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Relational Evaluations: How Frontline Foodservice and Retail Workers Use Workplace Relationships to Evaluate Their Jobs

by

Adam Storer

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Kim Voss, Chair
Class of 1939 Chancellor's Professor Neil Fligstein
Associate Professor David Bamman

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Abstract

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Adam Storer

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Kim Voss, Chair

Where do workers find meaning in frontline foodservice and retail jobs? These jobs are known for their low wages, lack of benefits, and schedule instability coupled with routinized interactions, service with a forced smile, and an employer who is seemingly cutting costs without any concern for worker well-being. To better understand where workers might find meaning in these jobs, this dissertation looks to workplace relationships, how they factor into job evaluations, and the extent to which organizational concerns color these relationships. Specifically, the dissertation studies relationships among frontline workers and their customers, as well as relationships among coworkers.

This dissertation draws on two novels datasets: job reviews posted on Glassdoor.com, and a survey fielded using Facebook advertisements. From both datasets, I sample 10 foodservice and retail companies, collecting both quantitative data and open-ended text responses. To analyze the data, I conduct qualitative and computational text analysis, in addition to regression analysis.

In the first empirical chapter, I study how workers incorporate descriptions of relationships with their customers into written job evaluations in order to understand what these relationships mean to workers. I find that frontline workers evaluate customer interactions in three ways: as an inescapable occupational hazard or benefit, as a source of intrinsic satisfaction, or as the result of organizational strategies. Next, I find that frontline workers' job satisfaction and turnover intentions are more highly associated with agreement or disagreement with organizational strategies regarding customers than with other common ways of theorizing customer interactions. Importantly, this chapter shows that workers care about their customers and how the organization treats their customers.

In the second empirical chapter, I measure the extent to which relationships with customers influence workers' desires to conduct emotional labor, provide high quality customer service, and make the job satisfying. I do so by first measuring how workers perceived their workplace relationships as changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I find that while respondents report that relationships with coworkers and supervisors generally stayed the same during the pandemic, relationships with customers deteriorated dramatically. I then use this deterioration in the quality of customer relationships as an independent variable. I find that a decline in relationships with customers is associated with more difficulty conducting emotional labor, less investment in producing a positive

customer service experience, lower job satisfaction, and higher turnover intentions. These results provide new insight into the centrality of positive customer relationships for job quality and organizational efficiency in the service sector.

In the final empirical chapter, I turn to the topic of coworkers. This chapter asks, how are workers impacted by their perceptions of how their company treats coworkers in relation to themselves. This chapter evaluates work schedule quality as a job characteristic that workers draw upon as a source of comparison. I first establish through an analysis of free-text responses that frontline workers have multiple pathways to access information regarding coworkers' schedules. Next, I find that frontline workers are more likely to compare schedule quality to their coworkers and compare wages to other employers. I hypothesize that this difference may be in part due to the high visibility of schedules in the workplace. Further, I find evidence of steep declines in schedule satisfaction, overall job satisfaction, and increases in turnover intentions when frontline workers feel they have worse schedules than their coworkers. In contrast, I find limited evidence for small to modest improvements when workers feel they are treated better than average.

Together, these three chapters demonstrate the complexities of workplace relationships in foodservice and retail, but also the meaning that relationships bring to work. They highlight that relationships matter to workers' subjective well-being, turnover intentions, and desire to perform the job well. Additionally, these chapters show that workers are alert to how their employer treats customers and coworkers. Workers notice what their managers are doing, and they are concerned about how it affects themselves and others. Workers want to feel as though their company cares about them and the work that they're doing. When workers interpret managerial decisions as evidence that the company does not care about them or their work, workers are worse off. While such decisions may benefit companies in the short term, cutting costs at the expense of customer service and schedule stability may cause higher turnover and less satisfied customers, impacting organizational efficiency and profits in the long run. The findings from this dissertation advance multiple fields of sociological theory, including theories of social comparisons, schedule quality, stratification, emotional labor, and intrinsic satisfaction at work.

Contents

Acknowledgments iv

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Serving Like an Organization: How Foodservice and Retail Workers Interpret Their Interactions with Customers 11

Chapter 3: The Effect of a Decline in The Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor, Job Satisfaction and Turnover: Evidence from COVID-19 43

Chapter 4: Comparing What to Whom? Workplace Stratification of Scheduling Practices as a Source of Social Comparison 64

Chapter 5: Conclusion 84

References 87

Appendix A 102

Appendix B 105

Appendix C 107

Appendix D 110

Appendix E 119

List of Figures

2-1 Predicted Glassdoor Ratings for Organizational and Occupational Customer Orientations . . . 31
2-2 Predicted Job Satisfaction for Agreement with how Company Treats Customers 36
2-3 Predicted Job Satisfaction for Difficulty Putting on a Happy Face . . . 37
2-4 Predicted New Job Search for Satisfaction with how Company Treats Customers 38
2-5 Predicted New Job Search for Difficulty Putting on a Happy Face . . . 39
3-1 Changes in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 . . . 46
3-2 The Average Marginal Effect of a Change in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 on Difficulty Putting on a Happy Face . . . 58
3-3 The Average Marginal Effect of a Change in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 on Job Satisfaction . . . 60
3-4 The Average Marginal Effect of a Change in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 on Turnover Intentions . . . 61
4-1 The Effect of Schedule Comparisons to Coworkers on Satisfaction with Schedule Stability . . . 79
4-2 The Effect of Schedule Comparisons to Coworkers on Job Satisfaction . . . 80
B-1 Histograms for Glassdoor Ratings by Customer Orientation . . . 105

List of Tables

2-1 Interpretations of Customers in Written Job Evaluations on Glassdoor, Pros and Cons . . . 27
2-2 Glassdoor Review Summary Statistics . . . 30
2-3 Descriptive Statistics of Survey . . . 35
3-1 Descriptive Statistics of Survey . . . 55
3-2 The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor and Attachment to Customer Service . . . 57
3-3 The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Job Satisfaction, Customer Service Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions in Frontline Foodservice and Retail . . . 59
4-1 Descriptive Statistics of Survey . . . 74
4-2 To Whom Do Foodservice and Retail Workers Compare Wages and Schedules Characteristics . . . 76
4-3 The Effect of Explicit Relative Comparisons of Schedule Quality Compared to Coworkers on Usual Hours, Schedule Stability, and Shift Notice Satisfaction Among Foodservice and Retail Workers . . . 78
A-1 Qualitative and Machine Coding Tabulations . . . 103
4-4 The Effect of Explicit Relative Comparisons of Schedule Quality Compared to Coworkers on Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions Among Foodservice and Retail Workers . . . 104
B-1 Missing Items in Glassdoor Data . . . 106
C-1 The Effects of Organizational and Occupational Orientations on Glassdoor Ratings - Cons Model . . . 107

C-2 The Effects of Organizational and Occupational Orientations on Glassdoor Ratings - Pros Model 108
D-1 Sample Demographics in Comparison to Schneider and Harknett (2019b)'s Table 1 111
D-2 Key Glassdoor Customer-Oriented Variables 112
D-3 Key Facebook Survey Customer-Oriented Variables 113
D-4 The Effects of Perceived Treatment of Customers and Difficulty Conducting Emotional Labor on Job Satisfaction 114
D-5 The Effects of Perceived Treatment of Customers and Difficulty Conducting Emotional Labor on Turnover Intentions 115
D-6 Robustness Checks on Job Satisfaction Regressions 116
D-7 Robustness Checks on New Job Search Regressions 118
E-1 Robustness Check Ordinal Logistic Regression: The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor and Attachment to Customer Service 119
E-2 Robustness Check Ordinal Logistic Regression: The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Job Satisfaction, Customer Service Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions in Frontline Foodservice and Retail . . 120

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1970s, the United States economy has seen dramatic growth in the service sector, with frontline foodservice and retail jobs now employing over ten million workers. This transition to a service economy has brought job quality polarization, with a proliferation of good jobs among managers and professionals, and bad jobs among frontline service workers (Kalleberg, 2011). Frontline foodservice and retail jobs now make up some of the most common bad jobs in the United States.

These frontline jobs are known for their low wages and lack of benefits (Osterman and Shulman, 2011), and for their precarity (Kalleberg, 2018). As employers attempt to squeeze more profit out of frontline workers, they look to cut labor costs as much as possible, frequently keeping workers around only for the hours when they are absolutely necessary (Lambert, 2008). As a result, workers are often unable to get full time work, and are forced to leave their schedules open in case they are called in at a moment's notice (Henly and Lambert, 2014).

While many workers in the US economy benefit from desirable schedule flexibility, foodservice and retail jobs leave workers with undesirable schedule instability, as they are often unsure of when they might be working, or for how long (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a; McCrate, 2012). Not only are schedules unpredictable, they are also undesirable. These workers need to be available on nights, weekends, and holidays, when others might be spending time with friends or family (Presser, 1999, 2003).

These service jobs also provide little autonomy. Even human interactions are highly routinized (Leidner, 1993; Ikeler, 2016), and service with a smile is a mandated part of work (Hochschild, 1983). Workers are asked not only to smile through the monotony of a boring workday, they must put on a happy face while experiencing incivility (Kern and Grandey, 2009; Han et al., 2016). Beyond generic incivility, workers may experience sexual harassment (Tindell and Padavic, 2021; Good and Cooper, 2016a), transphobia (Hadjisolomou, 2021), and racism (Kern and Grandey, 2009) from their customers. Through it all, workers are expected to smile and remember that the customer is always right (Korczynski and Evans, 2013).

This dissertation asks how frontline foodservice and retail workers make sense of their situation. How do they motivate themselves? Where do they find meaning in their work? And how does the ever-present cost-cutting employer factor into these attitudes? To answer these questions, this dissertation studies workplace relationships. Although research on emotional labor and deskilling provides evidence that workplace relationships could be another in a long list of negative job attributes, a continued body of research suggests that workers may indeed find meaning in these workplace relationships.

First, although the routine and brief nature of the service work might seem to preclude workers from developing meaningful relationships with customers (Korczynski, 2009), qualitative evidence suggests just this outcome. Leidner (1993) studies McDonald's workers, and finds that workers often describe customer interactions as the most satisfying aspects of their jobs. Tolich (1993) studies grocery store workers, and particularly cashiers, finding that these workers also sometimes feel connected to the community due to their jobs. Reich and Bearman (2018) similarly find that Walmart workers often discuss customers in a positive light. Nonetheless, when researchers look for meaningful workplace

relationships in service work they typically focus on healthcare, since the relationship between a nurse and a patient seems more meaning-laden than that between a McDonald's worker and their customer (Lopez, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019). However, as Bolton and Houlihan (2005) argue, all customer interactions, no matter how routinized, are human interactions. As such, workers and customers are given an opportunity to connect with one another, even if this is a brief connection. This dissertation asks, in what ways do these connections really matter to foodservice and retail workers?

And what role do coworkers play? On the one hand, coworkers may be a useful source of support in a difficult working environment (Sloan, 2012; Ducharme and Martin, 2000). On the other hand, as these companies cut costs to improve profits, workers often end up operating in a resource deprived environment, where coworkers are pitted against one another, competing over scarce resources such as a desirable shift or a full week's worth of hours (McCrate et al., 2019; Wood, 2020).

In considering relationships with customers and coworkers, this dissertation pays special attention to the extent to which workers factor in the multiple cost-cutting measures implemented by their employers in their own job quality evaluations. Are they aware of these strategies? Do they hold it against their employer? Do workers buy into a competition for desirable hours, reveling in the success of receiving a stable schedule? Or does the scarcity simply leave those who end up with worse schedules feeling that their employer treats them badly compared to their coworkers? Do workers notice the strain that cost cutting measures like understaffing puts on customer service, and does this matter to workers in terms of subjective job quality, turnover intentions, or their motivation at work?

To answer these questions, this dissertation draws on two novel datasets, sampling over multiple industries and organizations. The next section explains my methodological approach, followed by an outline of the arguments advanced in each chapter.

Methodological Approach

When attempting to understand how workers make sense of their relationships in an industry characterized by large national chains, it is important to consider that differences in management strategies may account for a significant amount of the variation. For instance, if companies have different scripts for talking with customers, different ways of codifying whether the customer is always right (Korczynski and Evans, 2013), or different scheduling practices, workplace relationships may vary dramatically. Unfortunately, research on these topics does not typically include large-scale variation along industry and organization due to the lack of available data. When research does include such variation, it tends to rely on national samples where unobserved differences in management strategy by employer are not accounted for (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b).

Yet some of the most convincing qualitative evidence on these topics comes from comparisons between companies (Lopez, 2006; Vermeerbergen et al., 2021). Unfortunately, sampling over multiple organizations is typically time consuming. Qualitative researchers often spend months working in or observing a single organization, making it difficult to scale. For quantitative researchers working with organizations, developing and maintaining contacts with a single organization in order to review their sensitive information can

similarly be a time-consuming process. Yet, sampling over multiple organizations is important. Otherwise, researchers run the risk of conflating the nature of work in the low-wage service sector with how workers feel at a specific organization or establishment.

To address this issue, this dissertation uses two novel sources of data to measure how workers make sense of social relationships at work: data collected from job reviews posted on Glassdoor.com, and an original survey of workers recruited using Facebook Advertisements. These data sources, discussed in more detail below, both allow for sampling over specific employers. While these data are not matched, meaning that I do not have any metrics provided directly by the employers, they are employer-identified. Employer-identified data allows for the inclusion of employer fixed effects in regression models. This approach controls for unobserved differences in management strategies (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a; Storer et al., 2020) as a way to better understand how workers in this sector in general draw on relationships with customers and coworkers in order to evaluate their jobs.

This dissertation samples workers from five different industries and includes two organizations from each industry. The sample consists of big box stores (Walmart and Target), pharmacy retail stores (Walgreens and CVS), coffee shops (Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts), fast food stores (McDonald's and Burger King) and hardware stores (Home Depot and Lowe's). The sampling strategy is meant to include variation both between and within industries. By capturing variation between industries, I observe workers who deal with coworkers and customers in slightly different ways. For instance, in hardware stores or big box stores workers may be more spread out from one another, using their knowledge about the store to solve problems for customers. In the fast food stores and coffee shops, interactions may be more routinized (Leidner, 1993) and consist of shorter service encounters (Korczynski, 2009). Workers in these industries may also work more tightly together as a group in a confined space, amplifying the importance of relationships with coworkers. Each industry also shares similarities, such as the presence of cashiers, and a mix of jobs that do and do not regularly involve customer service.

Within each industry I sample two of the largest comparable chains available. This within-industry variation makes it possible to control for differences between chains, in terms of what types of workers they recruit, their customer base, their pay and benefit levels, how work is organized, and the style of customer service interactions that are mandated by the company. These differences in managerial strategy are numerous, making it difficult to enumerate each difference in a survey questionnaire. By producing an employer-identified dataset with multiple employers in the same industry, it is possible to control for these potential differences using fixed effect models without needing to identify each specific difference in how organizations are managed. This sampling strategy makes it possible to analyze workplace relationships in the sector overall.

Glassdoor Data

This dissertation first uses data from Glassdoor.com, a website where individuals can post anonymous reviews of a company, their salary, and the interview questions they were asked as part of the process of applying for their job. Glassdoor also allows employers to post jobs on the website, and it does not allow employers to take down any reviews. Glassdoor uses a "Give-to-Get" model, where one must give a review to see other reviews or job postings,

and this process has been shown to reduce bias in online reviews (Chamberlain and Smart, 2017; Marinescu et al., 2021). Glassdoor is one of the most popular of many such online services. As of 2021, Glassdoor has over 50 million written reviews, and receives over 65 million monthly visitors to the website (Glassdoor, 2021). Glassdoor data is becoming an increasingly valuable source in academic research and has been used to study various aspects of organizational culture (Storer and Reich, 2019; Corritore et al., 2020; Wowak et al., 2022; Das Swain et al., 2020).

Glassdoor data is additionally useful because it prioritizes free-text responses, asking workers to describe the "Pros" and "Cons" of their jobs. By qualitatively considering these written reviews, this dissertation considers spontaneous, varied ways of understanding the workplace. Moreover, it can do so at scale, sampling over a decade's worth of reviews from multiple organizations. This is particularly important since workers may be willing to discuss things in ways they would not otherwise when responding to a traditional survey or a structured interview. These written reviews may better capture individuals' thought processes than survey or interview questions because people's understandings tend to be somewhat unstructured, and potentially incoherent (Swidler, 2003), attributes not easily accessed in interview and survey questions. This dissertation takes advantage of the Glassdoor data in different ways, through qualitative review, computational text analysis, and correlating what workers write about their jobs with their job rating.

Facebook Survey Data

This research also uses survey data collected on Facebook.com. The survey was marketed to workers who indicated they were employed by the same 10 companies on Facebook.com and Instagram from November 7th to November 12th, 2020. The sample was collected using Facebook Advertising, in which workers who indicate that they are employed by these companies are served an advertisement on their feed to fill out a survey for a chance to win a $500 gift card. It is important to note that I do not recruit respondents from Facebook groups, where individuals must be an active member to receive an invitation to participate. Instead, I target any Facebook users who include one of the ten companies as their employer on their profile.

In comparison to other samples drawn from other online platforms (Wang et al., 2015), sampling from Facebook has the advantage that the majority of Americans are active on the platform (Perrin, 2015). The Facebook Ad sampling strategy has been validated both with respect to the general population (Grow et al., 2021) as well as specifically for targeting frontline workers (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b). This strategy has notably been used by the Shift Project to analyze a similar sample of workers to the sample in this research (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a; Storer et al., 2020; Schneider and Harknett, 2021).

The survey asks about a variety of topics, and like the Glassdoor data, also prioritizes the collection of free-text responses in addition to asking Likert-scale survey questions. Throughout the dissertation the survey will be introduced multiple times with different sample sizes. This is because some survey blocks appear later than others throughout the survey, so different questions have different levels of attrition.

This dissertation is composed of three closely related chapters that use these datasets in different ways. The first two chapters use this data to analyze the relationship between

workers and their customers in foodservice and retail jobs. The third chapter focuses on relationships between workers and their coworkers, considering which job qualities workers compare to their coworkers, and examining the effects of feeling treated relatively better or worse than their coworkers. The next section introduces each upcoming empirical chapter in more detail.

Serving Like an Organization: How Foodservice and Retail Workers Interpret Their Interactions with Customers

The first empirical chapter of the dissertation asks, how exactly do frontline workers make sense of their customers? In the years since Hochschild's (1983) pioneering work on emotional labor, researchers have identified a variety of processes, specific to service work, suggesting that customer service interactions in foodservice and retail are likely to make bad jobs worse. Most notably, when workers are asked to engage in surface acting, typically by smiling through customer incivility, they frequently end up feeling alienated and dissatisfied with their jobs (Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Kern and Grandey, 2009; Groth and Grandey, 2012). While some types of customer interactions are thought to give workers more of a sense of meaning, specifically in healthcare (Lopez, 2010; Vermeerbergen et al., 2021; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019) research suggests that multiple factors make this sense of meaning less likely in foodservice and retail work. The interactions are short and routinized (Leidner, 1993; Ikeler, 2016) and do not have the same amount of inherent meaning as in healthcare (Korczynski, 2009).

