospitality people are free…No one else is out – it's just hospitality people, so we can all relate, we can all talk about our shit and talk about the jobs and experiences we've had. [Stan, 22, Newcastle restaurant and bar worker]

Workers social lives therefore contributed to their ability to relate to one another at work, which in turn facilitates the labour process. What this means is that workers' friendships are sources of value for employers, because they contribute to their ability to create fun interactions and produce the 'vibes' or consumption experiences on offer in venues. This is a significant but poorly understood and largely unrecognised aspect of the hospitality labour process, the experience of being a hospitality worker, and the role that workers play in creating value within venues.

Finding employment

As well as facilitating the labour process, workers' relationships with one another are the main means by which they find work. Participants described finding work through friends, and sometimes working in venues that they and their friends also visited as consumers:

[I find work through] friends usually, or bars that I frequent, they'll give me a job…it's mostly friends and friendship groups who work there and they're like oh, do you want a - and I'm asking for jobs and they're like oh yeah, work here. Other places that I've applied for on the internet or resume drops and stuff like that are usually places I don't stay for very long. [Cassie, 29, Melbourne bar worker]

I think the first couple of times we just came here and sat at the bar and talked to the bar man for a while and hung out all arvo and then we saw some shows coming up and went to those and just became familiar with the staff here and got a job through that.

Okay yeah, and is that a common way of getting a job here?

I think that's the only way. [Sam, 27, Melbourne bar worker]

Working with friends was desirable and regarded as a good reason to seek employment in a venue, especially since remuneration was likely to be similar from one venue to another. However, as Cassie says in the quote above, finding jobs through friends also increased the likelihood that a worker would stay working in a venue, improving staff retention for employers. This was because workers enjoyed working with friends, and were also more likely to 'fit in' socially to venues where they had existing social networks. In these instances, hiring processes worked on the basis of 'intuition' rather than assessments of experience or skills:

> *So, like, you'll meet the owner or the manager or whatever and be like, hello, my name is such and such and they have a look at you and they kind of smell you like an animal and you sniff each other out a little bit and you're like okay, this might be all right, you can have a trial and you get hired based on your trial.*
>
> *I think there's a kind of, like – bar work tends to involve a lot of intuition. Like, that sort of – a lot of what you do is intuitive. The way you respond to people is intuitive. The way you deal with problems is intuitive and certainly the way that people get hired can be intuitive and, like, if you give someone a resume and go, like, I've worked in bars for 10 years, but at the end of the day if you don't really like the other person, the way they smell or the way they do things, then you're not going to get along and you're not going to consider working there* [Jenny, 28, Melbourne bar worker]

Friendship networks amongst workers are therefore useful for employers as well as workers themselves, because they increase the likelihood that a worker will form positive relationships with existing staff. Hiring workers from the customer base of a venue also means that workers will understand the venue's brand and image, and the kinds of consumption on offer within the venues.

Finally, workers also understood that the relationships they formed with their managers would impact on their working conditions. In an industry in which workers' formal entitlements are extremely limited, access to desirable shifts was dependent on informal relationships:

> *If you're not on good terms with your manager and you want to work full time, you're going to get two shifts a week because, well, I don't like working with you, so why would I give you shifts?*
>
> *The industry is broken…You deal with what you're given, and you beg and grovel for anything more than that.* [Steven, 19, Melbourne bar and restaurant worker]

Workers would therefore deliberately form relationships with managerial staff in order to enhance their working conditions. Like relationships with other co-workers, relationships with management also blurred the boundaries between friendship and working relationships, especially since managerial staff in hospitality often work alongside other front of house workers during shifts and participate in the social scene of hospitality workers.

Conclusion

Hospitality workers offer enormous value to employers, but understanding this requires a new perspective on the nature of the work. Hospitality work does not simply rely on a set of technical skills that can be easily defined and measured. In hospitality venues, value is created from an enormously expansive range of workers' attributes and capacities. This includes their identities, tastes, leisure pursuits, relational styles, and friendships with one another. Young workers in particular are valuable here because of the popular association of youthfulness with cutting edge style and 'fun', which contributes to the atmospheres of enjoyment in venues that brand themselves in this way. When workers fit into venues, their labour practices have the appearance of spontaneity, seeming almost like leisure. However, these interactions are nevertheless deliberately deployed by workers to fit the atmosphere of a venue and the requirements of venue management.

There is a social scene of hospitality workers united by their unsociable hours and the demands made on them at work. This scene contributes to the availability of high-quality labour for hospitality employers, because it is made up of workers who can facilitate connections between their friends and venues that might be suitable places for them to work. When this is successful, employers benefit because they gain access to workers who will effortlessly fit in with existing staff and who will be able to contribute to the branded forms of consumption in a venue without needing explicit guidance as to how to comport themselves. The friendship networks that make up this scene are therefore a critical source of value for the industry.

Chapter 4: How Workers Create Value: Skills and Learning

Introduction

Hospitality labour is widely regarded as unskilled work – a definitively entry level job that 'anyone' can do. However, this view of hospitality work is not shared by workers. Workers are aware that hospitality work is different from forms of employment that require educational qualifications and technical certifications. However, they are clear that hospitality labour nevertheless requires a series of specific and cultivated competencies that workers possess to different degrees, even if these are not formalised or recognised in institutional definitions of skills. In this chapter we discuss workers' perspectives on the skills required to perform hospitality labour and how workers develop these skills.

Hospitality workers described two kinds of skills as significant to their work: practical skills, and relational skills. Practical skills included product knowledge, drink recipes, and the management of consumers' dining sessions (such timing and organising when to clean plates or serve new dishes), alongside time management, multitasking, physical endurance and the ability to work under pressure. Relational skills included the ability to read and respond to customer cues, anticipating requests, adjusting relational styles to different customers, de-escalating confrontation, and putting up an appropriate 'front' to customers. While hospitality requires all of these skills, workers suggested that ultimately relational skills were the most significant, and these were a source of pride and sense of expertise. However, staff often felt that the value and significance of these relational abilities were not recognised by managers or consumers:

> *It's very degrading to think that social skills isn't skills…It just feels like for people to make the assumption that hospitality is unskilled, it kind of reeks of classism or elitism. One because there's that assumption that technical skills are better, which I don't agree with, you need both technical and social skills. Two it's also like, well, you can't demean a service and then demand it. It feels very disgusting to me when you love going out to cafés and restaurants, and then you're a bitch to the wait staff.*
> [Joyce, 24, Melbourne café worker]

First, we discuss the practical skills workers described as central to their work, followed by the relational skills and informal learning practices that workers use to help one another

develop their skills, and the importance of these skills in developing a sense of capacity or expertise associated with hospitality work.

Practical skills

According to our participants, there were two kinds of practical skills required of good hospitality workers – those relating to working in a fast-paced and high-pressure environment, and those relating to product knowledge – understanding the food or drinks available in a venue and being able to guide consumers through the experience on offer. Helen, who had recently left the hospitality industry, described her new 'office' job as relatively easy compared to her hospitality work. For her, this was because of the relatively fast pace of hospitality work and the limited control workers have over their time during a shift:

> *I think I'm good at hospitality. What I know about hospitality, the way I've learned how to work in teams, fast paced, the ship is literally sinking and you're doing everything, running around and holding it together - hospitality is so fucking high pressure, fast shit that now that I'm working in an office where [laughs] everyone's just talking to each other, getting a coffee.* [Helen, 28, Melbourne restaurant worker]

Participants described a typical shift as involving multiple, competing demands over very short, moment to moment timeframes. During each shift, the typical rhythm of taking orders, serving and cleaning up was punctuated by extra demands – irate customers, changed orders, spillages and other unexpected events required multitasking, time management and physical endurance:

> *Time management for one is very important in this industry and a lot of people don't realise. Efficiency is definitely key and also multi-tasking is a huge problem we are running into right now…it definitely takes like even like a level of fitness. You need to be reasonably fit to work in hospitality a lot of the time, particularly busy places.* [Amanda, 25, Melbourne bar worker]

> *The physical aspect of the job as well. We're running trays to room almost non-stop. So, you've got to be physically able enough to go up and down a flight of stairs, like, several hundred times a night.* [Felicity, 29 years old, Newcastle bar worker and manager]

Many participants emphasised the physically demanding nature of the work. Practical skills were important aspects of what would determine whether a young worker who was new to the industry would be invited back to a venue after their initial trial shift, although no formal support or training was available to these inexperienced staff.

The other practical skills required of workers was product knowledge – understanding the finer details of food and drinks. In some venues, workers needed to cultivate an expansive range of product knowledge that included aspects of food preparation and ingredients, and winemaking, and sequence these into a carefully cultivated dining experience for consumers that included the order and timing of dishes:

> *So I had to learn how to make cocktails. I learned from a dude who was really intense and pedantic and precise. Even the way you held the shaker and stuff like that, he's like, hold it like this. Do it like this. Shake it as many times that sort of thing…So yeah, so it's learning to make the cocktails but then also learning the pacing of wait service, anticipating people's needs, figuring out when they want to order stuff. Then when they get it, it's okay, you're going to have this and then order that. It was you would run a sequence for them. Just learning about the wine and how to talk about the wine. By the time I left there, I knew - I could tell you the climate and atmosphere of every wine region in Spain and weird cultural anecdotes about all these places and stories about Spanish winemakers and stuff, stuff I'd picked up second-hand, but you had to be able to spin all this stuff as part of it and match that to people's palates.* [Spencer, 31, Melbourne bar and restaurant worker]

The nature and significance of product knowledge varied with the position that hospitality venues occupied within the industry. Upmarket cocktail bars and restaurants required more product knowledge and late-night bars and pubs required less.

Relational skills

The main skillset required of hospitality workers is relational – managing social interactions. Because general social interactions are a routine part of everyday life, the more specific way that hospitality workers do this at work is not always recognised as a skill. Nevertheless, workers emphasised that even when an interaction felt authentic to a customer, this interaction was a deliberate 'front' that workers mobilised in different ways at work:

> *But at the same time, you do need - you do obviously need to learn skills…Yeah, like putting up that - the fronts…The front that you have to present to customers, yeah.* [Alison, 20, café worker]

However, workers emphasised that dealing with customers face to face was not something a worker simply knew how to do by virtue of their experience in everyday life, but a competence that developed over time:

> *You get a lot of really young people that just don't want to talk to customers in the first year or two. They're just kind of like, always doing something else [laughs]. I was one of those people, so I know exactly what that's like. It's just like anxiety, I guess. Having - if you've got the balls to go out there on the floor and just talk to random people and you're - it's going well, you'll be considered valuable, 100 per cent. If you're building rapport really quickly, yeah, for sure.* [Jessica, 29, Newcastle café and bar worker]

Even workers who did not regard themselves as confident, sociable or inclined to make small talk found that they were able to develop relational skills through experience in the industry:

> *I think, even though I'm - even though just, like, socialising isn't [unclear] not my favourite skill to have, I've gotten better at it after working in hospo, and can be a people person, whereas before, I think I was a lot shyer in general…Whereas now I'm a bit more like, meh, okay…They're just another person. I am also a person. This will probably be okay.* [William, 20, Newcastle restaurant worker]

More experienced workers were seen to have more finely developed 'people skills', in which conversations were effortless and 'banter' was natural and fun for customers. Skilled workers made the interaction appear easy and genuine:

> *I think someone with really good people skills. The people at my café I can definitely tell, I mean they're all really established… I definitely know that they've been in hospitality as an industry for a while. You can tell that from the way they talk and whatnot. But even if they hadn't I just get the sense this person has the natural disposition of sunniness, friendliness, cheeriness, they're always the type of make jokes or banter with you. For a lot of customers I think that's really nice.* [Tara, 24, Melbourne café worker]

Moreover, these ‘people skills’ were deliberately attuned to the kinds of consumers that a specific venue attracted. The kinds of interactions that workers would be called upon to perform were not explicitly discussed, but required workers to quickly interpret what would be expected, read social cues, and then find a way of interacting that would contribute positively to a consumer’s experience.

> *I've learnt so much [chatting] to other people…I think it's one of those things that you tend to interact with people so often and you can have seven different tables. You have to act seven different ways between those people. You're learning social cues. I behave differently. For example, if there was a group of ladies in their sixties, I wouldn't swear. I'd be a bit more formal. But the same thing. If there is a group of four young ladies who are in their nineteen/twenties, I'm completely different. But there is still that respect and the same body language cues. But the language I would use is different.* [Emerson, 34, Melbourne restaurant worker]

Even product knowledge ultimately contributes to a performance designed to offer consumers the opportunity to exercise their own tastes and appreciate the variety of food and drink available in a venue:

> *It’s not the same labour as building a house or fixing some sinks or whatever but when people come in for a drink they don’t want to be waiting and they don’t want you to have an attitude and they want you to know what you’re talking about. So if you can’t do those three things they’ll go somewhere else. So you’re expected to basically know everything about every beer there. You need to know how to communicate effectively and you need to be able to carry three plates, multi-tasking, if people kind of give a vague suggestion or a vague kind of description you need to be able to know how to find something like that.* [Jack, 19, Melbourne restaurant and bar worker]

These relational skills underpin all the labour that hospitality workers perform in the course of a shift. In different ways, these relational skills allow workers to understand and immediately enact what it means to be ‘fun’ for different groups of people within the terms of a service interaction.

Workers must also sometimes manage customers who behave in ways that are inappropriate, or uncivil, including those who would deliberately patronise or degrade hospitality staff. In

these instances, good people skills were also ways that workers reduced or mitigated the threat that they would be treated in a degrading manner:

> *I have this massive fake personally that I just put on. I sound really nice and happy. That, I find, makes people less likely to attack me verbally or physically, than if I'm in a shitty mood and I'm letting that go through in my voice, then I find that people get shittier with me easier….*
>
> *[At work I switch to] customer service [name], which is just very happy and bubbly and very bloody fake. So, I feel like fakeness is a massive part of hospitality. You have to be fake to make it.* [Zeb, 22, Melbourne restaurant worker]

Workers had all had experiences of routine incivility or behaviour from consumers that made them feel uncomfortable, and the ability to 'read' a customer and understand what they were expecting allowed workers to manage these interactions. Customers whose expectations were not met were therefore a risk to workers who may be forced to engage in interactions that were upsetting, degrading or rude. Keeping customers happy was therefore not simply about maintaining a convivial consumer experience, but a defensive strategy that minimised the risks to workers' sense of dignity:

> *It's a huge skill to have in hospitality is to really not let the customer know what you're feeling. Say you have all this stuff happening. You're feeling really anxious, feeling very emotional, but you have to be really happy to them and really like just kind of adhering to all their demands in a way. So, I've had a worker crack and yell at people and I've actually first hand witnessed a lot of people cry on the job…My first hospitality job I dropped a drink on a customer by accident. He started yelling and shouting. I was crying. I ran away because I was really young at the time and he was really annoyed at I think having me such a young unskilled worker at the time kind of break down like that.*
>
> *But some people just don't have that patience. I've had - I think I apologised to a customer once as well and he was like, don't apologise and just got really rough and into me about the way I was. He was like I just want it snappy. I don't want you talking or anything like that. So, people are very particular with what they want out of a service. So definitely, reading the customer is also another skill. That definitely comes in handy.*

> *You need to be able to read people. You need to have tact. You need to know how to approach people and like when they're upset - when they're getting upset, when it's going badly, how to bring it back, all that stuff…It's just interaction all day long. If you can make it like positive, almost all the way through, you're winning, you know.* [Amanda, 25, Melbourne bar worker]

When interactions are managed successfully, they also mean that workers are able to enjoy their work:

> *It's really hard to have to be just on all the time and to be talking to people all the time…My ability to talk shit with anybody is directly attributable to my time working in hospitality. To be able to connect with somebody about something because it's going to make your day better and it's going to make their time - their experience better - and that continues on in life.* [Jacqui, 27, Melbourne café and bakery worker]

As Jacqui says here, learning good relational skills in hospitality was also commonly described as a positive thing in other areas of life. Workers reported feeling comfortable striking up conversation with others in other personal or professional settings having developed a finely tuned capacity to read social cues and understand the expectations that others brought to interactions.

However, in the hospitality industry these relational skills are required to facilitate consumption experiences and are therefore critical to the way that workers create value. As Helen says, the main thing is that workers are able to create the correct 'vibes', and that they do this in a way that reflects the atmosphere and branding strategies of the venue:

> *I think the affable but a good person is the rule…A good person who gets along with everyone there and creates the [venue] vibe I think is the prerequisite.* [Helen, 28, Melbourne restaurant worker]

As discussed in chapter three, workers are called upon to create atmospheres that facilitate their workers' labour, as well as the consumption taking place within a bar. For this reason, their relational skills are also drawn upon in forming relationships with co-workers which will be recognised and rewarded by management. Workers are therefore constantly deploying these skills every moment they are at work.

Learning

Despite the importance of having highly cultivated relational skills for the successful operation of venues and for the creation of value in the industry, participants described substantive or formal training within the hospitality industry or within venues as extremely limited. Of course, hospitality training courses are offered in many vocational training organisations, but none of our participants mentioned these certificates as significant or useful in their workplaces and very few had ever participated in any formal hospitality training beyond gaining a responsible service of alcohol certification. Instead, participants describe starting in the industry with little understanding of what was required of them and 'picking up' the skills required of them.

> *I was never really taught anything, I just pick things up and just went with - figured things out…* [Zeb, 22, Melbourne restaurant worker]

> *People in an environment like that, when you're stressed you just copy people, you know what I mean? Like, you just start adapting to the environment and just survival instinct to just fit in. You might not be doing everything crash hot, but you will at least be like, kind of like oh [laughs]. You know like, doing something* [Jessica, 29, Newcastle café and restaurant worker]

Learning by watching others was also the basis for the limited training that was on offer in the few venues that did deliberately train their staff:

> *Yeah. I'd say it's probably from watching other people and what they do. I mean, formally at the restaurant I shadowed someone for a few shifts, so I literally followed them around and watched what they did, watched what they said to customers. So, it's sort of learning in the way, but I always watch other waitresses and how they might upsell something or how they make a recommendation or that kind of thing.* [Annelise, 22, Melbourne café and restaurant worker]

In general, participants described being thrown into their first hospitality job and having to 'sink or swim' by watching others. Participants agreed that this process was often unsuccessful, with many workers coming into venues for one or two trial shifts and then being dismissed. This was due to a general perception that what matters is a worker's

'personality' rather than their skills, despite the difficulty that participants described in having to learn their jobs without formal support.