However, some research suggests that even in frontline foodservice and retail, customer interactions are sometimes described in a positive light. In interviews, grocery store workers, McDonald's workers, and Walmart workers, all describe how customers can provide a sense of job satisfaction (Tolich, 1993; Leidner, 1993; Reich and Bearman, 2018). Given these competing ways of making sense of customer interactions that appear in the literature, this chapter investigates how workers make sense of customer interactions using Glassdoor and Facebook surveys.

First, this chapter investigates this issue by systematically studying how workers incorporate customer service interactions into written job evaluations. I sample 500 "Pro" reviews and 500 "Con" reviews mentioning customers from Glassdoor, and inductively develop a coding scheme in which workers demonstrate three different orientations towards customer interactions. In the first orientation, workers describe customers as an occupational hazard or benefit, where rude or nice customers are just a part of the job. A large portion of these reviews mention the incivility that research typically highlights when discussing customer interactions in foodservice and retail work.

Next, some workers describe customers using a second orientation, describing these interactions as a source of intrinsic satisfaction. Workers with this orientation describe themselves as finding meaning in their job by helping customers, even if it is only through a very simple task like a McDonald's workers making a soft-serve cone for a customer. Others with this orientation describe relationships with regular customers as a source of satisfaction, even though interactions with these customers are likely quite brief and somewhat surface level.

In addition, I find a third orientation where many workers are oriented towards customers

in a somewhat different way. Workers with this orientation put themselves in the headspace of their employer and concern themselves with how others are treating customers. Workers with this perspective are pleased when they perceive either their coworkers or the company itself as caring about customers. On the other hand, workers are frustrated when they feel that their company does not care about customers. This can present itself in different ways. For instance, workers may attribute negative customer interactions to understaffing or poor management. Workers who express this orientation are often disappointed that the company or their coworkers do not seem to care about good customer service as much as they do. Interestingly, these different orientations highlight the way that the same interaction with a customer can be interpreted differently. A negative interaction with a customer may be interpreted as the fault of the customer's personality when a worker has an occupational orientation, or the fault of the employer when a worker has an organizational orientation.

To further investigate the organizational orientation, this chapter conducts two quantitative analyses. First, using computational text analysis, I code the portion of the Glassdoor reviews that mention customers for either the occupational or organizational orientation, using the qualitatively coded reviews as a training set. I then associate the expressed orientation with Glassdoor reviewers' job ratings. I find that workers who express an organizational orientation typically give more extreme reviews of their job. Second, I draw on the Facebook data to understand how significant this organizational orientation is in comparison to one of the most common ways researchers think about interactions in frontline service work: surface acting. I find that, compared to when workers report a difficulty conducting surface acting, negative opinions regarding how the company treats customers are larger and more significantly associated with job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

These results point to the organizational orientation as an overlooked yet consequential aspect of how workers make sense of customer interactions. Many frontline workers care about their customers, and they want to feel that the organization cares as much about customers as they do. This is not just a theoretical concern. Their subjective well-being and turnover intentions are tied to their attitudes on the matter. This orientation may be particularly important in frontline foodservice and retail, since it suggests that frequently utilized cost cutting measures such as understaffing may impact workers in more ways than previously understood.

This chapter adds to the theory of emotional labor and customer incivility by identifying the varied ways that workers make sense of their customers, the meaning workers draw from their customers, and the significance of workers' organizational viewpoints. In the next chapter, I consider the significance of customer relationships more directly. While this chapter shows qualitatively that customer relationships matter to workers, and examines how different orientations are associated with outcomes, the next chapter examines to what extent positive or negative customer relationships in general affect worker well-being and organizational efficiency.

The Effect of a Decline in The Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor, Job Satisfaction and Turnover: Evidence from COVID-19

The second substantive chapter of the dissertation explores the association between customer relationships and multiple outcomes. The chapter asks: when the quality of customer relationships changes, how much more or less difficult is it to provide a positive customer service experience, and how are subjective job quality and turnover intentions impacted? The survey was fielded in November 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was, from a research design point of view, an opportune time to measure how shifting workplace relationships affect job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Specifically with respect to customers, there are reasonable arguments to be made that relationships with customers might have improved, and also that they might have deteriorated. On the one hand, workers in foodservice and retail jobs that may once have felt unimportant suddenly were considered essential. In this setting, customers may have shifted how they dealt with workers, giving them a newfound sense of respect, and thus producing a more appreciative customer base and a more rewarding workplace environment. On the other hand, each workplace interaction posed a threat to a worker's health at the same time as supply chain disruptions caused shortages and buying panics. In addition, new mask policies in the workplace were a potential point of discord among different workplace actors, while also creating a physical barrier to social connection.

While relationships with customers were shown to be important in the previous chapter, and also have been shown in various context to be consequential for workers in prior research (Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Han et al., 2016; Prasetyo et al., 2021) there are multiple confounders that make it difficult to accurately measure the association between the quality of customer relationships and outcomes like worker well-being. Most notably, customer relationships may differ by management strategies among employers (Lopez, 2006; Korczynski and Evans, 2013), or by personality (Pugh et al., 2011; Bono and Vey, 2007), and these factors are typically stable. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an exogenous shock to service workers, and this chapter shows that it was the relationship between workers and their customers that was the most deeply affected.

Drawing on survey results from the Facebook data, I find that, while coworker and manager relationships were largely stable during the COVID-19 pandemic, customer relationships deteriorated dramatically. Nearly 40% of survey respondents claimed that their relationships with customers declined. This decline in the quality of customer relationships is unfortunate for workers, but it provides a unique opportunity to measure how central this aspect of frontline service work is for workers.

This chapter investigates what happens when customer relationships decline. It explores the associated effects on one's ability to conduct surface acting, attachment to providing good customer service, and job satisfaction. First, I find that for workers who felt that customer relationships declined because of the pandemic, there was an associated increase in the difficulty expressed in conducting emotional labor. I also show that when customer relationships declined, workers were less attached to their work. Specifically, workers were significantly less likely to agree that it is important that customers leave happy. This finding reinforces the argument in the first chapter that customer relationships can give the job meaning. As a result, when these relationships decline, the job itself becomes less meaningful,

and workers are worse off. Since prior research has shown that customers are keenly aware of the extent to which service workers are genuinely invested in their satisfaction (Snipes et al., 2005; Hur et al., 2015; Gremler and Gwinner, 2000; Groth et al., 2009), when workers are less motivated the company's bottom line may also be affected. Finally, this chapter shows that when customer relationships declined, workers were less satisfied with their jobs overall, and were more likely to search for a new job. Even in an industry dominated by contingent and unstable work (Lambert, 2008; Henly and Lambert, 2014; Schneider and Harknett, 2019a), higher turnover rates are associated with lower organizational efficiency (Kacmar et al., 2006).

Given the potential impact on not only the workers, but also on organizational efficiency, these findings suggest that employers would be well advised to facilitate positive, meaningful connections between workers and their customers. This chapter, along with the previous one, highlights the twofold positive effect that facilitating meaningful relationships can have on workers. First, workers will directly benefit from positive interactions, and be more attached to their work, when these relationships are maintained. Second, workers will perceive that the organization is working to maintain positive relationships with customers, which also plays an impactful role on well-being and turnover intentions.

Comparing What to Whom? Workplace Stratification of Scheduling Practices as a Source of Social Comparison

The first chapter of the dissertation shows that workers are keenly aware of how their employer treats customers. In addition, workers perceptions of how their company treats customers is significantly associated with subjective job quality and turnover intentions. This chapter asks, how are workers impacted by their perceptions of how their company treats coworkers in relation to themselves?

Workplace inequality among coworkers is a well-studied topic in the discipline. The distribution of desirable job rewards, such as pay, by ascriptive characters, most notably race (Storer et al., 2020; Wood, 2020) and gender (Kristal et al., 2018; Snipp and Cheung, 2016) has been shown to both exist and impact worker well-being. These studies of the first order effects of inequality show the extent to which some workers are treated materially worse than others, receiving lower pay, fewer benefits, and worse schedules.

This chapter considers the second order effects of this inequality, measuring the psychological effect of being the recipient of relatively worse or better treatment than one's peers in the workplace. This effect has been studied most often through the lens of relative deprivation (Stouffer et al., 1949; Easterlin, 1974; Clark and Oswald, 1996; Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Caporale et al., 2009), especially in the area of pay. A strategic emphasis on pay in many studies simplifies research by producing a single, quantified metric of treatment to consider across multiple groups, but it has been criticized because it overlooks other salient dimensions of workplace inequality (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Kawachi, 2012).

This chapter introduces schedule quality as a potential source of social comparisons. In frontline foodservice and retail, a regime of unstable and unpredictable schedules (Henly and Lambert, 2014) create a context where workers may be competing against each other for better, more stable schedules (Wood, 2020; McCrate et al., 2019). Previous research

has shown that unstable schedules have important first order effects, with workers worse off when they receive unstable schedules (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b, 2021; Carrillo et al., 2017). Research also shows that desirable schedules are unequally distributed within the firm (Storer et al., 2020). These are exactly the type of circumstances in which a valuable resource may be given out selectively within an organization (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Acker, 2006; Ray, 2019), making it a prime site of social comparisons.

To analyze these social comparisons, I first use open-ended survey questions to enumerate the different ways that respondents learn about their coworkers' schedules, in order to ensure that frontline workers perceive variation in schedule quality among their coworkers. I find that knowledge of others' schedules is commonplace, often posted publicly in the break room, or available over a workplace app. Given that workers are aware of others' schedule quality, and the possibility of inequality along this dimension, this study goes on to use comparisons along to study wage and schedule inequality in order expand theories of social comparisons.

This chapter asks: do individuals compare different goods, such as schedules and pay, to different reference groups? Findings indicate that workers are significantly more likely to compare schedules with those of their coworkers, yet to compare pay with that of outside reference groups, like friends and workers at similar companies. This suggests that there are different types of positional goods, or goods that one uses to make social comparisons. First, there are context-agnostic positional goods, such as pay, that can be somewhat easily compared across multiple reference groups. Second, there are context-specific positional goods that are only easily compared to others within a specific context. For instance, who gets the more stable schedule or better hours, is something that can be difficult to observe across employers. Yet, in a context where workers are acutely aware of one another's schedules, this becomes an important positional good within that context. I argue that to the extent that workplace schedules exhibit (a) an unequal distribution that is (b) perceptible to members of an organization but imperceptible to those outside of the organization, they become a context-specific positional good.

Finally, I ask, to what extent are perceptions of relative schedule advantage and disadvantage, controlling for the direct effects of schedule quality, associated with job satisfaction and turnover intentions. While many studies measure only a negative effect of relative deprivation compared to the best treated referent in a reference group (Yitzhaki, 1979), other studies show that social comparisons are often more complicated (Kuziemko et al., 2014; Storer and Reich, 2019). This chapter examines how workers perceive their schedules compared to their coworkers in a different way. I ask whether workers feel they are treated relatively better or relatively worse than the average coworker. Findings highlight that, even after controlling for the direct effects of schedule quality, one's perceived position is associated with these outcomes.

However, this is not always the case. Compared to feeling as though one is treated equally, when workers feel as though they are relatively disadvantaged, there are large and significant drops in job satisfactions, and significant increases in turnover intentions. Conversely, when workers feel they are relatively advantaged, this is associated with smaller effect sizes, and ones that are less regularly significant. I suggest that this indicates that there is not a strong positive psychological impact of creating an unequal system within the workplace, which one might expect if one's prior belief that competition for a limited resource leads to better work. On the other hand, there is a significant negative impact of designing an unequal workplace,

particularly among workers who feel they are mistreated or underappreciated.

Together, these three chapters demonstrate how workplace relationships act as a source of meaning for workers in foodservice and retail, despite the strict constraints put on them. They highlight that relationships matter to workers' subjective well-being and provide a motivation to do good work. I find that meaningful interactions with customers can make an otherwise unrewarding job seem worthwhile. I also find that workers benchmark their treatment to those of their coworkers, and are worse off when they feel they are being treated less well than their coworkers, even after controlling for the first order effects of their material hardship.

Additionally, these chapters show that workers are alert to how their employer treats both customers and coworkers. Workers are attentive to what their managers are doing, and they are concerned about how managers' actions affect them and others. Workers want to feel as though their company cares about them and the work that they're doing. When workers interpret managerial decisions as evidence that the company does not care about them or their work, workers are worse off. Altogether, these findings advance multiple fields of sociological theory, including theories of social comparisons, schedule quality, stratification, emotional labor, and intrinsic satisfaction at work.

Chapter 2: Serving Like an Organization: How Foodservice and Retail Workers Interpret Their Interactions with Customers

Abstract

How do customers affect the job quality of frontline workers? This chapter draws on over 15,000 observations from two datasets of 10 foodservice and retail companies, conducting qualitative, quantitative, and computational text analysis in order to address this question. Findings suggest that frontline workers evaluate customer interactions in three ways: as an inescapable occupational hazard or benefit, as a source of intrinsic satisfaction, or as the result of organizational strategies. Additionally, frontline workers' job satisfaction and turnover intentions are more highly associated with agreement or disagreement with organizational strategies regarding customers than other common ways of theorizing customer interactions.

Introduction

How do frontline foodservice and retail workers view their customers? Unlike many office or manufacturing jobs, where workers are not required to interact with the general public, frontline service sector jobs are largely customer-facing. These jobs are not merely a special case; frontline foodservice and retail jobs constitute the two largest occupations in the United States, employing over 15 million people (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). In the past few decades, sociology has made considerable headway in theorizing the qualitative differences between customer-facing work and the traditional types of labor that had been the focus of centuries of research and analysis. Researchers have identified a multitude of new sociological processes, specific to service work, that directly impact service workers.

Hochschild (1983) developed the central foundation for understanding interactive service work, arguing that the requirements of customer interaction expose workers to a new form of alienation arising from the disconnect between felt and expressed emotions at work. Essentially, a worker's outward expression becomes part of the labor process, and an additional site for alienation. However, a consistent critique of Hochschild's theory has pointed out that some interactive service workers find interactions with customers to be rewarding, rather than alienating.

A recurring formulation in subsequent work has drawn a distinction between the negative aspects of service work and a positive ability to connect with customers, identifying a sociological process which tips the scales in one direction or the other, spanning occupational characteristics (Bhave and Glomb, 2013; Singh and Glavin, 2017), organizational distinctions in how customer interactions are managed (Lopez, 2006; Tolich, 1993), managerial strategies such as debriefing or surveillance (DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019; Fuller and Smith, 1991), the valence of interactions with customers (Han et al., 2016; Groth and Grandey, 2012), and personality characteristics (Bono and Vey, 2007).

Beyond emotional labor, researchers have characterized the complicated relationship between employees and customer service workers in a number of other ways. For instance, characterizations of the different actors within the service process as a service triangle (Leidner, 1993; Vermeerbergen et al., 2021), relationships between non-manager employees within the triangle (Subramanian and Suquet, 2018), or the inclusion of different levels of managers (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010). In addition, researchers have noted how the addition of the customer service interaction forces workers to try to both serve the needs of their employer and the needs of the customer, which are often not fully aligned (Korczynski, 2008; Troyer et al., 2000).

This chapter argues that the act of identifying these novel sociological processes in service work only goes part of the way in explaining how workers evaluate their interactions with customers. The nature of customer service work in frontline foodservice and retail does not lend itself to a single process fully characterizing the interactions between workers and customers. Interactions in service work are constantly occurring and may vary significantly. Some may be positive, others negative. Managers may sometimes side with an employee and other times with a customer. Rules about what to say and how to say it may sometimes be enforced, and other times relaxed, especially if a worker has more than one manager. Workers may at times feel torn between the logics of customer service and organizational efficiency, while at other times feeling as though these logics work smoothly together. Within the course of a single day, workers may feel multiple different ways: alienated from themselves due to how they are forced to interact with customers, then connected to the community by a positive and helpful customer interaction, then reprimanded by a manager for a negative interaction, and finally given some guidance from a manager on how to deal emotionally with a difficult customer.

In the face of this complex set of experiences, research must reckon with a disconnect between the frequency of any one type of experience, and the ways that workers evaluate their experiences with customers. This distinction between action or experience and mental representations is one that has been of interest beyond the sociology of work, particularly to cultural sociologists (Swidler, 1986; Vaisey, 2009). This chapter focuses on workers' personal culture (Lizardo, 2017), highlighting the mental representations of a group or idea, separate from their actions (Pugh, 2013; Lamont and Swidler, 2014).

This disconnect is frequently identified in job quality research where, over and over, researchers have shown that workers' descriptions of their relationships with customers seem to defy the labor processes which are expected to define the relationship (Cottingham and Erickson, 2019; Reich and Bearman, 2018; Misra and Walters, 2016; Bolton and Boyd, 2003). This disconnect is mirrored in the distinctions between quantitative measures of job satisfaction and objective conditions of work. For instance, frontline foodservice and retail workers experience schedule instability (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a), are paid at or near the minimum wage with little possibility of upward mobility (Warhurst, 2021), are at risk for minimum wage violations (Henly et al., 2021), and are often employed by "Low Road" firms (Osterman, 2018). In general, these factors are indeed correlated with lower subjective well-being (Inanc, 2020; Schneider and Harknett, 2019a). Yet workers still find meaning in their jobs, demonstrating a sensitivity to small differences in pay (Storer and Reich, 2019), a yearning for a feeling of respect (Reich and Bearman, 2018), or appreciation in the brand recognition that comes from working in certain stores over others

(Misra and Walters, 2016).

To contend with this disconnect, this chapter focuses on developing an understanding of the schematic frameworks individuals use to interpret their experiences with customers in frontline foodservice and retail work, with the understanding that they may be incoherent in the face of interrogation (Swidler, 2003; Pugh, 2013). In other words, this chapter asks: How do frontline foodservice and retail workers incorporate their customers into job quality evaluations? After doing so, this chapter analyzes how different ways of thinking about customers, as well as specific attitudes towards customers, are related to job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Measuring these schematic frameworks presents a series of methodological challenges. First, a body of research on customer interactions has highlighted the role that organizational practices and differences in the required tasks in different occupations play in shaping how workers perceive their customers (Lopez, 2006; Findlay et al., 2017a; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019). These unobserved organizational differences in how customer interactions operate present a significant challenge. This challenge is compounded by the possibility that workers' mental models of how customers impact job quality may be difficult to access, since specific survey or interview questions may subconsciously bias respondents.

In order to study how customers are discussed within the context of job quality evaluations, I draw upon two sources of data. Both sources sample data from ten large, national companies from five different industries, all of which employ low-wage service workers. They are big box stores (Walmart and Target), drug stores (Walgreens and CVS), coffee shops (Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts), fast food (McDonald's and Burger King) and hardware stores (Home Depot and Lowe's). By sampling over and controlling for multiple firms in multiple industries, I am able to control for unobserved firm-level differences which could lead workers to make sense of their customers in different ways. The first dataset consists of online reviews from Glassdoor.com, a website that allows employees to anonymously review companies that they work for. Workers leave 1- to 5-star ratings of the job overall, as well as other dimensions of the job such as culture, management, and compensation. In addition, workers write a summary of the job, the pros, the cons, and a note with advice to management. The dataset includes over 15,000 reviews that in some way mention customers, between 2008 and 2018.

This dataset provides unique advantages to analyzing how workers perceive their customers. First, the dataset is quite large, one of the largest to date that has been used to analyze this relationship in detail. In addition, rather than asking specific questions about how workers interpret their customers, responses in the Pros and Cons sections are open-ended. This allows workers to present their own mental model of how they analyze their experiences at work. This is particularly important for an analysis of customer interactions, where respondents may be subconsciously moved to focus on only a subset of the many varied experiences with customers in response to a specific survey or interview question. Finally, the data is employer-identified, making it possible to control for unobserved heterogeneity in management practices and job tasks between employers.

I first conduct a qualitative analysis of 500 randomly selected Pros and 500 randomly selected Cons reviews. Through an iterative process of coding, I identify three distinct ways in which workers are oriented towards their customers: as a source of intrinsic satisfaction,

as an occupational hazard or benefit, or in the context of organizational decisions which foster or hinder positive interactions with customers. This analysis highlights two important viewpoints that are often overlooked in the literature on customers. First, some workers even at these low-wage foodservice and retail jobs find meaning in their work specifically through their interactions with customers. Second, workers often discuss customers as the result of an organizational process, focusing on how the company treats customers, rather than the interpersonal interaction itself.

Next, in a set of quantitative analyses, I examine this second organizational orientation in two ways. First, I study how the expressed organizational orientation in the Glassdoor data is related to Glassdoor job ratings. I do so using computational text analysis to code organizational and occupational orientations for the full sample of reviews mentioning customers, drawing on the qualitatively coded data as a training set for an automated model. Results from this analysis show that reviews which implicate the organization are, on average, more extreme than those which conceptualize positive or negative interactions as an occupational benefit or hazard.

Finally, I extend these results using an original survey of 849 frontline foodservice and retail workers from the same 10 firms, distributed via Facebook advertising. Using the survey, I investigate the association between the underlying attitude implied by the organizational orientation, agreement with how the company treats customers, and both job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Findings from this analysis control for important layers of variation missing from the Glassdoor data, including hourly wage, age, race, gender, parental status, and frequency of customer interactions. Results show that agreement with this facet of the customer service interaction is more highly associated with job satisfaction and turnover intentions than a respondent's perceived frequency of positive or negative interactions with customers, or a reported difficulty in conducting emotional labor.

This analysis contributes to the literature on the sociology of work and job satisfaction by building on innovations in the sociology of culture and computational techniques. First, it uses a new dataset that makes it possible to analyze how a large sample of workers evaluate customers in their own words. In doing so, it demonstrates the varied views workers have of their customers, showing that many of them are indeed positive. This is notable, since relying on sociological theories of service work may lead researchers to assume that, in low-level foodservice and retail work, customer interactions only serve to make a bad job worse. Instead, the level of concern that workers express towards their customers in many reviews indicates that these interactions can provide a powerful source of meaning for retail and foodservice workers.

Using computational techniques, this chapter also highlights the salience of an overlooked aspect of customer service interactions: frontline workers' investment in how the organization manages customers and customer service interactions. This research shows that many workers are acutely aware of how organizational policies make it easier or harder to have positive interactions with customers. Moreover, a perception of an unsupportive organization is associated with notably lower job ratings, and the perception of an organization supportive of customer interactions is associated with higher ratings. The survey results demonstrate that frontline workers' agreement with how their employer treats customers is quite important to workers both in terms of job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Together, these findings suggest that an organization's treatment of customers can dramatically alter job satisfaction and turnover intentions for frontline workers. Further, workers sometimes take on the perspective of the organization, viewing decisions such as understaffing in terms of its impact on the overall customer service experience. Even in these common, low-wage foodservice and retail jobs, workers derive meaning from their customers and are deeply invested in how they are treated by their employer.

Service Workers and Their Customers

Sociological research regarding interactions in the workplace have often sought to break down the complex social experience of work into separate, identifiable social processes, and then to analyze the extent to which a process impacts workers. This line of research asks how a particular action, such as a promotion, a discussion with a manager, or a friendship with a coworker, are related to reviews of the experience of work (Ducharme and Martin, 2000; Sloan, 2012; Gordon et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2017). For service work, much attention has been given to characterizing the interactions between customers and workers, and to identifying the implications of these interactions. However, these characterizations are often at odds with one another, highlighting different, sometimes conflicting labor processes that may occur as a result of customer interactions, many of which may co-occur. This has made it difficult to form a single, cohesive, theory of customer service work (Korczynski, 2009, 2013). Three sets of processes describing the relationship between service workers and customers are described below. Each process is defined with respect to a specific hypothesized outcome for how workers would see their customers if this process played a dominant role in workers mental evaluations.

Occupational Processes

The most influential understanding of how customers impact workers comes from Hochschild (1983), who introduced the concept of emotional labor. This describes the moments when workers must suppress their feelings or emotions in social interaction in order to comply with company policies surrounding service. Hochschild argues that this emotional labor has negative effects on workers, either because workers must enact emotions they do not feel, or because they must realign their emotions in order to reduce cognitive dissonance. Researchers have specifically focused on "surface acting" in thinking about frontline foodservice and retail, where workers act in ways they do not feel, producing dissonance between internal emotional state and external activity (Groth and Grandey, 2012). Occupations in foodservice and retail are thought to, by nature, require more surface acting, and thus be less satisfying, since these jobs don't allow for as much complex problem solving or empathy with customers as other forms of service work (Singh and Glavin, 2017). Occupations that require specific types of interactions have been shown to be associated with feelings of inauthenticity, anger, depression, and burnout (Hsieh, 2014; Sloan, 2004; Erickson and Wharton, 1997). This line of research suggests that the negative impact of emotional labor is an inescapable occupational hazard, which comes with the territory of frontline customer service work in foodservice and retail. That is, any work that involves customer interaction of the type required in frontline foodservice and retail will force workers to engage in alienating and harmful emotional labor.

Beyond emotional labor, research also shows that workers who deal with customers are at greater risk for lower subjective well-being due to the conflict inherent in balancing the needs of the customer and the organization (Troyer et al., 2000; Korczynski, 2008). If the negative interactions that result from surface acting are the defining process for how workers understand their relationships with customers, then workers would describe their experiences as hypothesized below:

Hypothesis 1a: Occupational Hazard. Workers are primarily burdened by negative interactions with customers.

Research supports the notion that the emotional labor entailed in service work is associated with lower job satisfaction specifically. A number of studies have found that negative interactions with customers can have negative impacts on workers, and that this is the case for a wide variety of service jobs. For instance, negative customer interactions are strongly correlated with higher intentions to leaves the job, and lower job satisfaction (van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Han et al., 2016; Grandey et al., 2004).

Occupational Benefit

The direct corollary to the occupational hazard hypothesis is also possible though it has received less sustained attention in research. Korczynski (2008) highlights that part of the inherent contradiction in frontline service work is that customers can be a key source of satisfaction, in addition to humiliation or pain. Addressing this possibility goes part of the way towards answering Bolton and Houlihan's (2005) call to understand the human nature of customer service interactions. Simply receiving a kind look or a compliment may provide a pathway for workers to appreciate their jobs.

Instead of primarily focusing on negative interactions with customers, under this formulation, workers in some occupational contexts may emphasize the positive moments with customers in the context of a job quality evaluation (Korczynski, 2009), particularly when they are given more autonomy (Troyer et al., 2000). However, even in jobs where interactions with customers are not inherently meaningful or complicated, and even are highly routinized (Leidner, 1993), the same findings that detail negative emotion spirals suggests that when workers are thanked by customers, or customers are kind rather than rude, service workers may feel better off. If these interactions play a primary role in shaping how workers conceptualize their customers, then the following hypothesis would hold:

Hypothesis 1b: Occupational Benefit. The corollary to 1a, workers are primarily pleased by positive interactions with customers.

The positive effect of compliments within low skilled service encounters is not a popular topic in the sociological literature. Surrounding disciplines however have identified how people with certain personality types, for instance those who are more likely to enjoy interactions with others or have higher levels of emotional intelligence, may be less likely to experience burnout, be happier at work, and provide better quality service (Hurley, 1998; Bakker et al., 2006; Bono and Vey, 2007). Sociologists have typically focused on more substantive critiques to the occupational hazard formulation, addressed below.

Intrinsic Satisfaction

A consistent refrain in the research acknowledges that workers draw additional meaning from their interactions with customers. Particularly in healthcare, researchers have shown how helping patients sometimes leads healthcare workers to a distinct sense of satisfaction with their work (DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019; Wharton, 2009; Lopez, 2006). Even outside of care work, however, a small body of research suggests that workers continue to find deeper meaning in their interactions with customers (Endrissat et al., 2015; Misra and Walters, 2016; Reich and Bearman, 2018). Although it is not the main theoretical contribution of their studies, Hochschild's 1983 study of flight attendants, as well as Leidner's 1993 study of McDonald's workers acknowledges that workers often describe customer interactions as the most satisfying aspects of their jobs. Tolich (1993) studies grocery store workers, and particularly cashiers, finding that these workers sometimes feel connected to and closer with the general community due to their interactions with customers. Tolich goes so far as to argue that, rather than alienating, service work has the potential to be liberating, and intrinsically satisfying.

If this, instead, is the primary way workers conceptualize their customers, then the following hypothesis would hold:

Hypothesis 1c: Intrinsic Satisfaction. Workers primarily find meaning in their experiences with customers.

Organizational Processes

Another ongoing line of research has highlighted the extent to which the employer shapes how workers experience their customers. Korczynski (2008) argues that the organization's role is fundamental to defining how workers experience their customers. Service work, Korczynski argues, provides an inherent conflict where rational business and irrational customers have different needs. How organizations attempt to resolve this conflict is consequential.

Some studies deal specifically with how these strategies impact emotional labor. In a study of caregivers at different nursing homes, Lopez (2006) highlights the power of these organizational rules. Lopez shows that organizations can, under the right conditions, provide an avenue for emotional connection with their clients, just as they can provide an avenue for alienating emotional labor. An additional labor process is managerial support. Through debriefing after a difficult interaction, workers may be less likely to experience these interactions as emotionally draining (DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019). Additionally, some organizational structures which emphasize customer sovereignty may create a system where workers are more likely to experience abuse from customers and thus will have to conduct more emotional labor (Korczynski and Evans, 2013).

In addition to management strategies regarding emotional labor, organizational strategies surrounding the relationship between workers, customers and managers have also been shown to play a role in what workers take away from their customers. For instance, as Leidner (1993) notes, the complex and shifting triangle between workers, customers, and managers plays a role in shaping the quality of interactions. A manager's decision to routinize interactions through the use of scripts for Leidner's McDonald's workers can cut both ways, making it difficult to connect with customers or be authentic, but also providing a useful script when

things go wrong. In a broader study of nursing homes, Vermeerbergen et al. (2021) also shows the power managers have in shaping service interactions and what workers take away from their customers. Even the boundaries between different service providers within the organization can create conflict and could alter how workers interpret their interactions with customers (Subramanian and Suquet, 2018). In frontline service work, these relationships are complicated by the presence of multiple levels of middle managers, often paid only a small amount more than frontline workers yet given the responsibilities of a manager (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010).

Other researchers highlight organizational attempts to construct how workers evaluate their customers as an additional labor process in service work that can have disparate effects on workers (Grant et al., 2009). Those workers who buy into the organizational culture, may get additional satisfaction out of interactions with customers. Even so, workers who feel they must act as if they understand their customers only in the organizationally sanctioned way, even when they do not, may face additional dissatisfaction due to their forced inauthenticity. Managers also make use of customer feedback or other forms of surveillance as an additional form of control with respect to customer interactions (Fuller and Smith, 1991; Brown and Korczynski, 2010).

However, a question remains in this literature. What, if any, opinions do the workers have about how these organizational processes may alter customer service? These organizational processes may operate undetected by workers, altering the underlying nature of customer interactions. On the other hand, workers may also actively implicate organizational strategies when describing their interactions with customers. Two additional hypotheses stemming from these organizational processes are:

Hypothesis 1d: Unsupportive Organization. Workers are primarily dissatisfied with how their organization hinders positive interactions with customers.

Hypothesis 1e: Supportive Organization. Workers are primarily satisfied with how their organization supports positive interactions with customers.

An Orientations Approach

As the preceding review has shown, researchers have identified myriad processes that are possibly at odds with one another, that may have different, opposing, effects on customer service workers. Indeed, as Korczynski (2008) argues, this tension is fundamental to the nature of service work. Moreover, many of the different processes described above are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Since customer service work entails repeated, varied, complex interactions between customers, workers, and management, workers may experience many of the processes highlighted above in the course of their job tenure, or even in the course of a single day. It is feasible that interactions will vary to the extent that they require surface acting, produce a feeling of alienation from their labor or themselves, foster anger at management, or provide an avenue for connection with the broader community. As a result, the impact and valence of customer service interaction as a whole is difficult to characterize from the perspective of research which identifies and separates out unique processes, since each process may characterize only a subset of interactions throughout the course of a day, and may not play a role in how frontline workers incorporate customers into job quality evaluations.

Rather than produce an accounting of the frequency of different types of interactions workers have with their customers, this chapter conducts a systematic analysis of how workers incorporate customers into their job evaluations. This approach is meant to reveal how workers interpret, on the whole, the series of interactions with customers, while leaving open the possibility that some interactions can be negative, others positive, some providing meaning, and others alienating. That is, how do workers' themselves negotiate their attitudes surrounding the customer-oriented bureaucracy (Korczynski, 2008).

This intervention draws on cultural sociology, which has shown how some strongly held conceptualizations can defy logic, reason, or a formal breakdown of experience (Swidler, 2003). Follow-up research in cultural and cognitive cultural sociology has pointed out that the ways in which meanings are drawn and communicated with others often have a complicated relationship with experience and may be utilized in ways that defy expectations (Lamont and Swidler, 2014; Pugh, 2013). Moreover, identity-based questioning has been shown to provide new insights in understanding retail workers (Misra and Walters, 2016). From this perspective, judgments about customers are an essential data point for understanding the endpoint of these sociological processes at service work, endpoints that may be difficult to identify solely by focusing on the impact of a specific sociological processes on the quality of service work.

While these judgments about work may not be based on an accurate accounting of how workers are treated by customers or their employer, this does not necessarily mean that workers' orientations towards customers are insignificant. As workers develop a mental model of job quality and customers, this may impact how they perceive treatment from customers and managers in the future. These perceptions may also play a role in whether workers decide to stay at their current job, pursue promotions at their current employer, or look for employment elsewhere (Winchester and Green, 2019).

This approach is not without its downsides. Ultimately, some combinations of processes are likely more influential. Employers, individual establishments, and managers utilize different approaches to managing customer service at different rates, which likely leads to differential impacts on workers. In the end, some pattern of treatment is likely to correspond to some pattern of beliefs among frontline workers. This chapter does not analyze why workers feel some ways instead of others. Instead, this chapter's orientation-based approach is meant to approach the question from the opposing direction, analyzing the various ways that workers incorporate these new, potentially conflicting processes, into a coherent framework for themselves. By developing a better understanding of the end point, of how workers summarize their experiences with customers, this analysis is meant to provide insight into which processes require more sustained sociological research. It may also help researchers build a set of questions surrounding customer service work which help build a bridge between the set of processes specific to customer service work which impact workers, and the end result of how workers conceptualize their customers.

Implications for Job Ratings

This intervention is also informed by research on job satisfaction. Multiple studies have found that workers draw meaning from their work in ways that are sometimes unexpected and

difficult to explain (Misra and Walters, 2016; Reich and Bearman, 2018; Storer and Reich, 2019). Even in jobs that provide low pay, benefits, and offer few rewards, for example, workers still find reasons to be satisfied with their jobs (Deery et al., 2019). While the objective qualities of a job in terms of pay, benefits or insecurity may or may not predict subjective well-being (Brown et al., 2012; Warhurst, 2021; Schneider and Harknett, 2019a), it can play a useful role in understanding how workers evaluate their job quality.

Research has tied both organizational and occupational aspects of customer interaction to job satisfaction. From an occupational perspective, research shows that jobs which require more surface acting are correlated with worse outcomes, including lower job satisfaction (Bhave and Glomb, 2016; Singh and Glavin, 2017). However, research shows that organizational support can lead to higher job satisfaction. In a survey of 338 retail workers, Duke et al. (2009), for instance, finds that workers who have higher levels of perceived support from the organization report higher job satisfaction when faced with the need to do emotion work. On the other hand, a lack of quality training on how to deal with customers may leave workers feeling incompetent, dissatisfied, and lead to turnover Sallaz (2015).

This chapter analyses how orientations towards customers are associated with job satisfaction. That is, are more extreme responses to job satisfaction, positive or negative, associated with certain conceptualizations of customers?

If workers who see customers as an occupational benefit or hazard are deeply impacted by this aspect of the job, then:

Hypothesis 2a: Occupational Primacy. Holding all else constant, workers who describe interactions with customers as an occupational hazard or benefit, where rude or nice customers are simply part of the job, will feel more or less satisfied with their jobs than those who hold other orientations towards customers.

However, if supportive or unsupportive organizations are associated with stronger attitudes, then:

Hypothesis 2b: Organizational Primacy. Holding all else constant, workers who discuss customers in the context of organizational or managerial problems will feel more satisfied when discussing organizational support, and less satisfied when discussing organizational hindrance.

Glassdoor Data

This chapter conducts a systematic analysis of workers' orientations towards customers in foodservice and retail using job evaluations. This analysis is a departure from research focusing on the distinct processes that workers engage in while interacting with customers; it instead focuses on summative judgments workers make about customers in job quality evaluations. This chapter includes roughly 15,000 job quality evaluations from five different industries and includes two organizations from each industry. The sample consists of big box stores (Walmart and Target), pharmacy retail stores (Walgreens and CVS), coffee shops (Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts), fast food (McDonald's and Burger King) and hardware stores (Home Depot and Lowe's). The sample includes variation both between and within industries, since these differences have been shown to play an important role in how service work operates.

This dataset is notable in that, while organization- and industry-level variation play a role in how workers interact with their customers, analyses of attitudes towards customers do not typically include variation along both of these lines. Jobs such as pharmacy technician, which may add an additional layer of meaning due to the connection to the healthcare industry, are excluded from the analysis.

This chapter uses data from Glassdoor.com, a website where individuals can post anonymous reviews of a company, their salary, and interview questions they were asked when they applied for their job. Glassdoor also allows employers to post jobs on the website. Importantly, the website does not allow employers to take down any reviews, though employers can post responses to reviews. Although it is not possible to know why individuals post on Glassdoor, in order to scroll through reviews of jobs one must create an account and post a review. Glassdoor calls this a "Give-to-Get" model and this process has been shown to reduces bias in online reviews (Chamberlain and Smart, 2017; Marinescu et al., 2021). Unfortunately, Glassdoor does not make demographic data for specific reviews publicly available. However, one can assume that workers who find the site are either curious about others reviews of their current employer, or curious about the reviews of other employers, and must fill out a review in order to browse other reviews, or search job reviews.