Some participants nevertheless discussed deliberately training and supporting new staff members, and considered this their responsibility as more experienced workers. This was recognised as successful to the operation of venues because inexperienced staff who did not understand what was required of them would interfere with the labour of others and the systems in place within a venue. Emerson describes deliberately training a new young worker who was initially regarded as unlikely to 'work out' by co-workers, but who Emerson felt it was her responsibility to support:

> *She started with us when she was 15. She was there for about three years. She started off as a teenager. Too cool for school. Over that time we built her confidence…She was carrying three plates. I said you are doing it the hard way. If you lower your elbow, you do these basics. But I've definitely in other jobs spent time. Generally, I do a lot more with first timers, like 18/19 year olds will come in for the first time. This is what we do.*
>
> Do you feel like you get reimbursed for that or compensated for that in monetary terms?
>
> *No. No money will change hands for extra training…Someone has to do it. I had someone do this stuff for me when I was 18/19. I believe it's one of those things that you need to pass on. I've got this big belief in mentoring and the older generation helping the younger generation.* [Emerson, 34, Melbourne restaurant worker]

Informal training of this kind allows workers to develop the technical and relational skills they need despite being largely unsupported in their work by managers. This support is informal and unremunerated, not a part of formal employment duties but critical to the way that venues operate. Its informal and largely voluntary nature is likely part of why so many new hospitality workers do not 'work out' in venues.

Conclusion

Hospitality is popularly regarded as unskilled work, and as discussed in chapter three, workers are employed on the basis of 'fit', or in the hope that they will fit into a venue, understanding implicitly how to relate to the consumers and other staff. In this sense,

hospitality work is seen as a spontaneous expression of a person's identity – of who a person is, rather than what they can do. However, workers in this project emphasised that hospitality work is not simply about personality. Instead, workers describe a series of practical and relational skills that are accumulated through experience in the industry and then mobilised in strategic ways in order to provide consumers with the experience they are looking for. This includes managing self-presentation (the 'front') in order to appeal to different consumers who may have different expectations, and requires workers to recognise and respond to these expectations on the basis of fleeting interactions and limited social queues. They are able to do this in part because of informal and unrecognised training they are offered by their co-workers. They also develop these relational skills in order to survive in an industry that often includes uncivil treatment from consumers who feel entitled to belittle workers when unsatisfied with their service.

Chapter 5: Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment in The Service Industry

Introduction

Gender-based violence and sexual harassment - such as suggestive, aggressive or degrading comments and unwanted physical contact - is widely documented as a major problem in the interactive service sector (Coffey et al, 2018; Coffey et al, 2023; Bruner and Dever 2014; Good and Cooper, 2016; Sharp et al, 2022). Women hospitality workers in our program of research frequently described instances of being sexually harassed, primarily by customers. Employers or managers often did not have processes for protecting staff, so such issues were individually assessed and navigated by workers on their own. Women bar workers were also routinely called upon to defuse violent or aggressive patrons at work. Here, gendered associations which position women as more capable of managing complex interpersonal relations create situations of significant potential harm for workers. This chapter discusses how gender norms, specifically related to femininity, are crucial for understanding the risk of gender-based violence and harm that women workers in the industry face. In this chapter, we discuss key findings related to femininity and gender norms in front-of-house service labour, including how these norms are connected to the broader problem of gender-based violence at work. We first discuss the forms of femininity expected from young women workers, before discussing examples of sexual harassment, and how women learn to mitigate the risk of gender-based harm through the course of their work.

Gender-based violence and sexual harassment are symptoms of gender inequality both in the workplace, and in broader society (UNHCR 2023). Women historically are over-represented in lower-paid and more demanding roles in the service industry (Guerrier and Adib, 2000; Women First, 2010). The challenges for women working in hospitality are well-known, and range from a lack of reward and recognition to serious workplace safety issues such as gender-based violence, including sexual harassment (Morgan & Pritchard 2019, p.39). Sexual harassment in front of house hospitality work disproportionally affects younger women, transgender people and tipped workers, who comprise a significant proportion of this workforce (Gilbert et al., 1998; Poulson, 2007).

The results of the largest national survey into workplace sexual harassment (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2022) highlight that those working in the areas that incorporate hospitality experience higher rates than the national average. Long unsociable hours, a

preponderance of young women working on flexible, part-time contracts in often sexualised marketing and working environments, and broader gender norms are shown to be contributing factors (Morgan & Pritchard 2019 p.42). A recent study which surveyed 4,281 workers during 2020 (HospoVoice, 2021) found that sexual harassment is one of the underlying and ongoing issues within hospitality. Previous surveying by HospoVoice (2017) indicated that 89% of young women working in the industry experienced sexual harassment.

Feminist research describes how the norms of femininity, including receptivity and heterosexual appeal, can create the conditions for sexual harassment in service labour (Hochschild, 1983; Brunner and Dever, 2014; Pettinger, 2011; Good and Cooper, 2016; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1994; Watts, 2007). Hospitality is a more sexualised space than many other service occupations such as retail (Poulston 2008). The monitoring of styles of dress, appearance and comportment which align with 'fun', light-hearted femininity is also crucial in this sphere of work. These demands have been described as 'aesthetic labour' (Mears 2014), drawing attention to the fashion, body and beauty requirements alongside those of emotional labour. Bodily strategies undertaken in an effort to 'look right' are critical in producing the sensation of 'feeling right' which venues hope to create for consumers (Witz et al. 2003).

Heterosexual appeal through femininity at work

Femininity norms were central in women participants' descriptions of their experiences of hospitality work. Bar workers described that creating a 'buzz' or 'vibe' in a bar was a cornerstone of their work. Catherine, for example, described how she managed different tasks on a typical weekend shift in an atmosphere of 'a lot of orders, a lot of people, a lot of noise'. Working at the bar overlooking the dancefloor, she fulfils traditional bar-tasks such as 'thinking ahead to when we will need another bottle of something, and asking the glassy to get another one', alongside 'reading the crowd' and 'purely interacting with customers', and making sure the 'vibey' dance-club atmosphere is maintained:

> *[I read the crowd for] how much fun I can have with them, definitely. How annoyed they are if they've been waiting for a while. If I can see that they're pretty annoyed I might have a little bit more fun with them, spend a little bit more time sort of getting them happy again, joking around with them...So particularly when it's busy, obviously they're coming from the dancefloor which is heaving and having heaps of fun and you*

want to make sure when they're standing at the bar they're still having a good time. They're not losing that buzz so to speak…I think it's just - I don't know, I just do it. [Catherine, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

Catherine's efforts to 'read the crowd' and interactions between the bodies is a key skill of her work, demonstrating 'emotional expertise' (Wolkowitz 2006: 77). Two other Melbourne bar workers, Neve and Jack, said 'it's almost like we're psychologists', describing their expertise in reading patrons' behaviour and anticipating their needs.

The 'vibes' and appealing atmospheres are created within broader gendered, racialised, and sexualised dynamics. The young women in the study described 'how they look' as an important dimension to their work, and something openly discussed by managers and amongst workers (Coffey et al. 2018). Christine, for example, said:

People go to the bar expecting an ideal stereotype. There's a real sense of expectation that the women behind the bar are sexy and fun, flirty, especially in a [hip] bar… I think a lot of the time I unintentionally became a 'manic-pixie-dream-girl' [stereotype] kind of thing because I had pink hair or red hair or blonde hair and a Joy Division t-shirt, and that was like an ember behind the bar and [these characteristics] screamed at people. It was a weird kind of fantasy thing… I found myself a lot of the time enacting that because it actually gets the tips, and that's shit, but you know. [Christine, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

Meera, 30, similarly described being explicitly aware of how her appearance and dress was key to her work. She worked as a 'hostess' in a 'high class' bar in Melbourne's 'South side'.

As a hostess you're expected to 'dress up': I've been told when I'm working as a booth hostess to dress better, or not show up in basics, because behind the bar you can just wear jeans and top. They have to be black and yeah, you're set. You don't necessarily have to wear make up, but a lot of people do wear make up because I think they get better tips when they do. But as a hostess I've been told to wear a dress… (Meera, 30, Bisexual, Indian, Melbourne, bar worker)

Meera's 'friendliness' and 'appeal' connect with heterosexual femininity and beauty ideals and make her a valued employee, where value is in large part comprised through her physical appearance and positioning as 'exotic' or different in racialised and gendered dynamics of

power. Her ethnicity – or difference in being 'not white-passing' – is a talking point for men she's encouraged to dance with and 'make them feel good'.

> *If I'm on the floor and somebody starts dancing with me, I'll probably have a little boogie with them and that makes them feel good that they were able to connect someone, with a stranger almost instantly. I do get a lot of questions, where people are just generally interested in my ethnicity and have a chat with me about that.'*

Similarly, Queenie, a Brazilian bar worker in Melbourne, discussed how her 'difference' (as being 'not white') was strategically used by her manager who positioned her to be visible from the street to attract passers-by to the venue:

> *The manager told us, you're all beautiful girls, you're hired…you're going to stay in this bar which was the quieter bar but it was the first bar that people saw… because people see you and they will like it*. (Queenie, 24, Straight, Brazilian, Melbourne, CBD bar worker)

Young women across the study had to carefully navigate this atmosphere of sexuality in interactions with customers in a way that the young male participants did not. Historically, female service workers have been seen as sexually available to male customers (Poulston 2008). Both young women and men in the study described enjoying the pleasures associated with the sexually-charged party atmosphere of the bar. However, women workers described a clear 'line' that is crossed when sexually explicit or harassing comments are made by customers.

Sexual harassment: 'The line is clear'

Sexual harassment was described as a widespread problem in the industry, particularly in bar work. Participants described numerous instances of 'deeply inappropriate' and 'disrespectful' behaviour, ranging from verbal to physical harassment.