When employees post company reviews on Glassdoor, they can post one- to five-star reviews of the job. Employees can create a title for their review and fill in separate free text responses for the pros of the job, the cons of the job, and advice to management. In terms of demographic information, they are free to leave any of the following information: Current or Former Employee, Part of Full time, Job Tenure, Job Title, and the City in which they work. The current analysis is limited to posts that mention customers in the written review, and all demographic information is available. For a description of the reasoning behind implementing listwise deletion, see Appendix B.

Glassdoor data is becoming an increasingly valuable source in academic research and has been used to study various aspects of organizational culture (Storer and Reich, 2019; Corritore et al., 2020; Wowak et al., 2022; Das Swain et al., 2020).

Advantages of Glassdoor

The Glassdoor dataset has significant advantages. First, it allows for free text responses in which workers can decide what to post, based on what they feel are important aspects of the job. By analyzing spontaneous reviews of the pros and cons of a job, we can be relatively certain that we are accessing what workers see as the most salient aspects of their job quality. With respect to orientations towards customers, this dataset allows for an approach where workers integrate customers into discussions of their job quality on their own. This approach, while more difficult to implement, provides insight, on a large scale, into how workers view their own experiences. This provides a stark contrast to interview methods or traditional surveys. The mechanisms by which an interviewer coaxes specific stories out of a worker, and translates those into a narrative, leaves the possibility that the interviewer may be playing an undue role in producing their data. As Swidler (2003) shows, individuals internal thought processes are relatively scattered, and may therefore be somewhat suggestible. Interviews with service-sector workers which ask directly about customers may lead respondents to

produce a narrative in which customers, or certain types of interactions with customers, are more central than they otherwise would be. These methods are not mutually exclusive. By producing an account of the ways that workers make sense of their customers without any prompting, an analysis of the Glassdoor data can open new pathways to further questioning of workers.

Additionally, Glassdoor data is employer-identified and voluminous. Quantitative research on customers often takes advantage of small samples from a single organization, or national samples which do not indicate organizations at all. Since comparisons between employers typically show that organizational practices can alter how frontline workers interact with customers (Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Lopez, 2006), accounting for unobserved organizational differences in how customer service interactions are managed is essential for identifying the relationship between how workers make sense of their customers and job satisfaction. Employer-identified data and employer fixed effects can take these unobserved differences into account (Brown and McIntosh, 2003; Schneider and Harknett, 2019a). Similarly, occupations within employer may vary significantly in how customer interactions are managed, whether workers develop relationships with customers, and how much freedom workers are given in accomplishing their tasks (Korczynski, 2009; Leidner, 1993; Gutek et al., 2000) and what workers might take away from these interactions. Since workers provide job titles as part of Glassdoor review, it is possible to include and control for variation along these lines.

The Glassdoor data allow for this variation to be accounted for as part of the research design. It should be noted that few studies of customer service interactions span multiple organizations, and that the large number of reviews included in this study presents a significant increase in sample size over other quantitative studies of customer interactions in the service sector.

Limitations of Glassdoor

The Glassdoor dataset has significant limitations. Most importantly, posts on Glassdoor are not randomly sampled. Individuals must spontaneously decide to post a review on the site, so the data-generating mechanism is opaque. Workers may post reviews more often after a negative or positive event, for example, leading to skewed results. The convenience sample does not allow for a definitive statement about whether workers in the overall population hold the same attitudes about customers. They do, however, provide some suggestive evidence about where more research should be done. In addition, comparisons within the sample may be somewhat less fraught, under the assumption that the same data generating mechanism operates for all workers who post on Glassdoor, regardless of industry, organization, or occupation.

In addition, reviewers may be lying about specific aspects of their demographic characteristics in order to avoid identification. Fortunately, since all of the potentially identifiable aspects surrounding Glassdoor reviews are optional, there is less incentive to fabricate information. Instead, these reviewers can simply leave fields blank. However, employers themselves could fabricate reviews in order to create a positive image of the company.

Another drawback of the data is that certain important demographic characteristics, such

as age, race, and gender, are not included in the data. This is particularly troubling with respect to service work, since researchers have identified important ways in which emotional labor differs by each of these characteristics (Polletta and Tufail, 2016; Good and Cooper, 2016b).

Finally, frontline workers may hold views about their relationships with customers that they, for whatever reason, choose not to express in the Glassdoor reviews. Since this is digital trace data, there is no possibility to follow up with a specific Glassdoor reviewer about how they are discussing their customer.

To contend with these limitations, this chapter also draws on data from an original survey. Workers surveyed over Facebook are less likely to be biased than Glassdoor reviewers, and research has shown that, along many lines, Facebook respondents are representative of the population (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b). The Facebook survey includes demographic information, provides no incentive to lie about specific aspects of the job, and is less likely to draw on workers who have a notably negative or positive outlook. In addition, the survey data makes it possible to continue to interrogate a specific perspective towards customers that is identified in the Glassdoor data.

Research Design

This chapter use the Glassdoor data in two ways. First, using qualitative text analysis, I performed an iterative coding operation, randomly selecting 500 Pros and 500 Cons reviews that mention customers. Using an inductive coding scheme, I first developed over 100 codes defining the different ways in which workers discuss their customers. Second, I reread and recoded the initial codes based on overall patterns in the reviews, consolidating codes where the attitudes were similar, but the phrasing or specifics of the complaint were different. This chapter presents my findings in the following section and discuss them with reference to the orientation Hypotheses 1a-e, described above.

In a second set of analyses, this chapter measures the extent to which these orientations are associated with job satisfaction. Using the 1,000 qualitatively coded reviews, I trained a machine learning algorithm to code the remaining 14,000 reviews. I then run regressions on job satisfaction for reviews mentioning customers in the Pros or Cons sections of the written job evaluation. I evaluate the extent to which these regressions support occupational or organizational primacy, Hypotheses 2a and 2b.

In a final set of analyses, I extend the Glassdoor research, drawing on an original survey of 849 workers from the same 10 retail companies. This survey asks questions derived from the analysis of the Glassdoor data, while also including demographic information, as well as an additional outcome of interest, turnover intentions.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis identified three sets of primary codes, which represent three distinct orientations in the literature: occupational, intrinsic value, and organizational.

Occupational Orientation

The most common mentions of customers in reviews discussed how brief negative or positive interactions with customers affected the reviewer's job, where customers are typically

described as "rude" or "nice." These reviews are distinguished from others by how they do not discuss these interactions as impacted by any other social process and are instead simply part of the job. I describe these conceptualizations of customers as *Occupational*, in which customers, good or bad, are thought to be an unavoidable part of service work.

Occupational Hazard. In this code, workers describe customers based on overall negative traits that speak mainly to the personality characteristics of customers. As one reviewer discusses in the Cons section, "[s]ometimes customers make messes and are rude." Similarly, another reviewer didn't like "dealing with terrible customers."

Sometimes, although rarely, these negative reviews implicate the difficulties of emotion work that are tied to rude customers. One reviewer reports disliking "[r]ude customers", and that they "can't talk back." Another describes a con as "puttin on a show for customers." Even in discussion of emotion work, however, these reviews focus primarily on the customers themselves. As one reviewer writes, "[p]utting on your overly happy face all the time can be tiring. Some customers need to be brought down to earth." In these reviews, there is a sense that it is the customers who are at fault for producing a negative interaction. Another reviewer writes, "some customers can get really demanding and needy, but that's true for all customer service jobs." In short, rude customers are simply an occupational hazard, and a notable negative characteristic of the job.

Occupational Benefit. These types of reviews, in which customers are simply part of the job, are not uniformly negative. On the positive side, one worker writes "most of the customers are really nice." These answers are often quite short, simply stating in the Pros "the customers," "interactions with customers," or "modest, nice customers." One reviewer writes, "I loved my interactions with customers. They always kept a smile on my face."

As in the occupational hazard coding, these positive reviews do not implicate any deeper feelings surrounding the customers, or any organizational features that impact this relationship. These workers simply seem to focus on the interactions with "friendly," nice customers when summarizing their customer service interactions.

Intrinsic Value Orientation

Two additional codes, both in the Pros section of the text, emerged from comments discussing the intrinsic value workers received from interactions with customers at work. These reviews go beyond saying customers were nice, or talking about their personalities, and instead mentioned how they both enjoyed developing relationships with customers and helping people.

Helping. Some workers discuss an intrinsic satisfaction they feel in helping customers. One reviewer states,

> *"I loved working in an environment where people told me that I made their day better just by being cheerful. It is also quite enjoyable to make things like ice cream cones...Not because it is a complicated task, but because you made something for someone who then gets to enjoy what you made for them."*

Another worker echoes these sentiments, writing "I loved sharing my knowledge with my customers, it gave me a lot of self-satisfaction to see my customers walk away with a smile." In this code, workers are not merely satisfied with the positive interactions they have with

their customers. Instead, they find a deeper level of satisfaction in helping the customer, in making their day just a little bit better.

Relationships. Another positive orientation towards customers focuses on the social relationships workers have with their customers. These reviewers often write about "their" customers, such as in the statement "I love my customers." They also describe how "regular customers make interaction fun." One reviewer writes that it is "fun to connect with the customers," and another reviewer goes further, describing their regular CVS customers as "like family to us." Reviewers in this category often make a statement regarding "repeat customers."

Organizational Orientation

The final set of reviews implicate the organization in some way while discussing customers.

Supportive Organization. Some workers review their job based on whether it seems as though the company cares about customers. One positive reviewer states "the company wows on customer service." Another reviewer writes that the organization creates "a family like atmosphere that cares about the customers." This also means allowing workers to do what is necessary to help customers. One reviewer gives a positive review of the company because "You have the power to do what you feel is necessary to please the customer."

Others appreciate the organizational rules which create a positive relationship between customers and workers. One reviewer notes that their company has "incentives for high customer satisfaction." Blending customers and workers together was also common, such as in this review: "the company works hard to create an experience for partners and customers where everyone feels recognized." Workers in this category were also concerned with the quality of the product they were offering. One reviewer sees it as a positive that there is a "strong company focus on keeping prices down to save customers money." Putting these concepts together, one reviewer writes in the Pros that "It is a company that values not only customers, but also the employees who serve those customers."

Beyond organizational incentives and institutionalized support, workers were also invested in whether others cared about customers. One reviewer notes, "most employed have a genuine want to be part of an outstanding customer experience." These reviews also denote positive relationships with managers, for instance appreciating when managers take their side in an argument with customers. As a pro, one reviewer states "I got yelled at by customers, but managers always had my back."

Unsupportive Organization. While a number of workers emphasized positive aspects of how their company facilitated customer interactions, another set of workers tied their negative reviews to how the organization hindered positive customer relations. One of the problems identified in this regard is understaffing. As one cashier succinctly puts it, "too many customers not enough registers." In this situation, workers are negatively impacted by the social stress of a long line. Another reviewer identifies the relationship between rude customers and understaffing - "When labor is cut to bare minimum, wait times increase for customers which can make impatient customers more likely to be rude." Another reviewer echoes these feelings, saying "often we were understaffed and there would be a line out the door, this was stressful because then the customers would become personally upset with you even when you were working your hardest." Others were bothered by their inability to help customers, and the repercussions they might face from managers if they did so. "Customer service was discouraged by heavy workloads and threats for being found in

another department or stopping current tasks while helping a customer." It is worth noting that these experiences are not always viewed as an organizational issue. For instance, one reviewer with an occupational hazard orientation mentions as a con: "People not understanding the volume of customers our store serves." From that perspective it is not a question of understaffing, but of undue expectations from the customer.

Some were disappointed by the organizations seeming lack of care for customers. One reviewer writes:

> *"The customer service/ taking care of our people culture that we had all grown up with disappeared. In it's place was a culture of making a number just for the sake of making a number. The company's new found focus on top line sales, which has nothing to do with being profitable and creating shareholder value, only shows that this is still the case. In addition to the stores being grossly understaffed, as voiced not only by our managers, but also by our customers the company has made it extremely difficult to order the product that is needed to take care of the customers."*

Workers also were put off when they felt that the company took the customers side over the workers. "Upper management and corporate took customer complaints too seriously." Another reviewer states "[The company] has this issue with allowing customers(not guests because they don't deserve that title) to act like animals and punish us for standing up for ourselves or explaining the outcome to them. "

Finally, reviewers were sometimes unhappy with how managers treated them in front of customers. One reviewer writes, "You get yelled at for anything and everything and in front of customers." The implication from these reviewers is that the workers are concerned with how customers see them. When managers discipline workers in front of customers, this adds another layer to negative attitudes.

Other

Customer Service Experience. A final group of workers see their interactions as a way to gain customer service skills. These reviewers believe that these experiences will be helpful in other jobs down the line. One reviewer describes the positive aspect of their job as "A great company to learn customer service," and another states that a job will "teach kids about how to approach customers and be personable."

The table below details the frequency of each customer orientation in the subsample of workers. The frequencies of these codes show that two sets of orientations - occupational (hazard and benefit) and organizational (supportive and unsupportive), were the most frequent in the reviews.

This qualitative analysis shows that there is significant variation in the ways that workers incorporate their customers into job evaluations. On the one hand, many workers do indeed see their interactions with customers as primarily negative, yet simply as an occupational hazard. For these individuals, the stress of dealing with customers is an inescapable part of customer service work. Some workers even make the connection between negative interactions and alienation from the self, describing how tiring it can be to be forced to act in a way in which you do not feel. Indeed, of the reviews which put

Table 2-1: Interpretations of Customers in Written Job Evaluations on Glassdoor, Pros and Cons

Category	Total	Percent Pros	Percent Cons
Occupational			
Occupational Hazard	312	3	59.4
Occupational Benefit	188	35.6	2
Intrinsic Value			
Relationship	76	14.4	0.8
Helping	81	15.2	1
Organizational			
Unsupportive Organization	188	0.8	36.8
Supportive Organization	78	15	0.6
Other			
Experience	69	13.4	0.4

Codes based on 500 randomly sampled Pro sections and 500 randomly sampled Cons sections from Glassdoor reviews mentioning customers.

customers in the negative parts of a job quality evaluation, the majority of workers describe their customers in this way.

However, this is not the only interpretation of customers. Thirty five percent of the reviews mentioning customers in a positive light describe a simple occupational benefit in interacting with nice customers. Nearly thirty percent of the positive reviews of customers go beyond a simple positive description, identifying a deeper meaning that workers draw from interactions with customers. These workers derive significant intrinsic values from helping customers, or their long-term relationships with customers.

With respect to Hypotheses 1a-1e, this analysis demonstrates partial support for each. While the occupational hazard hypothesis, 1a, appears quite frequently, as would be expected by a literature where workers find themselves forced to act nicely to customers who are rude to them, a variety of other views also surface. Some workers, for example, see customers as a positive part of the job, as in Hypothesis 1b, occupational benefit. As hypothesized in 1c, however, workers also sometimes find deeper intrinsic value in their social interactions with customers, enjoying either the relationship they build with customers over time, or helping customers in some small way. This demonstrates that no single theory plays a dominant role in workers' orientations towards their customers.

Additionally, while previous research suggests that organizations play a role in shaping customer service interactions, these findings show that workers often implicate management and organizational strategies in discussing the quality of their interactions with customers. This analysis finds support for both Hypotheses 1d, unsupportive organization, and 1e, supportive organization. Over 35 percent of the negative reviews of customers clearly implicate organizational strategies, such as understaffing, managerial miscommunication, or a focus on customer service statistics, when discussing how customer interactions detract from job quality. On the other hand, when organizations make an

effort to improve interactions with customers, workers also seem to notice. Roughly fifteen percent of the positive reviews mentioning customers mention how managerial support or organizational latitude in dealing with customers allows workers to feel good about how they are treating their customers.

The remainder of this chapter focuses specifically on understanding the impact of this relatively understudied aspect of frontline workers interpretations of their customers. That is, how important is it to frontline workers that the organization is supportive of customers and customer interactions? In order to further explore the salience of the organization in how frontline workers make sense of their interactions with customers, this chapter use two strategies. First, it analyzes the relationship between the unprompted expression of an *organizational orientation* in a Glassdoor review on job quality evaluations. Second, the chapter utilizes a survey in order to extend the investigation of the organizational orientation by analyzing the association between a set of questions regarding frontline workers' attitudes towards their customers, and two outcomes; job satisfaction and turnover intentions. This second analysis focuses in on a specific aspect of customer service - agreement with how customers are treated by their employer.

Quantitative Glassdoor Analysis

As described in the research design section above, the quantitative Glassdoor analysis measures the associations between the unprompted expression of an organizational or occupational orientation and job ratings on Glassdoor.

Dependent Variable

Job Rating. This variable is rated from one to five and is an employee's rating of the job, and a Glassdoor reviewer must always supply a job rating. When posting on Glassdoor, under the header "Company," workers add an anonymous company review.

Independent Variable

Customer Orientation. In two separate sections, workers are asked to share the best reasons or downsides to working at their employer, under the headers of Pros and Cons. Orientations towards customers are indicated using a series of binary codes for either "occupational" or "organizational" orientations developed in the qualitative analysis above. Depending on whether the orientation appears in the Pros or Cons section of the data, the orientations coded are *Occupational Hazard, Occupational Benefit, Supportive Organization,* or *Unsupportive Organization.* These codes are extrapolated to the whole sample of reviews mentioning customers using the qualitatively coded subsample as a training dataset for a supervised machine learning model. For a detailed description of the machine learning method implemented, see Appendix A. The choice to code for these two orientations, and to leave out codes for intrinsic meaning or customer service experience, were based on two factors. First, organizational and occupational codes represented the two most common types of orientations and therefore represent a larger sample group to train a machine learning model. Second, this project is focused specifically on attitudes

about the organizations support or lack thereof as an understudied aspect of the customer service interaction.

Controls

Character Count. This variable is a number indicating how many characters are in the Pros or Cons section of the written review. Length of review is included as it may serves as an indicator of how strongly a reviewer feels, where longer reviews may indicate a stronger attitude. Longer reviews, for instance, may cover more positive or negative aspects of the job, or may include a more detailed description of a specific pro or con. Counts are included from both the Pros and the Cons sections in each model.

Managerial Level. Each company structures its employment hierarchy in different ways. Using information from each companies' descriptions of job titles on their websites, I code job titles based on three hierarchical levels. Front-line non-managerial workers, including cashiers or sales associates, are coded as a one. Middle managers, including department managers, "head" cashiers, or team leaders, are coded as a two. Top level store managers are coded as a three.

Full Time. This is a dummy variable indicating that a person worked on the job full time.

Less Than Year. This is a dummy variable indicating that a person worked on the job for less than a year.

Urban. This variable indicates which if a respondent comes from a city which has a population of over 40,000 people.

Company. Fixed effects are included for each company in the data. These fixed effects play an important role in controlling for unobserved heterogeneity between employers in how service interactions are managed.

Year. Fixed effects are included for each year in the data.

State. Fixed effects are included for each state in the data. If the quality of customer interactions varies in unobserved ways due to the norms of a specific region, these fixed effects should capture this variation.