> *There is a line and sometimes people cross it. I think it's very clear. I think it's as soon as you feel unsafe in a situation, it's like 'don't say to me, anything explicit about what you want to do with me'. That's obviously, deeply inappropriate. I'm serving you a drink."* [Karen, 25, Melbourne bar worker]

Catherine describes an array of problematic behaviours and 'types' of customer she has encountered in the bar:

> *There's...the dudes who are really sleazy, really unpleasant, really aggressive...and they're the ones who are just everywhere, do you know what I mean? These dudes are like 'hahah' and just taking up space and completely unaware of anybody else and then there's the quiet butt grabber and ass grabber, or the leg stroker. You're walking around trying to glass or trying to sweep up through a crowd and as you pass somebody just puts their hand up your skirt and disappears into the crowd. I hated that.* [Catherine, 24, Melbourne bar worker]

Similar examples of physical assault and verbal sexual harassment are reported in this sector (Kavanaugh 2013; Mellgren et al. 2017). Catherine and Karen described how male customers deliberately take advantage of sexist assumptions about women's sexual availability which seem to 'come with the territory' of bar-work.

Learning how to manage problematic, harassing or abusive customers was considered a routine part of the job for many woman bar workers. Jenny, Catherine and Karen describe an unconscious vigilance to the undercurrents of danger and risk in venues, including those interactions with patrons and with co-workers that are enjoyable or fun. Jenny says this embodied capacity to 'scan for risk' comes 'from personal experiences of not being safe in venues and not being safe as a woman in the world sometimes':

> *I think certainly when women are dealing with these issues there is all this other stuff that they have experienced just from inhabiting a female body as well...You're already used to receiving a certain amount of shit and attention and abuse sometimes as well and harassment.* [Jenny, 28, Melbourne bar worker]

Felicity also described learning how to assess 'body language' and sense 'threats' as an essential skill which 'can't be taught':

> *I am able to assess a room and pick out a threat before it becomes a threat. You have to have a gift of the gab in this industry and you've got to have a certain amount of people skills. I can teach anyone to pour a drink, I can't really teach that [ability to assess threats], and that's something that becomes quite apparent with staff, you have either got it or you don't, you have got to be able to talk to people. It's not just*

> *verbally, it's body language. If you have got a guy that is about to wind up, you don't go at them with big movements.* [Felicity, 29, Newcastle bar worker and manager]

Developing this capacity to read and respond to customers and potentially risky situations is a complex skill which is essential in bar work. As Zowie said, "It's important we have enough staff. Another set of eyes, just to have a - to be security guards too. We are security guards as well". Such skills are cultivated over a long period of time in the job.

Some described specifically avoiding working in service of alcohol roles to avoid needing to manage harassment. However, others described that harassment is possible in any service role, including cafes or bakeries. Orinda told us that:

> *A couple of friends told me that in certain suburbs, where one was working in a bakery, she said this male customer would always often, sometimes hang around outside wanting to then talk to her after she was - during her lunch break and things. I've heard a few creepy things like that.* [Orinda, 28, Melbourne café worker]

Women workers felt service roles often came with the inherent risk of harassment, which was 'part of the job' and had to be managed by workers and some employers or managers.

Managing violent and aggressive patrons

A subset of bar workers (12) who primarily worked in small 'alternative' venues in Melbourne and Newcastle which did not employ security staff described being expected to manage potentially threatening or aggressive patrons themselves. These women bar workers were positioned (by themselves and colleagues) as more capable of defusing potentially violent situations before they escalated. This was due to assumptions connected with gender, including expected capacities for particular 'calming' relational styles.

The type of bar venue where women were more likely to be called upon to manage volatile situations were those which were small-scale, 'hip' or 'boutique' venues which presented an aesthetic in contrast the typical cocktail bar, pub, or 'beer barn' atmosphere to be found in other parts of the city or outer suburbs (see Coffey et al. 2018). Such venues were less likely to employ security staff, which meant that workers developed their own informal systems or processes for managing potentially aggressive patrons. This, however, means that the task of

managing potentially violent situations falls to bar staff, with women playing a central and taken for granted role.

Curtis explained that there is no explicit plan whereby women staff are asked to diffuse aggressive male patrons. It's something which 'just happens':

> *I think women by nature are seen as less of a threat where if a guy is sort of telling them what to do they'll get aggressive about it. It just happens that way and some people are better at conflict resolution than others as well so there are guys who can be a bit more peaceful in the way they work it out, yeah.* [Curtis, 26, Melbourne bar worker]

Curtis explains that women are less at risk of violence by these male patrons because they are not seen as a 'threat' to the aggressor. This narrative rests on binary gender norms, where women are positioned outside masculine relations of aggression and competition (Pruitt, 2013; Hobbs et al., 2007).

Stan explained that strategies typically employed by male staff including trying to speak calmly or trying to befriend potentially aggressive patrons would not work with men who were actively looking to start a fight:

> *Some guys just want to kick off and will start a fight over anything. So, you can try to be their buddy, you can try and get on their side and be concerned and be understanding. But those kind of guys, they can just be like, I'm not your fucking mate, sort of thing, and then, yeah, they'll just boom. It doesn't matter what you do in those situations, you're pretty much fucked. Unless you're a female (staff member), to be honest. Because they're generally not open to punching females – depending on the individual though.* [Stan, 22, Newcastle bar worker]

Jenny recounted examples where she intervened physically by placing her body between aggressive men. Jenny explained that men were typically surprised by her intervention in their behaviour.

> *Usually it's men in these situations who are causing the aggro. They do not expect a small woman to be getting in between them and arcing up at them. I think that's what works for me, is that they are surprised by it and that makes them rethink what they're doing. So they don't expect it. They have to reconsider what they're doing immediately because they don't want to hit me and they don't want me to get hurt*

> *because then I can charge them with something or then they're, like, the dude that hit a woman in a pub. Like, they don't want to be that guy and there are very few dudes that will not care about that.* [Jenny, 28, Melbourne bar worker]

Whilst the women bar staff here assumed that male patrons behaving aggressively would be unlikely to hurt them (Coffey et al 2023), this does not align with the literature on prevalence of gender-based violence inflicted on women in all spheres of life, in the home as well as in public settings and workplaces (see Department of Social Services 2022).

Threats and assaults against women bar staff

Despite women bar workers' best efforts to manage and diffuse volatile situations, they also described severe examples of abuse and threats of physical and sexual harm. In one particularly concerning example, Felicity described being followed home, continually harassed, and threatened by a patron she had ejected from the bar:

> *I have been spat at, I've been followed home...You will occasionally have guys who are actual pieces of shit. I went to kick one guy out for punching someone. He then proceeded to come back multiple times. He stood out the front and he screamed abuse at me for probably an hour and a half. He consistently came back for six months. I was going to make a police report after he threatened to follow me home and rape me. It's just male entitled yuckiness, but it was coming into my workplace and it was coming to a point where he was trying to get physical with me and then trying to get physical with the other staff when they're trying to step in.* [Felicity, 29, Newcastle bar worker]

This example shows that women workers cannot avoid the potential of gender-based violence at work, particularly if they are tasked with the responsibility for acting as security guards as well as creating a 'fun' atmosphere. Whilst participants did also describe incidents where women patrons had to be removed, the incidents did not carry the same sense of threat or menace (for example, Felicity described being spat on by a woman, and Candice described a woman standing out the front of the venue yelling abuse).

Others described the importance of relying on security or management in responding to violence and aggression. While Jose said that at his venue there was a "really good security

team", there were common occurrences where conflict and harassment driven by customers would escalate towards threats of physical violence and brawls outside of the venue. He said:

> *Yeah, had to throw people out for sexually assaulting staff members, for sexually assaulting other patrons, I've been spat at, I've been punched. I've been threatened that people are going to wait around and catch up with me after work, after cutting them off. I've had issues with, especially in kitchens, a lot of chefs that have been quite malicious. Yes, I think for the most part sadly it's very much part and parcel of the trade*. [Jose, 21, Melbourne bartender]

Numerous other studies highlight patterns of gender-based violence occurring in the nighttime economy (Anderson et al., 2007; Fileborn, 2016b; Kavanaugh, 2013; Mellgren et al., 2017). Our findings show how these patterns impact hospitality workers, specifically front-of-house bar workers. Given the scale and breadth of gendered violence against women, in domestic and public spaces including the bars they work, and on the street (Fileborn 2012) the taken for granted assumption that women are 'better suited' to manage violence is highly problematic, risky and exploitative for women bar workers. This is a form of extra labour that is unrecognised in the industry.

Conclusion

The examples in this chapter highlight how gender norms can make the hospitality industry an unsafe environment for young women. Women working in front-of-house hospitality jobs are burdened by gendered norms and stereotypes, where their roles as 'servers' position them as sexually and emotionally available to men. These norms are crucial in understanding the hidden capabilities expected of particular workers, and directly inform the risk of gender-based violence and harm that women workers face. There has been progress in recent years in efforts to address gender-based harms in the sector. For example, since 2021, 60 venues have signed up to a previous union-led "Respect is the Rule" campaign. However, further efforts are needed which address the underlying gendered norms in the industry which can enable discrimination, harassment and violence to flourish. Pressure to serve customers despite their offensive behaviour and assumptions that staff should simply ignore gender-based harassment in their workplaces contribute to this problem. Furthermore, the findings of this report highlight that gender inequalities underpin the attitudes and behaviours leading to

violence in these workplaces, and the responses to these problems, to increase the risk of gender-based violence for women.

Chapter 6: Genders, Sexualities and Queer Hospitality

Introduction

For workers who identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community (referred to as queer people throughout), gender and sexuality played an important role in how they created and managed consumption experiences for customers. They suggested that their own biographies as queer people offered a unique and valuable resource to the hospitality industry. Their identities were connected to their working practices and, in many cases, were considered economically valuable to the venues they were employed in. Yet, being 'out' as queer and/or trans at work came with the risk of violence, particularly because of the public facing nature of hospitality employment. In all queer participant accounts, particular forms of discrimination and harassment, such as homophobia, biphobia and transphobia had been experienced in the workplace.