Analytic Strategy

The analysis uses two subsamples of the Glassdoor data. The first subsample consists of reviews that mention "customer", "guest", or the frequent misspelling "costumer," as well as their plurals, in the Cons section of the written text review. The second subsample selects on the same mentions of customers in the Pros section. I also drop any data where a job title is not listed, reviewers do not list a location, or the location a reviewer lists is outside of the United States. Listwise deletion is used rather than multiple imputation due to the small number of controls and missingness around two key variables that would be difficult to impute - location and job title. For a more detailed discussion of missingness and listwise deletion, see Appendix B.

For the regression analyses, this chapter uses linear regression. This decision is based on the recommendation from Angrist and Pischke (2009), who find that linear regression performs as well as ordinal regressions, while producing estimates that are more easily

interpretable and subject to less restrictive assumptions. Standard errors in each regression model are clustered by company, since reviews were drawn specifically from separate companies. Finally, standard errors are adjusted using bootstrapping, in order to account for the predictive uncertainty in the machine learning model.

Descriptive Statistics

Below are the summary statistics for the variables included in the model. For a more detailed discussion of the Glassdoor data, see Appendix B. Since two separate models are analyzed for reviews, one that mention customers in the Pros section and another that mentions customers in the Cons section, descriptive statistics are included separately for each subset.

Table 2-2: Glassdoor Review Summary Statistics

Variable	Cons	Pros	Min	Max
Dependent Variable				
Rating	3.174	3.311	1	5
Independent Variables				
Unsupportive Organization	0.342		0	1
Occupational Hazard	0.589		0	1
Supportive Organization		0.149	0	1
Occupational Benefit		0.392	0	1
Control Variables				
Cons Character Count	333.850	244.250	13	10,183
Pros Character Count	163.815	184.344	14	3,682
Frontline Worker	0.745	0.702	0	1
Middle Manager	0.219	0.240	0	1
Store Manager	0.036	0.057	0	1
Current Employee	0.510	0.505	0	1
Full Time	0.343	0.391	0	1
Less Than Year	0.209	0.195	0	1
Urban	0.653	0.634	0	1
N	9,668	7,656		

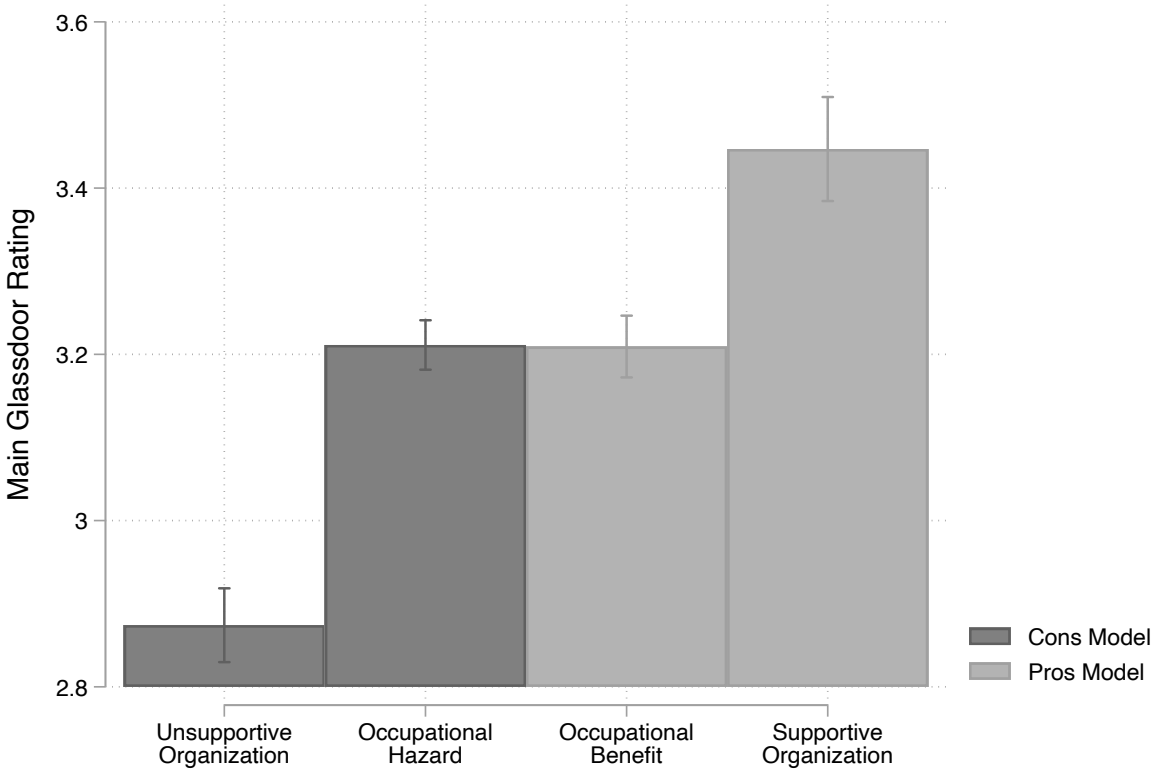
The job quality ratings that mention customers in the Cons are slightly lower overall, 3.17, than the ratings that mention customers among the Pros, 3.31. The Cons reviews are more likely to mention both Organizational and Occupational concerns than are the Pros reviews. This makes sense, since the Pros reviews also included a significant number of intrinsic value and customer service experience orientations. Organizational concerns are also notably less common than occupational concerns in both models, an additional trait that is mirrored in the qualitative subsample. The reviews are written mostly by frontline workers, making up about 75 percent of reviews mentioning customers in the Cons and 70 percent of reviews mentioning customers in the Pros. They are both split fairly evenly between current and former employees, with roughly half of the reviews from current employees. Workers who

mention customers in the Pros are more likely to be Full Time workers, to have longer job tenures, and work in less rural environments, although the margins are fairly slim.

Results

A summary of the results of the quantitative analysis are presented below. For a discussion of the tables associated with the model below, see Appendix C.

Figure 2-1: Predicted Glassdoor Ratings for Organizational and Occupational Customer Orientations



The figure demonstrates the average marginal effects for workers who hold these four separate orientations. For reviewers who express feelings of having an unsupportive organization when discussing customers, they give a rating of their job on Glassdoor a 2.8. Workers who discuss customers as an occupational benefit or hazard both rate their jobs as a 3.2 on Glassdoor. Finally, workers who discuss a supportive organization rate their jobs as roughly a 3.4. The standard deviation of the Glassdoor rating for the Pros analysis is 1.20 and for the Cons analysis is 1.21. So, the average marginal effect of discussing customers as part of an unsupportive organization is a decrease of about one third of a standard deviation, and the effect of discussing customers as part of a supportive organization is an increase of about .17 standard deviations.

With respect to the hypotheses developed above, this analysis provides significant evidence for *Hypothesis 2b: Organizational Primacy.* Workers who see their organization as

unsupportive, hindering a positive social interaction with their customers, are significantly less happy with their jobs. Worker who see their company as supportive are the most satisfied. On the other hand, there is not support for *Hypothesis 2a: Occupational Primacy.* Indeed, when workers see negative interactions with customers as simply an occupational hazard or as an occupational benefit, their job ratings are the same. This is true even after including a host of controls, as well as company fixed effects.

These results point to two separate, but interrelated, underlying distinctions. First, there is a difference in the way that workers *evaluate* customer interactions - either as a dyadic interaction between a customer and a worker that would occur in any customer service job, or as the result of an organizational process. Second, some workers hold an underlying attitude about whether the company does a good or bad job in the way it deals with customers. This attitude has been an overlooked aspect of job satisfaction for frontline workers. The Glassdoor data suggests that this attitude is particularly salient for job ratings, more so than positive or negative views of a dyadic interaction with customers.

In order to extend the analysis of the organizational orientation, this chapter draws on a survey which can more fully interrogate the underlying attitude: agreement or disagreement with how the company treats it customers. This method too is not without its drawbacks, since frontline workers may be providing answers to questions that are not typically part of their evaluative framework. However, once identified in the unprompted Glassdoor data, a targeted line of questioning should allow for a more well-rounded understanding of the salience of these attitudes. Since some frontline workers may hold attitudes that are missing from a Glassdoor review, asking explicitly about these attitudes provides an alternative method for studying the attitude and sizing its effect. Alternatively, this attitude may be more common among certain demographic groups, and these demographic groups may be driving the association between job quality and the organizational orientation.

Survey Results

Data

The survey was marketed to workers who indicated they were employed by the same 10 companies on Facebook.com from November 7th to November 12th, 2020. In order to be included in the sampling frame, individuals must be on Facebook and indicate that they work at one of the ten companies. According to a Pew telephone survey in 2021, roughly 70% of US Adults use Facebook, making it the most popular social networking site on the internet. (Gramlich, 2021) This sample was collected using Facebook Advertising, in which workers who indicate that they are employed by these companies are served an advertisement on their news feed to fill out a survey for a chance to win a 500 Amazon gift card. This strategy has been used by the Shift project to analyze frontline workers at these companies (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a; Storer et al., 2020). The survey was fielded in English only. According to Facebook's statistics, the click-through-rate for the survey, or the percentage of those who clicked the Facebook Ad of those who saw the Facebook Advertisement, is about 3.2%. Of those who saw the Facebook Ad, about 1.3% filled out any information. These metrics are in line with previous research using Facebook Ads (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b).

After multiple imputation, the analytic sample includes 849 responses. For a more

detailed discussion of the multiple imputation, as well as for a side by side comparison between the survey data provided here and CPS data on service workers, see Appendix D. However as noted in Schneider and Harknett (2019b), the demographics of the populations these samples are drawn from may be different from national samples of service workers, for instance because the CPS includes frontline workers in large and small firms. These issues are compounded in the current context, since the demographics of workers at the ten specific companies sampled in the current study may differ compared to a general sample of service sector workers. As a result, the analyses presented below are not weighted to the CPS. Finally, Appendix D contains a comparison between the survey data and the data scraped from Glassdoor along key independent and dependent variables.

While the exact wording for questions are listed below, all response categories are denoted in the descriptive statistics table.

Dependent Variables

Job Satisfaction. Respondents are asked "All in all, how satisfied are you with your job at [Employer]."

Turnover Intentions. Respondents are asked "Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it you will make a genuine effort to find a new job within the next 3 months?"

Independent Variables

Agreement with How Company Treats Customers. Respondents are asked "How satisfied are you with how [Employer] treats CUSTOMERS?" This variable is meant to capture and further interrogate the significance of the organizational orientation for job quality ratings.

In order to size this effect, this chapter also compares a series of other relevant theories of customer service work.

Emotional Labor. Respondents are asked "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In general, I find it difficult to put on a happy face for CUSTOMERS at [Employer]." This variable is meant to put the organizational question in perspective of another common view of customer service in sociology: a difficulty in conducting emotional labor.

Nice Customers. Respondents are asked "How often would you say your CUSTOMERS are rude to you?" This question is meant to capture the extent to which the perceived frequency of positive interactions with customers may improve job quality. This question and the following question capture the dyadic aspect of customer service interactions between frontline workers and their customers.

Rude Customers. Respondents are asked "How often would you say your CUSTOMERS are nice to you?" This question is meant to capture the extent to which the perceived frequency of negative interactions with customers may degrade job quality.

Controls

These analyses contain two sets of controls. First, fixed effects are included for occupation, company and state. These fixed effects play an important role in controlling for unobserved

heterogeneity between employers and occupation which may be determining how service interactions are managed and what workers take away from these interactions. By controlling for these differences, I am able to isolate the localized process connecting a particular attitude about one's job to job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Next, job quality controls are included for wage, the number of hours they usually work on the job, an indicator between zero and one indicating how variable the respondent's hours are over a month, if they have worked on the job for less than year, and whether they are full time. I also include a count of the experience of six negative schedule characteristics a worker experienced in the past month: (whether the respondent had worked on-call, had a shift cancelled, been told to stay late, been sent home early, been told to come in early, or been told to come in late) a respondent may experience. Human capital controls are included for whether they received at least some college education, and whether they are enrolled in school. In addition, demographic controls are included for age, race/ethnicity, gender, cohabitation, and whether the respondent has children. Finally, a control is included for how frequently a respondent interacts with customers.

Analytic Strategy

The analysis uses the survey data to run regressions for two outcomes: job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Multiple imputation is used to contend with item non-response. For a more detailed description of the reasoning behind this missing data strategy, see Appendix D. Once again this chapter uses linear regressions. Standard errors in each regression model are clustered by company, since reviews were drawn specifically from separate companies.

In the regression analysis, each independent variable is modeled separately, and then together in a final, single model. The estimates presented below are derived from the final model. For the results from each stage of the regression analysis, see Appendix D.

Descriptive Statistics

The table below highlights the questions asked in the survey that are included in the regression analysis.

Table 2-3: Descriptive Statistics of Survey

Variable	Mean
Dependent Variables	
Job Satisfaction	
Extremely dissatisfied	13.07%
Somewhat dissatisfied	20.73%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12.96%
Somewhat satisfied	32.51%
Extremely satisfied	20.73%
Likelihood in Searching for a New Job	
Extremely unlikely	33.69%
Somewhat unlikely	13.78%
Neither likely nor unlikely	14.02%
Somewhat likely	19.08%
Extremely likely	19.43%
Independent Variables	
Difficult to Put on a Happy Face for Customers	
Strongly Agree	7.77%
Agree	17.43%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16.49%
Disagree	24.15%
Strongly Disagree	34.16%
Satisfied with How Employer Treats Customers	
Extremely dissatisfied	4.95%
Somewhat dissatisfied	7.07%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14.96%
Somewhat satisfied	34.28%
Extremely satisfied	38.75%
How often are customers nice to you	
Never	0.59%
Rarely	4.95%
Monthly	3.06%
Weekly	15.55%
Daily	75.85%

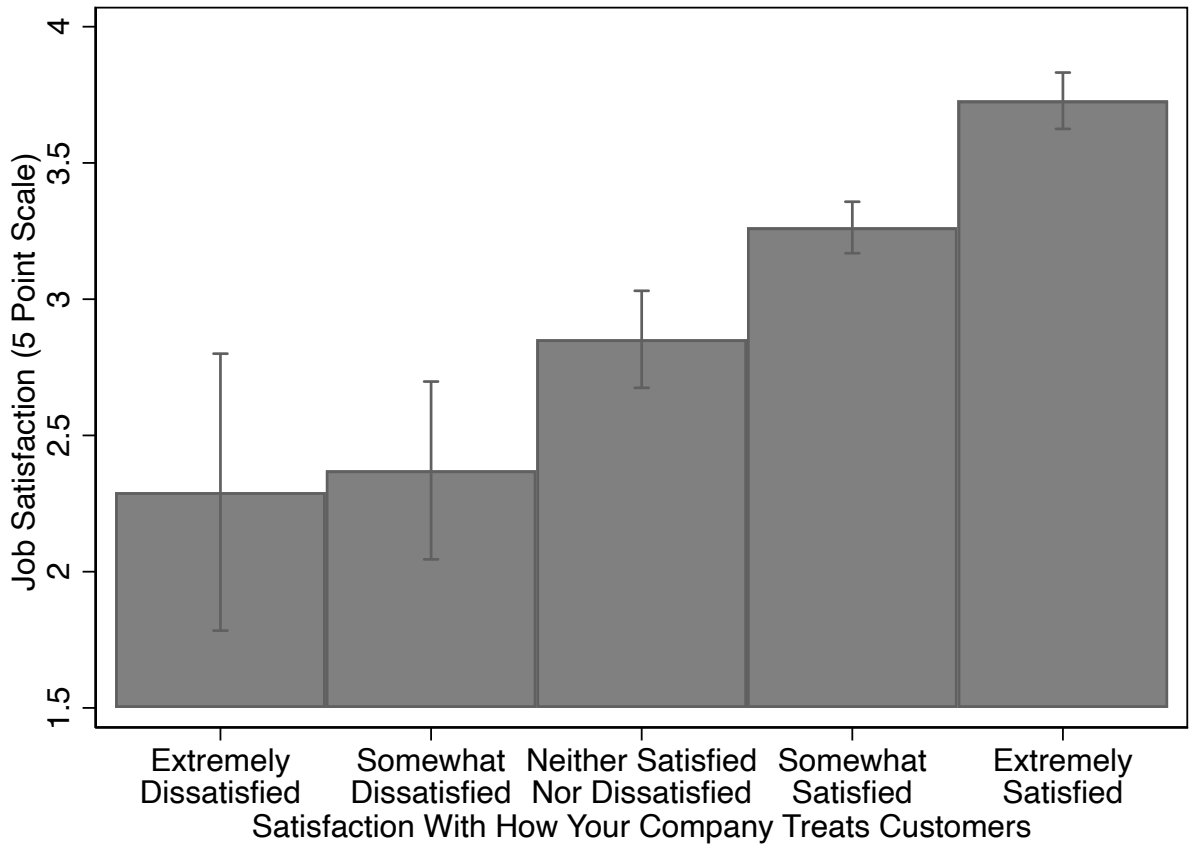
Variable	Mean
Independent Variables (Cont)	
How often are customers rude to you	
Never	4.83%
Rarely	25.32%
Monthly	9.31%
Weekly	24.97%
Daily	35.57%
Controls	
How often do you interact with customers	
Rarely	1.88%
Sometimes	3.53%
Often	12.72%
Always	81.86%
Negative Schedule Characteristics (0-6)	2.1261
Usual Hours	33.08
Full Time	54.65%
At Least Some College	62.05%
Less Than Year on the Job	39.18%
Has Children	40.18%
Cohabitating	76.38%
Enrolled In School	28.86%
Hourly Wage	$13.55
Schedule Variability	0.34
Age	35
Male	26.02%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	81.37%
Black	2.80%
Hispanic	9.68%
Other	6.15%
N	849

The table highlights some important distinctions. While roughly 25% of workers report that they find it difficult to put on a happy face for customers, only about 12% of workers say they are dissatisfied with how the company treats customers. Additionally, a large proportion of respondents, roughly 30% say they rarely or never have customers act rudely towards them. On the other hand, over 75% of workers say customers are nice on a daily basis.

Results

The figures below depict the average marginal effects of the regression for each response category in the dependent variable. With respect to job satisfaction, the figure shows that there are significant returns to satisfaction with how the company treats customers.