In this chapter, we discuss two findings that describe how queer workers experience and negotiate front-of-house hospitality work. The first is the way that certain queer identities, aesthetics, and dispositions produce value in hospitality venues that aim to cultivate an 'inclusive' and progressive consumption space. This means that queerness is tolerated, even celebrated and encouraged, across venues providing it does not transgress certain assumptions about LGBTQ+ lives. Ideally, queer workers are fun, flirtatious, gentle and flamboyant in their workplaces, and are willing to take up the additional labour required to be an educator, advocate, best friend and counsellor to colleagues and customers. This leads into the second section of this chapter that describes workers' experience of violence, the ways that they negotiate hostility in the workplace and specific instances where being queer at work is risky. These findings complicate how interactive service labour has been typically understood, and offer new ways of thinking about 'diversity' at work.

Queer Hospitality

Queer workers' ability to produce positive consumption experiences were described as connected to their biographies. Most participants discussed the ways that their biographies as queer people were integral to the way they approached their labour and the skills required to facilitate a pleasurable experience for consumers.

> *I always like to, as a section waitperson, I'm there to kind of guide people through their experience and make that experience as good as I can. I can't do that if I'm just ticking boxes or going through the motions. There is a certain level of psychology in it of kind of gauging people based on non-verbal cues and stuff like that. But I do think that my desire to fulfill that is something that I didn't learn from my positions in hospitality. It's something that has come from somewhere else, I think.* [Bianca, 25, Melbourne restaurant worker]

Bianca described how her biography as a queer trans woman contributes to the service that she provides in her role as a section waitperson. For her, the way that she relates to customers comes not so much from her technical skills as a hospitality worker - although she notes that these skills are integral to her work - but her own lived experience as a queer person. In this way queerness acts a skill in and of itself, an orientation that can be drawn upon in hospitality labour to generate pleasure and minimise discomfort. Such a view was common among queer participants of this research which suggests that queer people draw on their own experiences of what constitutes particular forms of 'hospitality' 'beyond practical tasks; safety, warmth, generosity and pleasure. For queer workers, facilitating spaces of safety was a clear theme that resonated throughout the narratives collected. Felicity, a bisexual cis woman, worked in and managed a bar in Newcastle. While not a "gay bar", it was known to be a place where queer people could work and hang out.

> *We make sure everyone feels welcome, we're safe. Especially with the queer community, we're an unofficially recognised kind of safe space. The staff are all very lovely and approachable. So it's just the general ambiance of it all. We're not going to kick somebody out if they're in drag or wearing a dress when they should be wearing pants and stuff like that.* [Felicity, 28, Newcastle bar worker and manager]

Felicity described the labour that goes into generating a safe space in a public bar. Importantly, safety is defined by participants as protection from violence, discrimination and harassment. This was described as part of the way workers approach customers, and how venues themselves can become safe for queer people. In Felicity's narrative, the presence of queer workers and clientele and the relationships formed amongst them generated an atmosphere of safety, and assurance that this was an inclusive venue.

Participants such as Jacqui added that geography and proximity of their location to other diverse businesses and organisations also play a role in whether venues can produce spaces of safety. Jacqui described the café in which she worked as a comfortable space that was welcoming of queer workers and also as having a large queer clientele. She attributed this to its location in what is colloquially referred to as the "Bonsoy belt" of Melbourne. "Bonsoy" is a brand of soy milk, which in the following narrative represents left-leaning, progressive politics aligned with social justice principles.

> *I feel like potentially something about the location. I guess it's kind of the environment. I feel like it's not a very intimidating space and I feel like it's very open and they've tried hard to create a place where everyone feels welcome. I think that having a lot of vegan options is probably maybe potentially a contributor. Queers and vegans, you know, in the Bonsoy belt, I guess communities just work that way. A few people start going and they go, hey, this place is really great. Then their friends will start coming.* [Jacqui, 27, Melbourne cafe worker]

Jacqui's narrative describes how diversity and inclusion have become values that represent the progressive politics of certain suburbs in metropolitan and inner-urban areas. The location of venues like Jacqui's, set amongst other businesses and organisations which foreground principles of social justice as an element of their venue's image, generates an atmosphere of inclusion" —a community" as Jacqui describes.

In the same way that queer workers such as Jacqui and Felicity wanted to create safe spaces in the venues they worked, they also understood themselves to be attuned to particular workplace tensions which, in their experience, may not be as acutely felt by heterosexual or cisgender workers. Ryan, a gay cis man from Melbourne described this as a constant state of being in question particularly with other staff at the upscale restaurant he worked at as a bartender. When asked about his sexuality at work he says:

> *Being a gay man, I feel like I've got better social awareness just because I've spent so long introverted in my own head that I'm able to read situations better and read people's body language a bit better. I don't mean that in an arrogant way, I think it just is what it is. Sometimes I find that with staff it can be a bit difficult because I'm*

> *gay, [working with] with a couple of straight guys. I don't know if that's in my own head because I'm thinking, what have I done to this person? I'm like, is it purely just because I'm gay? Is that why they're acting up?* [Ryan, 27, Melbourne bartender]

For Ryan, being "in his own head" produced a kind of intuition, something that was useful in his role because he could sense when customers were uncomfortable or tense, and anticipate when they wanted his attention. He also suggested that his ability to read people gave him an extra skillset in the workplace, one that is drawn from his biography rather than his employment history as a bartender. Olivia, a cafe and bar worker in Melbourne named this intuition or orientation as 'a queer scope'.

Olivia went further to describe how "being a person who's attuned to queer politics, it's going to be a lot harder on you." Queer workers noted throughout the research that they often felt their front-of-house hospitality roles were exhausting, emotionally draining and effortful in ways that were particular to their genders and sexualities. For trans and non-binary workers particularly, their visibility meant often being approached by co-workers and clientele to engage in conversation about contemporary gender politics. Ben, a barista in Newcastle recounted an instance of a customer asking him about social constructions of gender and sexuality while he was making their coffee order:

> *They do feel invested in you at some point. Also that they have the right to know details about you. So yeah, there is probably some ownership there. It's like, well, you've been making my coffee and you remember my order so there's something here…I have had customers come to me as well to try and like counsel them through—yeah, the whole non-binary, the whole gender spectrum. It's cool but it's also beyond my role. You don't know how much you can actually do. It's like, "look, this is great, Greg, that you're starting to explore this and accept your own son, but this is a very public forum and I feel like you're probably not ready for this conversation with 10 people listening." It's just really—it's interesting, let's just put it that way.* [Ben, 30, Newcastle barista]

Ben's narrative was articulated in various ways across each of the trans and non-binary workers we spoke to. Such a finding demonstrates that while service workers are expected to

be open to interactions with customers, these expectations go beyond those required to facilitate consumption and are additional unpaid labour.

Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia at Work

Many participants recounted instances of homophobia and discrimination they had experienced directly while working in customer-facing, front of house roles. Homophobic slurs were the most common, and the terms that were used to vilify hospitality workers overlapped across participant experiences. Several workers in this project described sensing their workplaces as homophobic, or "unsafe" places to be "out". Caleb, for example, who had previously worked in a daytime café described regularly hearing "homophobic slurs", which meant he avoided telling anybody he was gay. Noah, a café worker in Melbourne, commented on his last encounter with homophobic customers, 'I think the last one was […] I put down something in front of a couple and one of them said to the other, while I was walking away, "what a faggot" or something like that, just classic'.

Several of the cis male, queer participants recounted experiences like Noah's, and often with a kind of dismissive exhaustion, describing them as "just classic", a typical and unremarkable event. While Noah was employed in a management position at the time of the interview and was able to remove the customers, he was clear that it was his tenure as a long-serving hospitality worker which had afforded him that possibility. He later noted, "I spent years biting my tongue when I heard things like that, and I feel sad to think there are young queer workers experiencing that right now." The regularity and frequency with which queer hospitality workers could recount these experiences of homophobia in the workplace, often listing several examples in a row, speaks to its prevalence in the industry. Participants' descriptions of homophobia align with the experiences of queer workers in other customer facing industries such retail and social care work. The potential for homophobia was described as "the norm" in most hospitality venues which suggests that people with diverse genders and sexualities face unique forms of violence, discrimination and harassment. The threat of these kinds of violence also impacts workers, an example of which Bianca describes below:

> *I think for me as a trans woman, there is kind of a moment of insecurity when I meet someone for the first time and having maybe emailed or spoken to or whatever through text before or sent my resume or whatever and then when I first meet them*

> *face-to-face, there's often a moment of anticipation of how they may react because of course, there is a possibility that they may react negatively to finding out or realising that I am trans* [Bianca, 25, Melbourne restaurant worker]

For Bianca, assumptions about her gender and sexuality create a kind of 'anticipation' or 'insecurity' that occurs for her when she is about to meet someone for the first time after communicating via email or phone. She worries that her visibility as trans makes interaction with the public risky, even in venues that advocate for safety and inclusion. For other participants such as Jon, being 'out' at work as bisexual was too risky to be open to, and could be hidden.