Figure 2-2: Predicted Job Satisfaction for Agreement with how Company Treats Customers

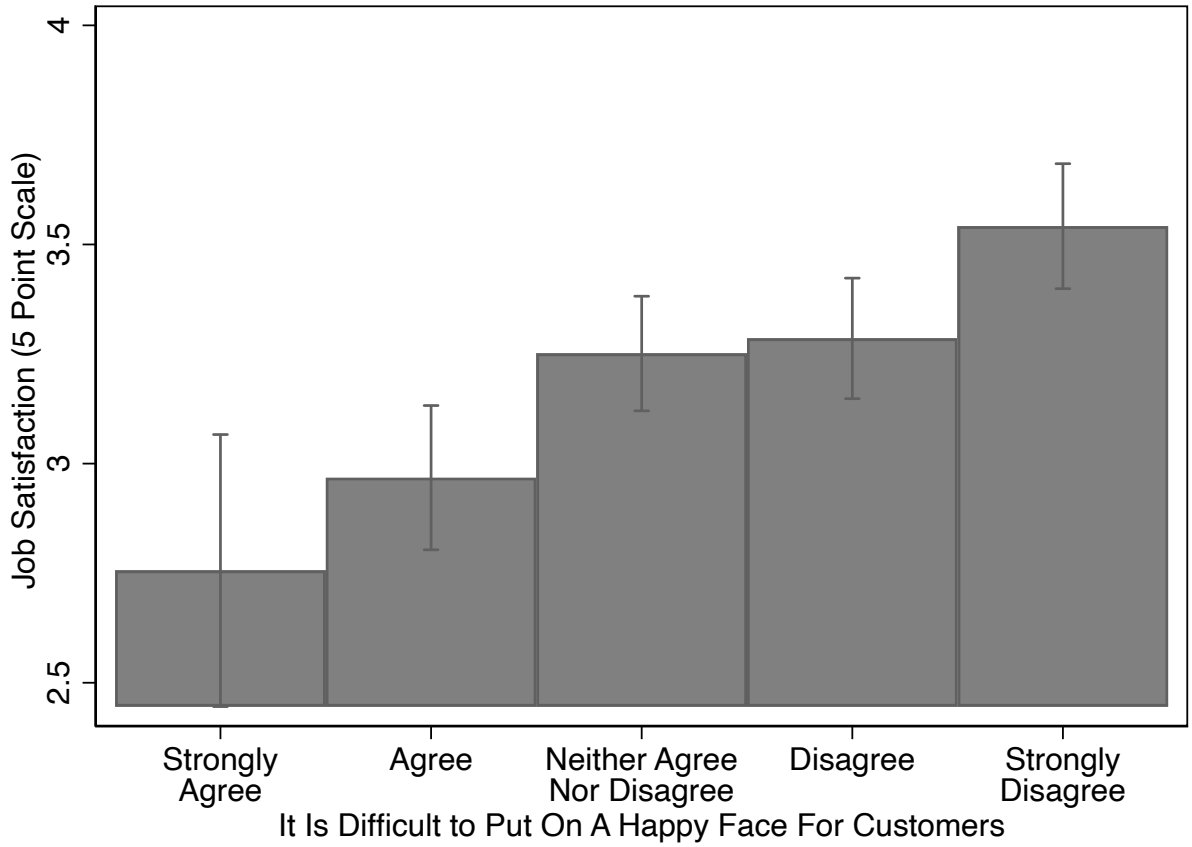


Frontline workers who are somewhat satisfied with how the company treats customers are .4 points more satisfied with their jobs. Extreme satisfaction with customer treatment is correlated with a nearly .9 point increase in job satisfaction compared to the neutral group. The standard deviation of the dependent variable, job satisfaction, is about 1.35. So, a .9 point increase in job satisfaction is an increase of two thirds of a standard deviation in

the dependent variable. Frontline workers who do not agree with how the company treats customers, on the other hand, average a nearly half point decrease in job satisfaction.

In order to put this effect in perspective, I contrast it here with the more established theory of emotional labor.

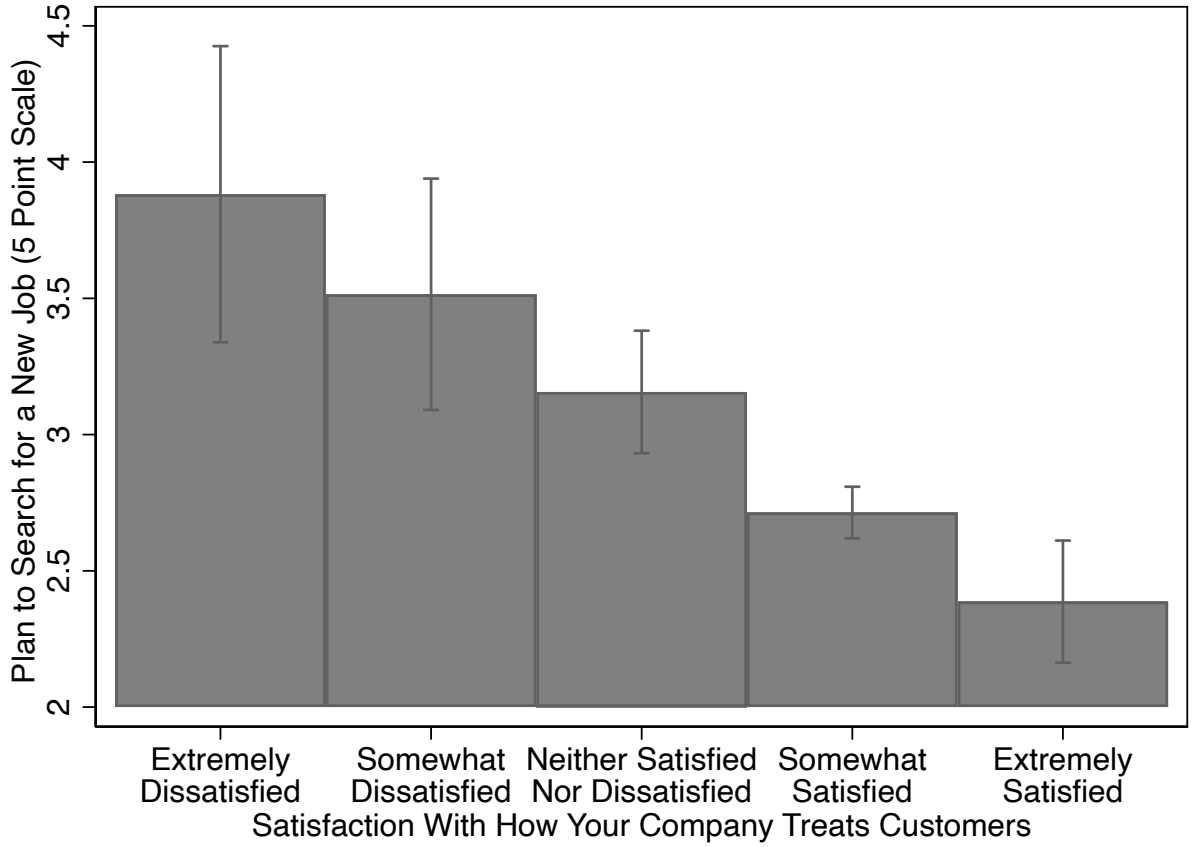
Figure 2-3: Predicted Job Satisfaction for Difficulty Putting on a Happy Face



Frontline workers who state they strongly agree that it is difficult to put on a happy face for customers are roughly a half point less satisfied with their jobs, and those who say they agree are .28 points less satisfied. In terms of standard deviation, compared to the two thirds standard deviation decrease corresponding to extreme dissatisfaction with how the company treats customers, extreme difficulty putting on a happy face is correlated with a .37 point decrease in the standard deviation. While these effects are sizable, they are nearly half the size of the satisfaction with how the company treats its customers coefficients. Though it is not shown here, an increase in the perceived frequency of positive or negative interactions with customers is not associated with any change in job satisfaction.

Turning to plans to search for a new job, the effects are even more strongly pronounced.

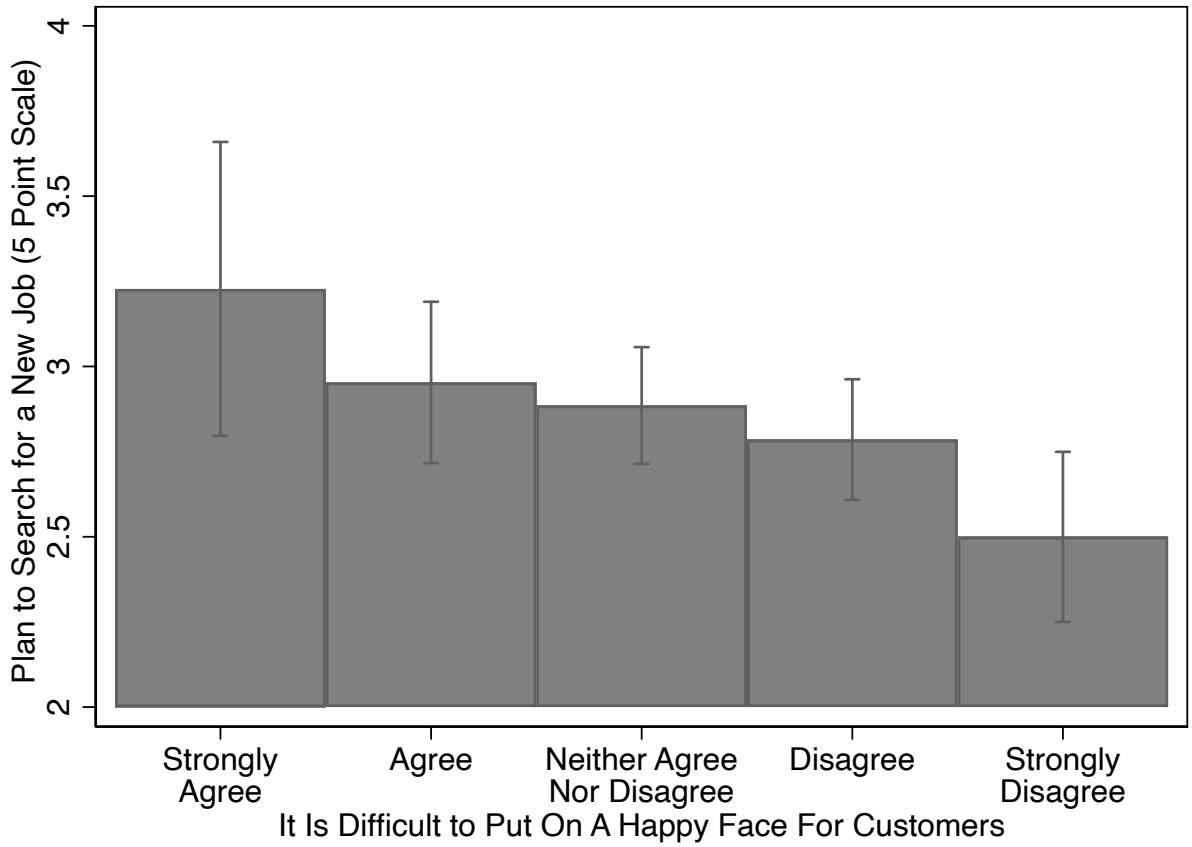
Figure 2-4: Predicted New Job Search for Satisfaction with how Company Treats Customers



Workers who are extremely dissatisfied with how the company treats customers report a .73 point higher likelihood to search for a new job in comparison to their neutral counterparts. On the other hand, frontline workers who are extremely satisfied along these lines report a .77 point lower likelihood to conduct a new job search. The standard deviation of the dependent variable is 1.55, so the swing from least to most satisfied with how the company treats customers is associated with about a one standard deviation decrease in plans to search for a new job. For the less extreme counterparts the differences are also statistically significant, with workers somewhat dissatisfied with how the company treats customers .36 points more likely to search for a new job, and somewhat satisfied workers .44 points less likely to conduct a search.

In contrast, as shown in the figure below, the only significant effect of difficulty conducting emotional labor on turnover intentions is among those who strongly disagree that it is difficult.

Figure 2-5: Predicted New Job Search for Difficulty Putting on a Happy Face



These workers are .38 points more likely to say they intend to stay at their current job. This effect is roughly half the size of the corresponding response among those satisfied with how the company treats customers.

Once again, a change in the perceived frequency of positive or negative interactions with customers is not associated with different levels of turnover intentions. This, in combination with the smaller effect sizes among those who report difficulty conducting emotional labor, once again puts the organizational aspect of customer service in stark relief. Workers are clearly impacted by their views of how the organization treats its customers. This view is present in written Glassdoor reviews, the association between these written reviews and Glassdoor ratings, and in direct questioning as a result of this survey, which also includes a wide variety of controls.

Discussion and Conclusion

Workers in frontline foodservice and retail occupations live notably precarious lives, with unstable schedules, low wages, and a lack of benefits (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a; Lambert, 2008). They are underpaid, understaffed, and are some of what have been called the "bad jobs" in the United States economy (Kalleberg, 2009, 2011; Warhurst, 2021).

These jobs also may be more likely to force meaningless or negative interactions with customers. In the face of negative interactions, these jobs likely do not provide some avenues of support that researchers have identified for facilitating positive interactions between workers and customers in other occupations, such as debriefing with managers after difficult moments with customers (DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019) or upskilling labor to create more meaningful patient interactions (Findlay et al., 2017a). They also do not seem to provide the same level of pride or intrinsic meaning we might expect from work in healthcare (Korczynski, 2009). In addition, the small amount of autonomy that may have provided workers more of a sense of meaning in these roles may be diminishing, as sales work becomes routinized and de-skilled (Ikeler, 2016; Leidner, 1993). Yet at the same time, these workers are asked to put on a happy face for their customers.

Since Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labor, researchers have struggled to square the labor process that alienates customer service workers with the positive ways in which workers sometimes discuss their customers (Korczynski, 2008). In order to do so, researchers have identified a series of new labor processes, typically in higher status professions, which may lead workers to feel better about customer service, such as debriefing, skilled emotional labor, deep acting, or specific organizational feeling rules. Beyond emotional labor, researchers have discussed how the makeup of tasks within an occupation, or the relationships within the firm may shape workers interactions. The assumption behind the codification of these labor processes is that workers who experience certain processes instead of, or more frequently than, others will be better off. Implicit in this assumption is that there are some service jobs which are primarily alienating, and that workers in these jobs will be worse off due to their interactions with customers.

This chapter challenges this common understanding of customer service for the most common low-wage frontline jobs. Even in low-level, underpaid, understaffed jobs, with relatively short and impersonal interactions, workers interpret interactions with customers in varied ways, and often see them as more than a source of emotional labor. Two common attitudes of note center on the fact that workers care about their customers. They appreciate regular customers, and enjoy helping people, even if this takes the form of simply providing a regular customer with their morning cup of coffee. This is not simply an aside for workers, it is the main way they discuss customers in the context of their job quality.

This capacity for human connection at work, one that researchers have attempted to explain by identifying complex labor processes in healthcare occupations, appears in common frontline service jobs. These findings highlight the need for a theory of customer service work that takes seriously the positive aspects of these interactions which have been noted but then left aside in the past (Leidner, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). For frontline workers, customers are not solely an alienating aspect of work, as one may expect from the emotional labor theory. Instead, these results suggest that connection with the community, dignity in their work, and a broader sense of meaning specifically as a result of customer interactions are a fundamental quality of service work. While the emotional labor associated with this work is a novel form of alienation, specific to service work, and sociologically compelling, to portray interactions with customers primarily in this way would misconstrue the relationship.

This chapter also identifies an additional dimension of concern that had been previously

overlooked. That is, workers are frequently explicitly concerned with the impact of the organizational strategies a company pursues on customers and the quality of service interactions. Sometimes, workers draw a connection between negative interactions with customers and management strategies. For instance, workers fear being yelled at by customers based on factors outside of their control, such as long lines due to understaffing or the lack of appropriate training making it difficult for workers to help a customer find something in a store. Other workers report genuine disappointment that their employer does not seem to care about customers, reporting dissatisfaction with selling customers unhealthy food, or a focus on profits over customer service. Conversely, workers are pleased when they feel the company facilitates positive interactions.

These organizational level findings complicate theories of customer service and the service triangle in two ways. First, these findings show that workers are not merely concerned with dyadic relationship between customer and worker. Many are actively thinking about how the organization manages this interaction, and whether the organization is producing a desirable customer service experience. Not only interactions with frontline managers, but also a worker's interpretation of organizational strategies play a powerful, central role in how workers rate their jobs. Previous research has shown that workers are impacted by organizational strategies (Lopez, 2006; Korczynski and Evans, 2013), or has characterized the inherent tension that workers face between good customer service and organizational efficiency (Korczynski, 2008). However, this finding shows that these tensions are not only theoretical. Workers are actively aware of how an organizational strategy impacts their relationship with customers, and their subjective well-being is tied to their attitudes on the matter. This is particularly important in frontline foodservice and retail work, where frequently utilized cost cutting measures such as understaffing may impact workers in more ways than previously understood.

Moreover, the impact of agreement or disagreement with how the organization facilitates customer service interactions, and treats its customers more broadly, is especially influential for job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Workers who express frustration or happiness with how the organization manages customer service interaction report the lowest and highest job ratings in the Glassdoor dataset respectively. These findings extend the impact of the organization beyond frontline managers, and behind-the-scenes framers of interactions.

These findings carry through in a survey analysis. More than when workers report a difficulty in conducting emotional labor, or experience negative or positive interactions with customers, negative opinions regarding how the company treats customers are larger and more significantly associated with job satisfaction and turnover intentions. These results together point to the organizational dimension as an important one, and one that is inextricably linked with the finding that workers are much more likely to care about their customers than researchers have typically expected. Frontline workers are invested in the well-being of their customers, and their job satisfaction is tied to whether employer seems invested as well.

This analysis has produced an accounting of *what* workers think of their customers, and the relationship between these perceptions and subjective well-being. To this end, this chapter summarizes over company, industry, and occupation to estimate the overall prevalence and significance of these views using a variety of new datasets. What is missing from this account, though, is *why* workers vary, for instance, in satisfaction with how their

company treats customers, or whether they see their interactions from an organizational orientation. A logical next step would be to identify the different management strategies that these companies use, or the quality of interactions within occupations at the same employer, in order to understand how these aspects of the job may shift how workers think about their customers. However, as this analysis shows, even within employer and occupation, attitudes about how the company treats customers vary, and these differences are associated with significant shifts in job satisfaction and turnover intentions. In addition to understanding variation between employer and occupation, future research may also work to understand why there is variation within these categories.

More research is needed to identify what leads workers to summarize their interactions with customers in different ways. One explanation for the diversity of attitudes within organizations could come from Grant et al. (2009), who parse the extent to which workers accept or reject the corporate sanctioned discussion of how to think about customers. But, the variety of orientations towards customers may suggest a theoretical process beyond accepting or rejecting corporate sanctioned meaning. Regardless of why such variation may exist, the current research highlights the immense power social interactions with customers have on workers, even in frontline foodservice and retail.

This chapter adds to the theory of the different ways that workers make sense of their customers and focuses on how workers often see customer interactions from an organizational perspective. However, throughout the qualitative portion of the text, and implicit in the quantitative analysis, it is evident that workers care about their customers, even in frontline foodservice and retail work. In the next chapter, I quantify just how important customer relationships are to workers with respect to their ability to conduct emotional labor, their motivation to provide a quality customer service experience, and their well-being. It does so by analyzing how workers' perceptions of customer relationships changed as a result of COVID-19.

Chapter 3: The Effect of a Decline in The Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor, Job Satisfaction and Turnover: Evidence from COVID-19

Abstract

How does the quality of relationships with customers impact emotional labor requirements and job satisfaction for frontline foodservice and retail workers? While customer service is a central aspect of work for many jobs in the United States, it is extremely difficult to answer this question due to the presence of multiple confounders. Through an original survey of 662 frontline workers at 10 foodservice and retail companies this chapter explores this question from a new perspective. By examining how workers perceived their workplace relationships as shifting as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study uses retrospective accounts of changing relationships to measure within-person change in relationship quality. I find first that, while respondents report that relationships with coworkers and supervisors generally stayed the same during the pandemic, relationships with customers deteriorated dramatically. Next, I find that a decline in relationships with customers is associated with more difficulty conducting emotional labor, less investment in producing a positive customer service experience, lower job satisfaction, and higher turnover intentions. These results provide new insight into the centrality of positive customer relationships for job quality in the service sector.