> *We used to have some people who worked there who were gay and out. I'm not out, as bi or anything there; I'm a bit too scared to. I've been called nasty things without that being the intention of targeting me but [I guess] - the fact that they were comfortable saying something like that is telling of the crowd. It's a bit of a scary place.* [Jon, 21, Newcastle bartender]

In venues which did not actively take an inclusive stance, several participants said that they allowed other staff members and customers to assume they were heterosexual in order to minimise the risk of hostility and potential violence. Workers' capacity to contest homophobia and transphobia from customers therefore varied from venue to venue. Workers were expected to navigate an aggressive and uncomfortable situation while also assessing the degree to which they would be supported by management in responding to this kind of homophobia. Unlike Noah, Ben was not in a management position and yearned for management to clearly designate "the line" for what is "acceptable" or "unacceptable" behaviour, rather than placing responsibility on the individual to "speak out":

> *Yeah, where is that line and why is that line not standardised across venues? I feel like that line [calling out bad behaviour] is dictated by your superiors and that sort of intersects with the way that you are expected to comport yourself at whatever venue that you're working at, and that will change depending on the venue. But yeah I think having to negotiate the way that you are expected to comport yourself and that kind of bullshit bigotry. For us [queer workers] - those two things don't necessarily intersect in a good place.* [Ben, 30, Newcastle barista]

Ben's comments about the intersection of bigotry and the expectation of some employers for workers to make their queerness part of the way they engage with customers speaks to a broader issue where only some forms of queerness are acceptable. Moreover, the ability of queer staff to contest specific forms of violence such as homophobia were dependent on the values of venue managers and other staff. For those who felt affirmed in their workplaces, calling out bad behaviour among customers and other staff was possible as Noah suggests.

An example of how queer workers proactively contest violence in their workplaces was raised by Xan, a cafe worker in Melbourne's CBD. Xan was a non-binary person who had worked across a variety of cafes throughout Melbourne and interstate.

> *I try the majority of time to wear a badge that says they/them underneath my normal name badge so then people – especially any other queer people that might walk in will feel safe to talk to me. Or they will know that I'm okay to talk to and won't standoffish or offend them in anyway.* [Xan, 23, Melbourne cafe worker]

Like other queer workers, Xan suggested that the use of signs and symbols that indicate queerness and/or allyship in hospitality spaces was a strategy for both creating a safe space and resisting homophobia and transphobia. They saw the use of a lapel pin with their pronouns displayed as a way to signal to others that they were 'safe to talk to' while also asserting a political stance against discrimination. Other participants spoke of similar strategies for creating safety such as through their own fashion and aesthetics, the use of art and symbolism, and by using gender neutral language. These strategies for contesting violence were specific to queer workers and their allies, yet were noted as only being possible in venues which supported and affirmed queer workers.

Conclusion

This section of the report has discussed some of the unique ways that queer hospitality workers engage with their employment, negotiate tensions in the workplace and contest violence that can arise between customers and co-workers. The diversity of hospitality venues that these participants have laboured in reflects a wide array of workplace practices and levels of management support that impacts how these workers are able to do their jobs,

and the additional demands placed upon them. For some queer workers, the venues that they laboured within enrolled politics of diversity and inclusion into their consumption offering. These venues were usually in inner-urban areas where tolerant cosmopolitanism was part of the socio-cultural landscape, such as the ‘Bonsoy Belt’ of Melbourne's northern suburbs and Newcastle's inner-city night-time economy. In these places, the pressure to be ‘out’ at work’ is a part of affective and immaterial labour practices that offer the kind of consumption experience customers anticipate within a venue that includes the presence of queer workers.

In venues where diversity is less valued, queer hospitality workers find themselves less likely to be ‘out’ at work, and experience a general hesitancy in expressing their sexuality. The lack of support from venue management also impacts how workers are able to relate to customers and the strategies they employ to contest homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the workplace. Our findings suggest that queer workers require additional protections in the workplace including an acknowledgement by venue management that their sexualities can be risky in public space. Moreover, workplace practices that affirm and support queer expression result in workers feeling a general sense of safety that extends to creating spaces of safety for customers. These spaces are valuable in inner-city venues where diversity is part of a consumption experience. The labour of queer workers is particular to how inclusivity is generated and maintained, yet is largely invisible and exploited in most mainstream venues.

Chapter 7: Class, Taste and Hospitality Work

Introduction

In the following chapter, we focus upon rising tensions between economic pressures that some venues place on workers, and the local community, especially in areas experiencing ongoing gentrification. Bar, café, and restaurant workers are often wary about these tensions, much more so than owners and developers, as workers are aware of how gradual changes in neighbourhoods can prompt conflict between gentrification's appeal to 'taste' and status, and their day-to-day experiences of work. Young hospitality workers embody the competing interests of the markets that result from gentrification: the allure of fashion, art, music, and trends at the creative cutting edge against rising costs and displacement of long-term residents. These workers have the perspective of being part of what drives rising costs, while being undervalued for their skills, labour, and time and sometimes being priced out of consuming in their own workplaces. The findings below outline how many hospitality workers we spoke to feel these conflicts that may marginalise them economically while also being against their own values and beliefs. Gentrification is thus often against the interests of the workers themselves, even though their own presence and their labour may contribute to these processes.

"Can't afford to eat here"

In terms of the economic position of young hospitality workers and their relationship to class, the question of whether they would consume in the venue they worked at was a simple one. Many could not afford to this, and rarely went out to hospitality venues themselves. Regardless of whether they thought the food was of an acceptable quality, many young people we spoke to were also studying and found that their economic position did not match the price points of most cafes and restaurants locally, nor that of their peers. This means that workers were aware that they were in a different class than the customers. As Rolo told us:

> Rolo: *I don't really go out to eat or drink that much. So, I only do it socially, so I mean probably. Yeah, I guess so. I think that's where it's the kind of place people usually go so yeah. Don't know.*
> Facilitator: You haven't [given it] that much thought.

Rolo: *No, I don't - well, I can't really afford to eat out all the time, so I don't really do it that much.*
Facilitator: Is it the kind of place that you need a lot of money to eat at?
Rolo: *If you're going to do it - like our regular customers, I think they would surely be paid well. Like I don't anyone who is a student who could do that many times throughout the week. So, I think you'd have to be on a decent income to afford like a $23 classic eggs benedict.* [Rolo, 22, Melbourne café worker]

In this conversation, Rolo shared that he rarely went out to eat or drink and saw that the regulars at the up-scale café he worked at would frequently spend what for him would be quite a lot on breakfast and coffee, pointing out that well-known Australian politicians and sportspeople ate at the café regularly. The novelty of eating out to him meant that he hadn't given thought to where he might go beyond the odd occasion. For a student like Rolo, it was uncommon for himself or his friends who were also studying to spend money like that.

Moreover, some young hospitality workers not only felt that they could not afford to eat at the venue they worked at, but they would also prefer to make their own food and sit in a nice place. Farhana, an international student, explained this as she talked about the café she worked as a barista in, which was positioned with a prized vista near the beach. For Farhana, a better experience would be to make her own food. She said:

Facilitator: Would this be the kind of café that you would come to eat at?
Farhana: *No.*
Facilitator: [Laughs] No? Where would you prefer to go?
Farhana: *I think I would prefer to make my own sandwiches and sit at the beach. I think I can make – I personally felt, because I have had the food there myself, I personally felt that it is overpriced. I wouldn't go there, yeah*. [Farhana, 23**,** Melbourne barista]

Farhana and others could see what their employers were marketing with their prices – location, aesthetic, novelty – but the price does not match what they felt they could provide for themselves. Here, as Farhana indicates – an appreciation of value for money is qualified in her understanding of how the food at her venue is priced. This value then, can be compared with how many young hospitality workers felt that they themselves would not be able to

afford to eat or drink at their own venues, while gaining the discernment to judge food quality against the economics of the market they work in.

Although young workers that we spoke to frequently indicated that they might have been employed to appeal to the marketability of a venue, they themselves could not be the clientele. For many, without staff discounts offered, they would not know the quality of food and drink they served to a customer from a higher-class background. This is reflected in how many workers think about how they are treated, but also in how they perceive the people they interacted with on the job. For example, Ken described a particularity of high-class bar patrons, who fussed over an image of a beverage rather than its taste. Ken said:

> Ken: *You just get like, weird requests all the time. Like, I think people get a lot more picky when they're at somewhere where they're spending more money, which makes sense. They want to get something specific out of it. But I had one last night where he wanted like five drinks but all of them just had to be blue. It didn't matter what it tasted like, it just had to be blue. I had nothing to make stuff blue so yeah*.
>
> Facilitator: Do you know why they wanted blue drinks?
> Ken: *It would have just been a photo thing I reckon, trying to match it to an outfit or something but so weird*.
> Facilitator: Do you think you could afford to eat or drink there?
> Ken: *If I saved up for a while maybe*. [Ken, 20, Melbourne bartender]

As demonstrated in this quote, Ken was bemused by the fact that those he served would often ask for bespoke products at a higher cost which they didn't intend to consume, just for the novelty. Ken had been brought up middle class in Australia and worked in the bar section of a fine-dining restaurant of a high-rise hotel in the CBD which required wearing a suit, but otherwise frequented rock shows in his spare time. Although Ken had previously reflected that he enjoyed working at this bar because of the staff's attention to detail in delivering high quality drinks and service, in the above conversation he notes this service was not something he could afford without saving up for. A distinction is made here where for many young people working in the industry there is a care for service and product which they themselves will not get to consume.