Introduction

How important are workplace relationships? This is undoubtedly a complex and multi-faceted question. On the one hand, negative workplace relationships can be a problem, as is the case when workers compare themselves unfavorably to coworkers (Storer and Reich, 2019; Baumann et al., 2019; Cobb et al., 2021), or when they must deal with institutional sexism (Cardador et al., 2021; Padavic et al., 2020) and racism (Storer et al., 2020; Wood, 2020; Ray, 2019). Workers may also feel victimized by their employer (Aquino and Bradfield, 2000), or feel limited in their ability to feel authentic (Cable et al., 2013), to name only a few issues. On the other hand, positive workplace relationships may be a boon to workers and the organizations for which they work (Sloan, 2011; Ducharme and Martin, 2000; Charoensukmongkol et al., 2016).

For frontline service workers, workplace relationships play an even more complicated role due to the addition of customers (Leidner, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). Here inauthenticity can be not only a part of the job, but a part of the product itself (Hochschild, 1983). Workers are asked to engage in surface acting, defined as acting in in a way that differs from how one feels emotionally, which has been tied to various negative effects for workers (Grandey, 2003; Sloan, 2011; Bhave and Glomb, 2016; Gabriel and Diefendorff, 2015). Yet the ability to successfully engage in surface acting and produce a positive customer service experience is of great concern to employers, since customer satisfaction can impact the bottom line. Workers

who are able to successfully provide service with a smile are more likely to produce satisfied customers (Grandey, 2003), and it is even better if customers perceive this interaction as authentic (Groth et al., 2009). While employers look to ensure positive experiences for customers, overly entitled customers can lead to greater customer incivility (Korczynski and Evans, 2013) which could affect employers by both burning workers out and producing turnover. This is consequential, since burnt out workers likely provide a worse experience for customers and unexpected turnover could impact the efficiency of the organization, even for employers where contingent employment is part of the business model (De Stefano et al., 2019).

The effect of customers is even more complicated when considering that relatively little is known regarding whether customer interactions make frontline workers' jobs generally more or less satisfying. For instance, workers may find customer interactions to be intrinsically valuable (Tolich, 1993; Korczynski, 2009), and even in situations where workers complain about rude customers, they also frequently discuss the role that customers can have as a source of satisfaction (Leidner, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). These effects can be difficult to pinpoint, with even studies of workers in the same occupation producing conflicting accounts (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). Further, for jobs where interactions are routinized and brief, such as in foodservice and retail work (Ikeler, 2016; Korczynski, 2009), it is possible that customer interactions play little to no role in overall job satisfaction, compared to extrinsic rewards like pay and benefits, or other material aspects of the job.

While identifying the importance of workplace relationships is consequential for both workers and organizations, there are two key measurement issues inherent in identifying the associations between workplaces relationships and outcomes such as surface acting, attachment to quality customer service, and overall well-being. First, workers work at different companies that may differ in their managerial strategies, and in particular in terms of how they manage customer service interactions. Research shows that the balancing act between the negative and the positive aspects of customer service often comes down to how managers treat customer service interactions. Managers may create a setting where workers are more likely to have authentic, positive interactions with customers (Lopez, 2006), may create a setting where workers are forced to follow rote scripts that make connection more difficult (Leidner, 1993; Ikeler, 2016), or may create a power imbalance that leaves workers more likely to be abused by customers (Korczynski and Evans, 2013). In order to measure the effect of a specific relationship on well-being, it is therefore necessary to draw a sample from multiple companies, and control for unobserved variation in managerial strategies. This measurement problem is especially problematic in the American context, where there is a lack of employer-identified survey data, making it difficult to account for such differences. The large-scale survey data that do exist rarely include multiple organizations and are typically cross-sectional. Large scale studies, as a result, often cannot account for organizational variation when measuring the relationship between behaviors such as surface acting and job satisfaction or health (Singh and Glavin, 2017; Bhave and Glomb, 2016).

Personality characteristics present a second methodological challenge. Research shows that individuals who are more suited to customer service, or who are more outgoing, have higher quality workplace relationships overall (Bono and Vey, 2007; Ashforth and Humphrey,

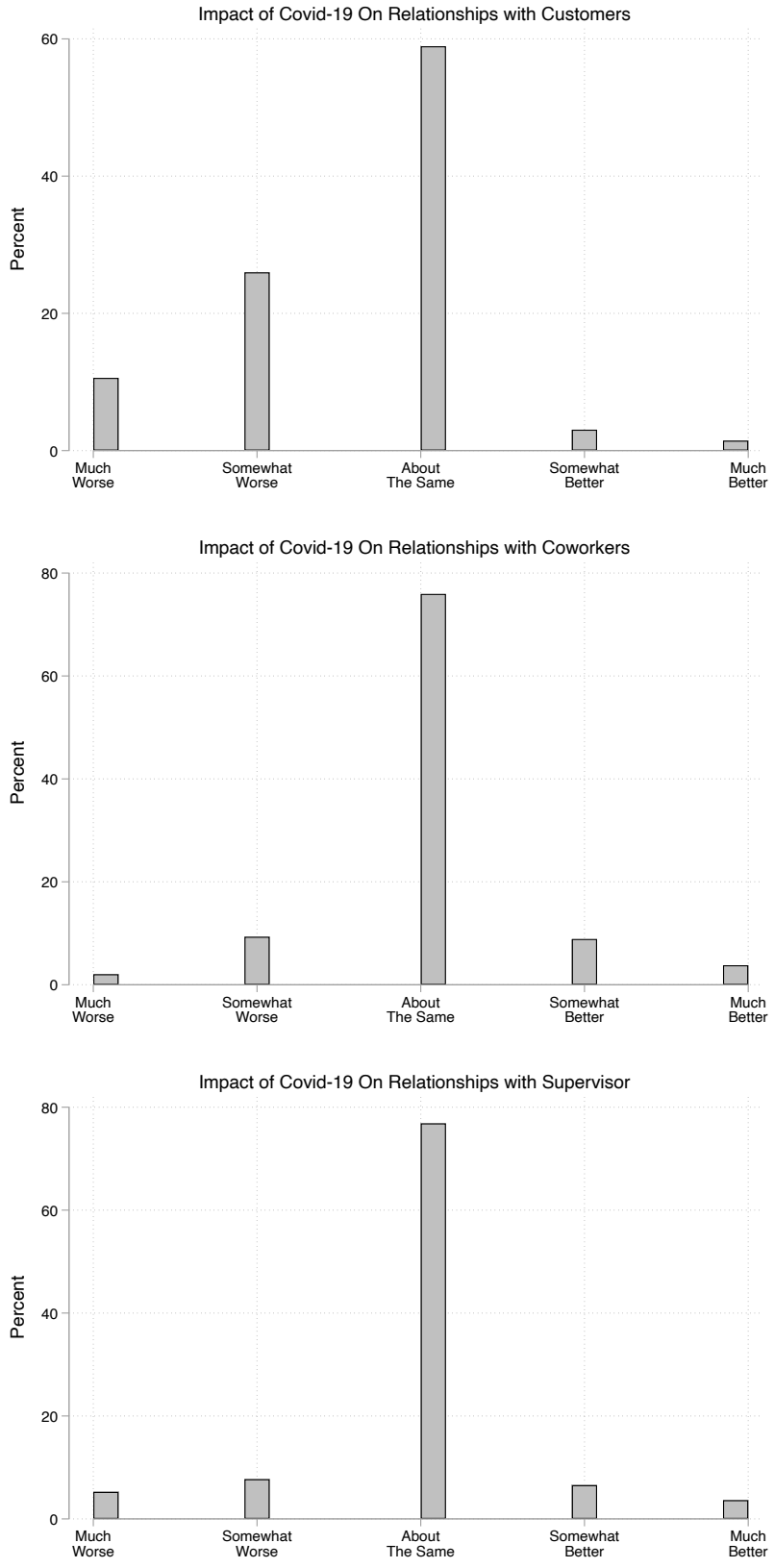
1993; Pugh et al., 2011). This gives rise to a measurement issue because it is inherently difficult to disambiguate the role that personality characteristics plays in difficulty conducting surface acting or subjective job quality from the effects of workplace relationships.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic may provide a unique research opportunity to deal with these measurement issues. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has had significant negative impacts on frontline foodservice and retail workers, adding new risks to their jobs. These workers were asked to continue coming into work and serving customers, even as many workers outside of the service sector were asked to stay home. If COVID-19 altered workplace relationships, this shift can be used to observe the association between workplace relationships and outcomes such as job satisfaction while holding constant company and personality confounders. In the case of customers, shifting relationships could provide insight into the role customer-worker relationships play in a worker's ability to engage in surface acting, their attachment to customer satisfaction, and their overall well-being.

But it is not clear if COVID-19 impacted workplace relationships, or in what direction. Reasonable arguments can be made for workplace relationships having both improved and deteriorated. On the one hand, managers, coworkers, and workers might have felt as though they were all going through something difficult together, producing a new sense of camaraderie. In addition, jobs that may once have felt ancillary to the economy, or unimportant, are now considered essential, potentially improving relationships through a renewed sense of purpose, duty, and responsibility. Indeed, during the pandemic frontline foodservice and retail workers became lumped in with healthcare workers, classified as "essential," and often described as heroes in the media. This could have led to a more appreciative and respectful customer base. On the other hand, each workplace interaction essentially operated as a threat to a worker's health, supply chain disruptions caused shortages and buying panics, and new mask policies in the workplace provided both a new point of potential discord between different actors within the workplace and an additional barrier to social connection in a workplace where it was more difficult to see and hear others.

To measure shifts in the quality of workplace relationships as a result of COVID-19, and analyze the associations between these relationships and outcomes, this chapter draws on an original survey of frontline workers from 10 foodservice and retail companies fielded in November 2020. The survey was fielded over Facebook and includes responses from 662 workers. Although the survey is cross-sectional, it asks frontline workers to examine how their workplace relationships changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey is described in more detail below, but I orient the rest of the chapter by first presenting Figure 3-1 below, which reports responses from a set of survey questions asking whether relationships with managers, coworkers, and customer deteriorated, improved, or stayed the same as a result of COVID-19.

Figure 3-1: Changes in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19



The results, displayed in Figure 3-1 show that for the most part, relationships with both coworkers and managers were reported to stay the same. Nearly 80% of workers responded that these relationships were unchanged by the pandemic, with the remaining 20% evenly split between reporting that relationships had improved and had declined. This is perhaps surprising, given the extent to which many believe that the pandemic fundamentally altered almost all aspects of work. In contrast, relationships with customers were reported to have declined substantially. Indeed, 37% of frontline workers reported a decline in the quality of customer relationships as a result of COVID-19, with 60% reporting that their relationships stayed the same. This precipitous decline in the quality of customer relationships is certainly unfortunate for workers, yet it provides an opportunity to explore the importance of customer relationships to a worker's ability to conduct emotional labor, to their motivation to provide quality customer service, as well as to their overall job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

The remainder of this chapter focuses specifically on the relationship between the declining quality of the worker-customer dyad and two sets of outcomes. First, I measure the effect of this decline on frontline workers' reported difficulty conducting emotional labor, and their attachment and motivation regarding the customer service experience. These outcomes, motivated by a large and growing literature on frontline service work, have been shown to be not only central aspects of service work, but tied to both worker well-being (Hochschild, 1983; Bhave and Glomb, 2016) and the quality of the services that workers provide (Snipes et al., 2005; Hur et al., 2015). Next, I examine the impact of declining customer relationships on subjective job quality and turnover intentions. These effects speak to both worker well-being, and organizational efficiency (Kacmar et al., 2006; De Stefano et al., 2019).

Findings demonstrate the importance of positive relationships with customers to frontline service workers, even in the context of deskilled and routinized customer service encounters (Ikeler, 2016; Korczynski, 2009). Workers who report declining relationships with customers as a result of COVID-19, also report more difficulty conducting emotional labor, less commitment to a positive customer service experience, lower job satisfaction and satisfaction with the customer service experience, and higher intentions to search for a new job. These findings provide new evidence about the importance of customer relationships in frontline foodservice and retail work.

Literature Review

This chapter measures how changes in the quality of customer relationships are associated with three related outcomes; 1) ability to conduct surface acting, 2) authentic motivation to satisfy customers, and 3) subjective job quality and turnover intentions. In this section, I describe the literature surrounding each of these three outcomes and develop hypotheses regarding how declining customer relationships may impact each outcome.

Surface Acting

Emotional labor is perhaps the most common theoretical concept that sociologists employ when describing customer service relationships. The concept, introduced by Hochschild (1983), focuses on the service dynamic in which workers are asked to express emotions as a

common-place part of the job. For Hochschild, this dynamic can be potentially detrimental to workers who must separate their felt emotions from their expressed emotions. While research has indicated that the worker-customer dyad is more complex than theorized by Hochschild, and in certain circumstances can be rewarding (Tolich, 1993; Lopez, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019), and shaped in multifaceted ways by organizational arrangements (Fuller and Smith, 1991; Williams and Connell, 2010; Leidner, 1993; Korczynski, 2008), the toll that emotional labor takes on frontline workers is well documented. Much of the research on emotional labor has focused on surface acting, which describes the requirement for workers to act in a way they do not feel. From an occupational perspective, workers who are asked to conduct more surface acting are more likely to have lower job satisfaction (Bhave and Glomb, 2016) and worse health outcomes (Singh and Glavin, 2017).

Surface acting may be required in every customer-facing interaction at work yet can be particularly taxing in the face of workplace incivility. These incivilities can range from simple negative interactions to experiences of sexual harassment (Tindell and Padavic, 2021; Good and Cooper, 2016a), transphobia (Hadjisolomou, 2021), and racism (Kern and Grandey, 2009). These workplace incivilities can impact a worker's well-being and turnover intentions (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Han et al., 2016). Moreover, compared to incivility from coworkers or managers, incivilities from customers can produce a greater level of emotional exhaustion among service workers (Grandey et al., 2007). When workers experience incivility, the effect is not isolated to the single incident. One negative exchange can spiral out, creating more negative interactions with subsequent customers throughout the workday (Groth and Grandey, 2012).

A potentially protective effect on the negative effects of surface acting is the role of positive relationships with customers. For instance, although workers do experience negative interactions, some continue to see customer interactions as the most rewarding part of the job (Tolich, 1993). The line between a rewarding and a draining customer service experience is potentially drawn by employers, who structure how customer service interactions operate (Leidner, 1993; Lopez, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019). Korczynski and Evans (2013) for instance shows that companies which prioritize "customer sovereignty," or the notion that the customer is always right, can open workers up to more incivility. Positive relationships with customers overall may reduce the negative effects of incivilities.

Given this line of research, this chapter hypothesizes the following:

Hypothesis 1: A decline in the quality of customer relationships will correspond to an increased difficulty in conducting surface acting.

However, it can often be quite difficult to directly observe the association between customer relationships and the negative effects of emotional labor. Workers with different personality types may be better suited to deal with customers (Bono and Vey, 2007) and organizations may be better or worse at hiring workers with these personality types. At the same time, changes in the qualities of customer relationships can be quite informative. Recall that Hochschild (1983) develops some of the primary implications of her emotional labor argument after observing how work speed ups made customer relationships more challenging.

Attachment to Service Work

As shown in the previous section, a large body of research has demonstrated that surface acting can be a negative source of stress for frontline workers. This stress can lead to worse outcomes for workers themselves, but also for the company that employs them. For instance, negative relationships with customers may lead to burnout, and as a result decrease workers' attachment to producing a satisfactory experience for customers. Han et al. (2016) demonstrate the pathway between incivility, surface acting, and burnout, highlighting the pathway connecting these processes. Indeed, when a job has more emotional labor requirements, workers are more likely to burn out (Hsieh, 2014), and thus be less motivated to do their job well.

DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom (2019) show that in healthcare, burnout can be prevented by a managerial strategy where workers consistently debrief and process negative interactions with managers. In low-wage foodservice and retail work, though, front-line managers are just the next level in a sometimes sprawling bureaucracy and are often overworked themselves. They likely do not have enough resources or leeway to take extra steps to prevent burnout (Butler and Hammer, 2019).

When workers burn out they provide a lower quality service product (Grandey, 2003). When it seems as though frontline workers are simply going through the motions, rather than genuinely providing customer support, it effects customer satisfaction (Grandey, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). Even when workers engage in surface acting, customers can tell when workers are faking their emotions and are less satisfied in this case (Groth et al., 2009). This is consistent with research that shows that when workers feel as though their job tasks are meaningless, they typically expend less effort (Chadi et al., 2017).

Just as burnout can create worse service outcomes, genuine connection with customers has been shown to be associated with a greater attachment to service work. For instance, when customers develop a rapport with workers, they are more likely to be pleased with the service overall (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000). The connection between customer satisfaction and rapport is not surprising, given some of the ethnographic and interview data on frontline workers. Even though customers are sometimes a source of stress, forcing workers to fake emotions and put up with abuse, workers typically also describe customer interactions as satisfying and providing motivation. Even McDonald's workers speak about how positive relationships with customers can give the job meaning (Leidner, 1993). For the frontline workers who spend all day interacting with customers, these interactions may have the power not only to fatigue them, but also to motivate them and give their job meaning (Korczynski, 2009, 2008; Tolich, 1993; Hochschild, 1983).

But what happens when the genuine connection that motivates workers and results in customer satisfaction falls apart, as it did for many workers during COVID-19? For workers whose relationships with customers declined as a result of COVID-19, this literature would suggest that workers would not only report difficulty conducting emotional labor. They might also be less intrinsically motivated to support their customers. Therefore, this line of reasoning suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: A decline in the quality of customer relationships will correspond to a decreased interest in providing good customer service.

In other words, if positive relationships with customers allow workers to feel a connection

to their work and provide the basis for them to perform well, then as these relationships deteriorate, workers will have less genuine interest in service quality. These workers will be less concerned, for instance, whether a customer leaves satisfied, and may lose the belief that what they do matters.

Customers and Job Satisfaction

Finally, to what extent do customer relationships impact overall job satisfaction and turnover intentions? Negative customer interactions have been directly tied to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions in the moments after a stressful interaction (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Han et al., 2016). Similarly, larger scale cross-sectional studies have also tied occupations with surface acting requirements to worse outcomes for workers. Bhave and Glomb (2016) identify a relationship between emotional labor requirements and job satisfaction. Singh and Glavin (2017) show that for workers in resource-deprived work contexts, emotional labor requirements are correlated with worse health for workers. In most service work, the COVID-19 pandemic created a source of work intensification, with more workers out sick or leaving, and customers having greater needs while at the same time being less satisfying. This type of speed up is consistent with the effects described by Hochschild (1983). Hochschild found that workers were more emotionally exhausted and less satisfied with their jobs when airlines reduced the number of flight attendants on a flight.

Given the research, this chapter hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 3: A decline in the quality of customer relationships will correspond to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions.