Other participants in the study had strong views on where they were positioned within this balance between quality and price. In some venues, the price covered more than what the

patron would receive on the plate. As Sydnee revealed, this insight led her to believing that the venue she worked at was simply "overpriced". Sydnee told us:

> Facilitator: Is this the kind of venue or restaurant that you might come to eat or drink at yourself?
>
> Sydnee: *No. We're so overpriced. Oh my God. Like, our average spend per head is $200 which is insane for the – and I'm not saying the food is bad. It's not bad. But like, it is not worth $200 per head*.
> Facilitator: Okay, putting aside money would you go there? Do you like the food?
> Sydnee: *Like I said we are expensive, and I don't consider our food to be that good, right? So, the problem is for people from the suburbs that's fine because generally they don't have that kind of amount of fine dining restaurants to compare it to. Whereas for international visitors and for people from the city that usually do have money and they come in, they're usually not impressed by what we offer food wise, especially for the price because they have more they can compare it to. So that's usually an issue*. [Sydnee, 24, Melbourne bartender]

Here, Sydnee finds that the cost of going to a fine dining restaurant was often more of a novelty experience for some patrons than others. When we spoke, Sydnee was about to head into her final shift employed at this restaurant, to return to study in hopes of earning more elsewhere after working in the industry for a long time. As she could not relate to the experience on offer at this restaurant, she did not see herself eating there. For many young hospitality workers, the uneven balance between price also created a conflict within perceived clientele expectations relating to class in hospitality settings.

As described in these examples, young hospitality workers must continuously manage the expectations of quality against their own value, when they themselves could often not afford the products that they served. In such settings, these workers would find that they could not relate to some regular customers of their venues, who happily paid for their service and expected more of staff than what these interviewees thought was worth the price, or what they themselves would receive. Some workers who could not justify the price for what they served had a stronger sense of detachment to their venue. Managing this uneven balance positions young workers in a practice of continuously attuning to the standards of others, while being devalued for their skill and understanding of quality provision of service.

Working through Taste and Identity

The young hospitality workers that took part in our study also provided insight into how aesthetic choices made by venues form part of the appeal to taste sensibilities of ideal customers. In design, this appeal would implicate codes of behaviour and interaction for the staff. These insights were made clear in our photo-elicitation interviews, where young workers were asked to reflect on how the atmosphere or 'vibe' of other venues might change working practices. In these discussions, many interviewees reflected that there were some aesthetic choices made in venues to draw a crowd or demographic of customers who would have distinct expectations relating to taste, attitude, and service. Chelsey, a middle-class student working in both a café and a fast-food restaurant in the CBD shared that some venues with more artistic and 'hipster' aesthetics in the inner North of Melbourne made her feel self-conscious. She said:

> *Chelsey: I think I would feel some sort of pressure to be cool, interesting both to my co-workers and then also to the customer. I think they expect a certain type of down to earth, friendly, professional but also cool kind of customer service. I don't know, it's very Inner north. [Laughs].* [Chelsey, 18, Melbourne café worker]

In Melbourne, terms like 'Inner North' or 'South of the river' are commonly used as shorthand for very different tastes and expectations. Chelsey had moved to Melbourne from Perth to study urban planning and had been working in hospitality for about three years. For her, parts of Melbourne had aesthetic choices which venues had associated practices of work in having to relate to both other staff-members and customers that she felt out of step with. In our interview, she told us that outside of work and study, she did not have much time to get out. To be 'cool' related to assumptions of cultural knowledge that were coded in the style and aesthetic of the business that she could not connect with herself - but knew were markers of taste and being able to spend time in parts of Melbourne. In this respect, workers perceived that this type of setting could bring on a higher amount of judgement and critique, both from the customer base as well as their colleagues. If a young worker felt they did not have the established cultural expertise or understanding to get along in such a venue, they might feel intimidated, or under pressure 'to be cool'.

Further, participants felt that the production of taste through working in a venue could make them feel less confident in working well amongst their colleagues, or to support the

expectations of the customer. This would potentially lead some young workers to reconsider where they work, based on location, style, or their own perception of cultural knowledge. When Zowie responded to images of a fashionable wine-bar in the Inner North of Melbourne, she had feelings of intimidation, sharing that:

> *Zowie: It'll be a bit intense. Oh actually, I don't know. I've never worked in an environment like that before. But I feel like if I say the wrong thing, I'm just going to get fired on the spot [laughs].*
> Facilitator: What do you mean?
> *Zowie: Maybe I say something like - as like I take it as a joke, but then they misconstrue it and it's not a joke to them. Then it just gets really awkward..*
> Facilitator: What would it be like to get along with the customers in a place like this?
> *Zowie: I just feel like because I'm not from this - from the area, I wouldn't be able to know how to converse. Or I wouldn't find like I wouldn't be able to have many things in common. Or be interesting, like "oh, I have to be interesting. I'm not interesting."*
> [Zowie, 25**,** Melbourne bartender]

Zowie gives the sense that working in such a stylised venue would make her feel like an outsider, sharing that she would be under higher scrutiny by both her fellow workmates and the customers. Living in Caroline Springs, she preferred to work in a bar where she could feel comfortable to be herself, make the kind of jokes that she understood, fool around, or knew what people were talking about. Zowie was also a student and told us she came from a working-class migrant background, and that she was more likely to have friends over to eat and drink than to go out to other bars and cafes. She mentioned that her parents hoped that one day she would get a 'real job' to support herself – but she couldn't imagine what that would look like right now. For Zowie, the intensity of an environment where you needed to know what was happening in the area made her reflect on her own knowledge and feel that she wouldn't 'be interesting' enough to retain the job. The pressure to comply with style or cultural norms in the production of an aesthetic taste then, could either draw some hospitality workers into a venue, or away from it.

In other venues, the deliberate use of design and aesthetic cues could also draw a contrasting appeal. During the photo-elicitation process, participants responded to a new venue in the city that pulled on an older style of pub, with warm and eclectic furnishings that were more common in regional Australia. Discussing this venue, participants were both comforted, and

confused about its appeal. For example, Ken spoke about how the familiarity of such a venue would give a sense of ease for both the worker and the customer – informing casual service and simplifying practices. Ken told us that:

> *Ken: It feels very kind of like rural town, like, whenever I visit my parent's family– [place name] like that kind of outer suburb. This feels yeah like every bar you walk into. It's that pool table… I think because it does kind of seem like it's trying to run cheap, like you can only see one staff person in there. I reckon it would mostly come down to getting the specifics of what's laid out right. So, you're keeping all of your work simple and you're also not wasting anything. But beyond you can get a good amount of freedom in that kind of environment. You can just kind of work to your own style and as long as it's not getting in the way, then yeah it can be rewarding and easy and comfortable.* [Ken, 20, Melbourne bartender]

For Ken, the style made the venue look 'cheap', even when this might not be the case. The styling then would lead to a different set of expectations, or freedoms in working amongst other staff and customers who visited the bar, to have their 'own style'. In such a venue where a deliberate choice is made to juxtapose the more expensive surroundings, expectations in practice could then be met on a day-to-day basis, supporting the staff as needed, to the functional practice of service.

However, such choices could also be perceived as appropriating an aesthetic. While many participants responded to this venue positively, seeing the style as familiar or comforting and easier to work amongst, others found the choice in using a nostalgic aesthetic to be a contradictory appeal to taste. In one interview, Rolo told us he found this choice to be quite jarring:

> *Rolo: Like a gentrified kind of vibe? Wow. That's lame.*
> Facilitator: [Laughs].
> *Rolo: Yeah. That's weird.*
> Facilitator: What do you think - who do you think would come to a place like that?
> *Interviewee: Probably like - well, I don't know now because I know I don't know how people know of it or how people think of it. Like if they do know that it is a quirky kind of attempt, then I don't know. I don't know of any businesses who are trying to attract that, that haven't been doing that for ages though. Like I don't know any places who open up looking for that demographic.* [Rolo, 22, Melbourne, cafe worker]

In Rolo's view, to 'gentrify' the style of older, regional Australian pubs was an unusual choice which he couldn't understand. In using the term 'gentrify' here, Rolo implies how some venues are complicit in using style and location to market towards an appeal which may not be in earnest, and difficult to replicate in the current economy. Having grown up in regional Queensland, Rolo could not understand how an upscale bar touching on a taste which he personally felt was from the past, regional or 'cheap', would attract affluent clientele. The use of such familiar, comforting and 'cheap' aesthetics then, could both prompt an ease at work and with customers or disdain for involvement of appropriation of taste. Helen, who had been working in hospitality since a teenager and moved to Melbourne from rural South Australia had a shifting perspective on how some businesses were influenced by and toward such trends. Working as both a server in one of these more up market venues, studying social work, and as a DJ, Helen was reflexive about these issues, provided insight into how the taste cultures and aesthetics of her venue are particularly intimidating for some people. Helen told us:

> *They're very responsive to trends in that, we have got a blue drink, everyone's got a blue drink. I think that it's a very Instagrammable place. A lot of the people that are running the kitchen were Instagram chefs; had a following. I very much live in the Inner-North of Melbourne and don't go South-Side, but there are a lot of people that I would call southside type people, city people, suits, older people, random groups of people constantly eating the food. It also scares people as well. I definitely hear a lot of people talking about how they don't want to go to [VENUE] because of that. They don't feel comfortable being there because of how trendy it is. That's what people say all the time.* [Helen, 28**,** Melbourne wine bar worker]

As Helen points out, markers of taste create different feelings: they can make workers and customers feel included or excluded, comfortable or awkward. The discussions we had with workers illustrate the tensions that arise when a venue may be fitting more with the gentrified forces taking place in a suburb rather than the locals that have lived there for years, sometimes for generations. Helen above told us of how her venue recruits from a community, meaning the artist community that the venue is attended by, rather than the community of residents. This implicated who would attend the venue, and the trends or aesthetic choices to which the venue related. Helen thought about these distinctions, in sharing how she thought about how this in relation to her other job at a local youth centre. She said:

> *I think the whole point of [venue] is that it's meant to be an amalgamation of profit, of capital and grassroots community. It's meant to be this space that's representative of and for the community that it's in, but I definitely know that they have to work really hard to try and get community involved in the space. I was there with my youth centre job today, having a meeting about how to integrate the young people that are in the [three local suburbs] community in this space that they don't feel a part of. I think it's like a tugging; a pushing and pulling tugging of we're a community trying to be for the community, but then there's the community.* . [Helen, 28**,** Melbourne wine bar worker]

In this last sentence there are three 'communities' Helen refers to being in tension within the ongoing process of gentrification, with community here aligning clearly with different classes: business owners, artists, and local residents. The first is her workplace ('we're a community') that is built into a non-profit social enterprise to raise opportunities of small business and artistic practices ('for the community'). However, when she says, 'there's the community', what she means is the existing residents who are largely in the surrounding government housing and are either absent or more likely ostracised a venue's prices and aesthetic orientations to more middle-class tastes. Identifying this 'tugging' between community and profit, the workers we spoke to demonstrate an intimate understanding that they were both part of the process of appealing to one crowd while potentially forcing other 'communities' away.

Conclusion

Young workers are employed in hospitality to serve food and pour drinks, but as we have established throughout this report, their very presence including their styles, tastes, sexuality, and gender are curated in some venues to create a specific aesthetic and vibe to attract specific consumer cohorts. For workers themselves, feelings related to class, such as being able to afford to eat there or feeling above or below customers in a class-based hierarchy has implications for working practices and customer relations. The language of class particularly emerges when hospitality workers talk about working in venues that they would not go to as customers, can't afford to eat at, or spaces where they feel less comfortable or have difficulty relating with the customer-base. This is especially prevalent in gentrifying locations. Young hospitality workers we spoke to were also wary of gentrifying processes while being

complicit in them. Many workers identified that there was a double bind to find work in venues which adopt aesthetics or appeal to their taste and values, which may lead to divisions of class. These findings show how young hospitality workers reflect upon their part in the blurring of this practice. While they are priced out of these venues and areas, their tastes, aesthetics, and community engagements are also drawn into and provide the appeal to developing businesses and property value.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This final chapter of the report summarises project findings and suggests implications for employment practices in the hospitality industry. These implications are discussed with the aim of supporting the sustainability of the hospitality industry and improving the lives of workers. Hospitality workers' interactions with customers and with one another are the basis for value creation in the industry, but they take place in conditions that are materially precarious and sometimes dangerous. As the industry is in a period of post-COVID recovery amidst broader economic uncertainty, now is a critical moment for workers and employers alike to improve hospitality workplaces.

Summary of findings

Our findings relate to two aspects of hospitality labour: working conditions and labouring practices.

Working conditions in hospitality need urgent improvement. Workers are precariously or informally employed. Hospitality is one of the most poorly remunerated forms of work in the Australian economy. Workers have little security about when they will work, or whether they will continue to receive shifts, and are overwhelmingly casualised with no employment benefits, meaning that they are often obliged to work while unwell to meet the expectations of their employers and to support themselves materially. Despite this, many workers state that they would prefer to remain casual rather than being placed on a salary, because they have witnessed salaried co-workers working beyond their formal hours without remuneration and for a lower hourly rate. This reflects the generally exploitative conditions that workers find in this industry. The demographically young nature of the hospitality workforce in part reflects these conditions: hospitality workers struggle to sustain themselves materially on their wages, and hospitality work forecloses an adult life if this includes aspirations for parenthood or home ownership. Hospitality is therefore not sustainable for workers.

Women and queer workers face an additional set of challenges. Our findings show that women are frequently perceived as objects of sexual aspiration and desire, and experience significant sexual harassment from customers. Our participants agreed that this is endemic in

the industry. The ways that workers can respond to sexual harassment and other risks depend on their employers' own attitudes and are not standardised across the industry. In some venues sexual harassment is ostensibly not tolerated, and in others they are encouraged to see it as part of the job, part and parcel of being a woman working in the industry. Women and queer workers also perform significant additional labour that is invisible and unrecognised, but critical for making hospitality venues safe for consumers. Women working in late night bars are called upon to diffuse potentially violent situations on the assumption that they are relationally skilled and safe from violence between men. Women and queer workers deliberately monitor social interactions amongst customers to manage these kinds of risks, and queer workers must also contend with the threat of homophobia at work due to the publicly visible and relational nature of their work. Working in hospitality places workers in the public eye, and places them at risk of harm.

Within these conditions, workers' identities, relationships and interactions produce value and create profit for their employers. Workers understand that their task is not simply to serve food and drinks, but to create an atmosphere of enjoyment that patrons will pay to experience. They take pride in their ability to do this and recognise this as the main source of value in their venues. Workers therefore deliberately manage their interactions with the aim of being 'fun', and thereby facilitating the convivial enjoyment that hospitality venues offer to consumers. Their identities, including their interests and consumer tastes, are a part of the value they create, because they allow workers to recognise and enact the kinds of relational styles expected by consumers and employers. Workers' friendships are also a source of value for the industry, because they cross over into the social relations of their work and facilitate the hospitality labour process. The 'social scene' of hospitality facilitates employment in the industry by connecting workers to venues where they are likely to 'fit in', and thereby reduces staff turnover in a notoriously fluid industry. Value creation therefore takes place in ways that are often invisible and not necessarily captured by the formal employment relation, whilst nevertheless relying on the identities and relationships enacted by workers.

Workers create this value without formal training or support. Hospitality is popularly regarded as 'unskilled' work, but this relates more to the assumption that hospitality labour is the spontaneous expression of young people's ability to have fun with others, rather than the day-to-day nature of the labour. However, because of the assumption that hospitality is unskilled, training is limited or non-existent. Hospitality workers describe being 'thrown in the deep end' and having to learn how to perform the tasks and interactions expected of them

by watching other staff. Often this is unsuccessful, and they do not 'work out' in a venue, a process which explains the notoriously fluid nature of the labour force and employers' difficulties in finding the 'right' staff. Some workers take it upon themselves to support new staff with informal training on the job, but are not recognised or remunerated for this work. Despite this, workers develop significant practical and relational skills in their jobs. They are able to work under pressure and can manage interactions with a diverse customer base, a skill which they often deploy in order to minimise the chances of experiencing incivility from consumers dissatisfied with their experience. They do this conscious of the fact that their job is regarded as unskilled, and that this unskilled status accords them a low status in the service interaction and in public life more generally.

Together this amounts to a complex form of interactive service labour in which workers strategically deploy finely tuned relational skills in order to produce an immaterial, poorly understood, but enormously valuable product – the 'vibe' of enjoyment or the 'dining experience'. This takes place amidst some of the poorest working conditions in the contemporary Australian economy. Considering these in relation to the connections between labour, value and identity considered here leads to three key recommendations about the future of this industry.

Implications for Industry Reform

The hospitality industry is in need of urgent reform. Improving the industry offers benefit to workers and employers, and supports the viability of employment in the hospitality industry. Improving conditions in hospitality workplaces will allow workers to build materially secure lives on the basis of hospitality work. They will also help employers to retain quality staff and improve the labour process within venues. Finally, they will also improve the reputation of the hospitality industry as a place to work and to consume. Amidst repeated public scandals in the restaurant industry and elsewhere, the following reforms are needed:

1: Sustainable conditions for workers.

For hospitality to offer sustainable employment to workers, casualisation must decrease, wages must increase and reflect the work performed. Workers must be recognised for their role in value creation and must be compensated for training staff and carrying out other managerial duties. Salaried workers must be compensated for time worked beyond the

requirements of their contract and should be paid wages that reflect their importance to venues. Workers must be empowered to take time off when they are sick or when they have responsibilities outside of work. This means that venues must be staffed adequately, so that workers do not feel obliged to come to work due to a desire to support their co-workers.

2: A zero-tolerance approach to harassment and gender-based discrimination.

New policy is needed for addressing sexual harassment in front-of-house service labour, including processes for registering and resolving complaints, investigations and outcomes developed in consultation with workers. New policy is also required to support LGBTQ workers. A 'zero tolerance' approach to sexual harassment and homophobia should be adopted and implemented explicitly. This policy should be consistent across the industry. It should be actively endorsed by employers and workers should be empowered to speak out when treated disrespectfully by consumers. When businesses take positions of 'zero tolerance' that includes a culture of supporting workers, and preventing harassment, these venues are more inclusive for both workers and clientele. Undertaking measures to prevent violence and discrimination in hospitality can thus improve attitudes about venues, as well as broader attitudes about hospitality work itself. Collaboration between management and workers on strategies that minimise risk and reduce harm in the context of their work are essential.

3: A new approach to skills and training in hospitality.

Hospitality venues must offer adequate training to their staff rather than relying on the informal efforts of experienced workers. This must include both practical and relational aspects of the work. Experienced workers who train staff who are new to a venue should be recognised, materially compensated, and provided with time and resources to train others to the best of their ability. If training is made explicit and if experience is rewarded in venues, perceptions of hospitality as 'unskilled' work can be replaced by a more substantial recognition of the importance of workers' practical and relational skills for the creation of a satisfying consumption experience and the broader successful operation of a venue.

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[i] A full analysis of the digital diary method is provided in Threadgold, S. Coffey, J. Cook, J. Farrugia, D. Sharp, M. Whitton, F. & Burke, P.J. (2020) Young Hospitality Workers and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Work, Family Support and Wellbeing. Report prepared by the Newcastle Youth Studies Network, University of Newcastle. Australia.

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