The relationship between customer relationships and job satisfaction or turnover intentions is not necessarily a foregone conclusion in foodservice and retail work. Some evidence suggests that for frontline foodservice and retail workers, customer relationships might not play an important role in their overall job quality, even if surface acting itself can be harmful. Concerns about other aspects of job quality, such as wages and benefits, may crowd out any connection between customer relationships and turnover intentions. This may be particularly true of foodservice and retail workers. Since their compensation is not directly tied to customer satisfaction, workers might not be particularly invested in these relationships (Cohen, 2010). In the highly routinized work of frontline foodservice and retail workers (Ikeler, 2016; Leidner, 1993) where interactions are typically short and scripted (Korczynski, 2009) customer relationships may not play a particularly influential role with respect to turnover intentions and job satisfaction.

Identifying an association between customer relationships and turnover, though, is not only crucial for worker well-being. It also affects organizational efficiency. In a large meta-study, Park and Shaw (2013) show that higher turnover is correlated with lower organizational performance. Kacmar et al. (2006) demonstrate that even in fast-food restaurants, which are highly routinized, more turnover can lead to longer wait times and lower customer satisfaction. Even in industries where turnover is part of a business model that includes a flexible and contingent workforce, unplanned turnover can still be costly for the organization (De Stefano et al., 2019). Higher turnover was even more problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a stronger social safety net made it possible for

many workers to leave or look for better employment. Many of the companies included in this study offered unprecedented signing bonuses, competing to bring in a more limited supply of labor. In this context, turnover is likely even more costly for employers.

Customers Relationships During COVID-19

As Figure 3-1 indicates, although the quality of relationships with supervisors and coworkers remained largely the same as a result of COVID-19, workers reported significantly deteriorated relationships with customers. Ample reasons for such declines have been suggested. First and foremost, customers may operate as a potential vector for disease. Each interaction with a customer is another interaction that may result in contracting COVID-19. These fears may be amplified when customers refuse to wear masks, wear them only when asked, or wear them improperly.

Additionally, ongoing controversy over masks put frontline workers in difficult positions, often being asked to enforce mask policies within foodservice and retail stores that they or their customers may not agree with. This is an important and new source of labor for workers, who risk illness if they do not enforce the policy, and customer incivility if they do. This is likely to have led to additional experiences of both inauthenticity and incivility.

Masking is only one of many potential new sources of customer incivility. Disruptions in the supply chain led to shortages of key goods, such as toilet paper early in the pandemic, creating a tense situation between desperate customers and helpless service workers. Additionally, as coworkers got sick or felt uncomfortable coming to work, workers could find themselves with a larger-than-usual set of customers, and yet a smaller-than-usual workforce to help them. This type of understaffing can be a source of increased job pressure, stress, and dissatisfaction. Finally, all of these changes created a situation not only where negative interactions may increase, but also where rewarding interactions with customers diminished. Muffled voices through masks and a mutual fear pervading the customer service interaction with workers make it more difficult for workers to connect with customers.

While these factors provide some potential explanations for the declining quality of customer relationships as a result of COVID-19, this chapter does not seek to identify the cause of declining customer relationships or isolate the impact of specific factors on the outcomes listed above. Instead, it asks: how have these declining relationships impacted job quality? Since customer interactions are only one part of service work, they exist within a complicated field of interpersonal interactions with coworkers and managers, as well as satisfaction with schedule characteristics, wages, benefits, perks, and the relative availability of other jobs, just to name a few factors. These myriad factors make it difficult for traditional survey data to account for unobserved variables. However, asking workers to express how COVID-19 impacted customer relationships can provide a unique ability to isolate the association between relationships with customers and the outcomes described above.

Of course, the effects of COVID-19 were not uniform. Organizations had different management responses to the pandemic. Different regions of the country enacted different policies. Public opinion of COVID-19, including fear of the virus, also varied significantly. Individuals themselves may harbor different opinions from the public they were surrounded

by, a disconnect that may be particularly salient for customer service workers who come into contact with customers throughout the day. In order to control for these layers of concern, the current study includes a set of key COVID-19 specific controls, measuring workers' fear of the virus and opinions about their company's response. I also include fixed effects for employer and region in order to control for these differing responses.

Research Design

Data

In order to address my research questions, I draw upon a survey of frontline workers from 10 foodservice and retail companies. The sample is drawn over five industries; general retail, coffee shops, hardware stores, fast food, and drug stores and includes two companies per industry. The companies are Walmart, Target, Dunkin' (previously Dunkin' Donuts), Starbucks, Home Depot, Lowe's, McDonald's, Burger King, Walgreens, and CVS. This sampling variation is meant to capture variety in both the requirements of customer interaction in different industries, as well as organizational variation in how customer interactions are managed. The survey was conducted in Mid-November 2020 and was fielded via Facebook Advertisements. Frontline workers who indicated that they worked at one of these organizations were given an ad on their feed, offering a chance at a $500 gift card if they responded to the survey. The survey was fielded in English only. The click-through-rate for the survey, or the percentage of those who clicked the Facebook Ad of those who saw the Facebook Advertisement, is about 3.2%. Of those who saw the Facebook Ad, about 1.3% filled out any information, in line with previous research using Facebook Ads (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b).

After multiple imputation, the analytic sample includes 662 responses. Chained imputation models were used to impute control variables that were missing at random, allowing for the recovery of 183 responses. Respondents are only included if they were working during the COVID-19 pandemic when the survey was fielded, or if they reported having worked at the employer during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dependent Variables

I include six dependent variables in my analysis. The first three focus on workers' ability to conduct emotional labor, and their attachment to the service and the quality of service at work. Each of the items' response categories are on a 5-point scale.

Difficulty Putting on Happy Face. Respondents are asked: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In general, I find it difficult to put on a happy face for CUSTOMERS at [Employer]."

Company Provides Valuable Service. Respondents are asked: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: [Employer] provides a valuable service to customers."

Important that Customers Leave Happy. Respondents are asked: "How important is it to you that a CUSTOMER leaves [Employer] happy?"

Together these questions capture different attitudes towards workers experience of and attachment to customer service at work. The last three dependent variable questions ask

about workers overall subjective well-being at work.

Satisfaction with Customer Service Experience Respondents are asked: "In general, how satisfied are you with your experience serving CUSTOMERS at [Employer]?"

Job Satisfaction. Respondents are asked: "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job at [Employer]"

Plan to Search for a New Job Respondents are asked: "Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it you will make a genuine effort to find a new job within the next 3 months?"

Independent Variables

Customer Relationship Declined. The key independent variable is whether customer relationships declined during the pandemic. The question asks, "As a result of COVID-19, have your relationships with customers become..." and respondents are given five response categories from Much worse to Much better. Workers who replied much or somewhat worse are identified as having had declining customer relationships as a result of the pandemic.

Key Controls

I also include key controls regarding respondent's experience with COVID-19 specifically.

Fear of COVID-19. Reactions to customer relationships may vary depending on whether respondents are worried or not worried about the threat of contracting COVID-19 in general. To measure this, respondents are asked: "In general, how worried are you about contracting COVID-19?"

Company Protects from COVID-19. Similarly, workers may be disengaged or unhappy at work if they feel as though their employer is not doing enough to protect from the threat of COVID-19. Respondents are asked: "Do you believe [Employer] is doing enough to protect YOU from contracting COVID-19 at work?"

Mask Requirements. In the same vein as the previous question, respondents are also asked: "Are customers required to wear masks while at your [Employer]?"

Additional Controls

I also include a variety of demographic and human capital controls in each of the social comparison models. *Wage.* The hourly wage a worker reports in dollars. *Usual Hours.* The number of hours a worker usually works in a month. *Stability.* This variable comes from the combination of two survey questions. First, a measure of greatest hours: "In the last month, what is the greatest number of hours you've worked in a week at [EMPLOYER NAME?] (Please consider all hours, including any extra hours, overtime, work you did at home and so forth." This is subtracted from a measure of fewest hours: "In the last month, what is the fewest hours you've worked in a week at [EMPLOYER NAME]? (Please do not include weeks in which you missed work because of illness or vacation." The absolute value of the difference between greatest and least hours, divided by the greatest number of hours, is used to produce a scale where one is maximally stable and zero is maximally unstable. *Tenure.* This variable asks how long the worker has been on the job. *Former Employee.* This indicates if the worker was a former employee. *Education.* This variable indicates the level

of education the respondent has reached. *Enrolled in School*. This dummy variable is coded as a one if the respondent is currently enrolled in school, and a zero if the respondent is not. *Male*. This variable is coded as a 1 if the worker responds as male and a 0 if the worker responds as female or gender non-conforming. *Has Children*. This is a dummy variable, coded as a one if the respondent indicates they have children, and a zero if they indicate they do not. *Cohabitating*. This variable categorizes whether an individual is living with a spouse or a partner. *White* This variable is a categorical variable for race. This variable is derived by asking respondents to check all races or ethnicities that apply to themselves from among white, Hispanic or Latino/Latina, Black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or other. If respondents choose White and only white, they are coded as a 1 in the variable. *Age*. This variable is coded into three age categories: 18-25, 25-60, and 60+.

Fixed Effects

In low-wage foodservice and retail jobs, interactions between customers and employees are often carefully routinized (Leidner, 1993; Ikeler, 2016). How companies altered or did not alter these interactions in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have played an important role in altering the quality of relationships with customers (Findlay et al., 2017b; Lopez, 2006), and also other factors related to job satisfaction. As a result, I thus include fixed effects for *Company*. Similarly, within employer customer interactions may vary by *Occupation*, which I also include. Finally, relationships with customers, fear of COVID-19, and the standards surrounding how companies must respond to COVID-19 vary by region, so I include fixed effects for *State*.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3-1 below provides a description of the data along key variables included in the analysis.

Table 3-1: Descriptive Statistics of Survey

Dependent Variables	
Job Satisfaction	
Extremely dissatisfied	12.1%
Somewhat dissatisfied	21.6%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.4%
Somewhat satisfied	32.4%
Extremely satisfied	20.5%
Plan to Search for a New Job	
Extremely unlikely	32.7%
Somewhat unlikely	14.0%
Neither likely nor unlikely	14.2%
Somewhat likely	20.2%
Extremely likely	18.9%
Satisfaction With Customer Service Experience	
Extremely dissatisfied	6.9%
Somewhat dissatisfied	12.1%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.4%
Somewhat satisfied	32.7%
Extremely satisfied	32.9%
Company Provides Valuable Service	
Strongly Disagree	5.0%
Disagree	4.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	9.4%
Agree	33.9%
Strongly Agree	47.5%
Difficulty Putting On Happy Face	
Strongly Disagree	32.6%
Disagree	25.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	15.7%
Agree	17.7%
Strongly Agree	8.5%
Important that Customers Leave Happy	
Not at all important	3.0%
Slightly important	3.6%
Moderately important	15.4%
Very important	32.1%
Extremely important	45.9%
Independent Variable	
Customer Relationship Declined	37.4%

Key Controls	
Fear of Covid	
Not worried at all	12.7%
Not very worried	14.6%
Neutral	21.2%
Worried	29.6%
Very worried	22.0%
Company Protects from Covid	
Definitely not	17.8%
Probably not	21.3%
Might or might not	13.7%
Probably yes	28.6%
Definitely yes	18.6%
Mask Requirement at Work	79.2%
Additional Controls	
Hourly Wage	$13.37
Usual Hours	32.73
Schedule Variability	0.36
Tenure	
Less than 1 year	22.0%
1 year	18.7%
2 years	16.6%
3-5 years	21.6%
6+ years	21.0%
Education	
No Degree/High School	35.9%
Some College	40.0%
Associate's Degree+	24.2%
Former Employee	5.9%
Enrolled In School	29.9%
Male	26.7%
Has Children	37.5%
Cohabitating	76.6%
White	81.7%
Age	
18-25	47.0%
25-60	40.4%
60+	12.6%
N	662

The table shows that 37% of respondents described their relationships with customers as having declined as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, as with other samples collected using Facebook as the sampling frame, the current sample is whiter and more female than the service sector as a whole (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b). However, the demographics of specific employers, such as Walmart or Starbucks, may differ from the overall population of foodservice and retail workers. Since the demographic data for the specific sampled firms is not available, weighting data to the CPS may create another basis for bias. As a result, is not possible to disambiguate bias from the sampling frame from demographic differences between the population of the entire service sector and the population of employees at these ten specific companies.

Analytic Strategy

I conduct ordinary least squares regressions, treating the 5-point response scales as continuous. As Angrist and Pischke (2009) suggest, this strategy presents more easily interpretable results with fewer restrictive assumptions. As a robustness check, I also include ordinal logistic regressions in Appendix E. Additionally, because I conducted my sample by surveying specific companies, I cluster standard errors by company. All models include all of the control variables described above except when conspicuously absent.

Results

Table 3-2 below reports the results from the first set of dependent variables, those that measure workers' ability to conduct emotional labor, as well as their connection to the service experience. The first column for each dependent variable presents a partial model that excludes the key COVID-19 controls, and the second column presents the full model.

Table 3-2: The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor and Attachment to Customer Service

	(1) Company Provides Valuable Service b/se	(2) Company Provides Valuable Service b/se	(3) Difficulty Putting On Happy Face b/se	(4) Difficulty Putting On Happy Face b/se	(5) Important Customers Leave Happy b/se	(6) Important Customers Leave Happy b/se
Customer Relationships Declined	-0.319*	-0.169	0.612**	0.461**	-0.245**	-0.169*
	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Fear of Covid		0.048		-0.016		0.085**
		(0.05)		(0.04)		(0.02)
Company Protects from Covid		0.266***		-0.237**		0.204***
		(0.04)		(0.05)		(0.03)
Customers Masked		0.051		-0.072		-0.091
		(0.13)		(0.12)		(0.09)
Hourly Wage	-0.011	-0.005	0.011	0.005	0.001	0.005
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Usual Hours	-0.002	-0.000	0.005	0.003	-0.002	-0.001
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Schedule Variability	-0.028	0.044	0.193	0.118	-0.195	-0.163
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Male	-0.162	-0.125	-0.037	-0.064	-0.246*	-0.209*
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Kids	0.010	-0.018	-0.250	-0.230	0.254*	0.217
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.11)
White	-0.070	-0.089	-0.097	-0.073	0.135	0.127
	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Age Group						
25-60	0.211	0.174	-0.061	-0.021	-0.084	-0.092
	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.10)	(0.09)
60+	0.396	0.288	-0.334	-0.223	0.169	0.122
	(0.28)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.15)
Constant	4.853***	3.409**	1.419*	2.650**	4.754***	3.630***
	(0.57)	(0.76)	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.28)	(0.35)
N	662	662	662	662	662	662

Standard Errors Clustered by Company; Multiple Imputation for Item Non-Response; Unless Visibly Absent, All Controls, Including Fixed Effects, Included in Each Model
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3-2 shows that degrading relationships with customers as a result of COVID-19 is associated with a difficulty conducting emotional labor. The independent variable is significantly associated with a .61 point increase in difficulty putting on a happy face for customers in the partial model, and a .46 point increase in the full model. The standard deviation of the dependent variable is 1.32, so a .61 point is roughly a one third of a standard deviation increase in difficulty putting on a happy face.

In addition, Table 3-2 shows that belief in the company protecting from COVID-19 provides a protective effect. In the partial model, declining customer relationships is significantly associated with a .32 point decrease in the belief that the company provides a valuable service. Next, although there is a point estimate in the expected direction, there is not a significant association between the quality of relationships with customers and the belief that their company provides a valuable service in the full model. However, workers are less invested in their work overall, reporting a .25 point drop in their agreement with the statement that it's important that customers leave happy in the partial model, and a .17 point drop in the full model. The standard deviation of company providing a valuable service is 1.08 points, so this is equivalent to a shift of .16 standard deviations.

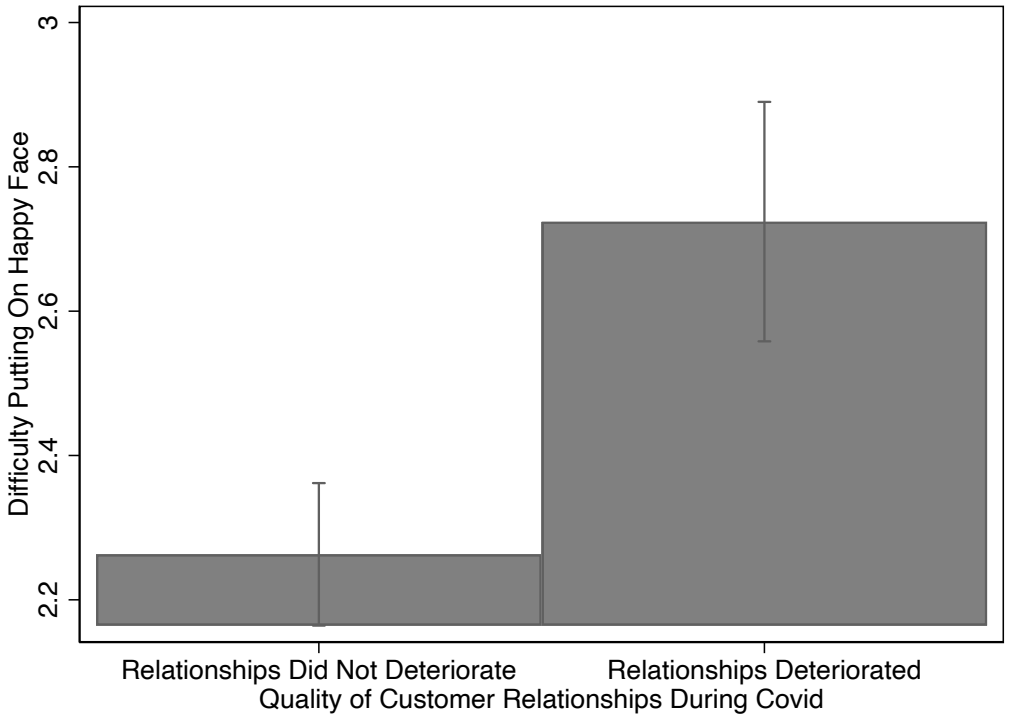
These results indicate that relationships with customer shape both workers' ability to conduct emotional labor, and also their investment in the quality of the service experience. When these relationships decline, workers have a harder time doing their job, and are less concerned about doing it well.

With respect to the hypotheses I laid out in the literature review, I find support for *Hypothesis 1: A decline in the quality of customer relationships will correspond to an*

increased difficulty in conducting surface acting. Additionally, I find partial support for *Hypothesis 2: A decline in the quality of customer relationships will correspond to a decreased interest in providing good customer service.* When workers' relationships with customers decline, they are less concerned with whether or not the customer leaves happy. Yet, workers do not become completely detached from the services they provide. That is, workers are not significantly less likely to believe that their company provides a valuable service when these relationships decline.

Figure 3-2 presents the average marginal effects for the reported difficulty putting on a happy face corresponding to the full model.

Figure 3-2: The Average Marginal Effect of a Change in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 on Difficulty Putting on a Happy Face



The figure shows that there are significant differences in the effect sizes. Workers who believed that customer relationships did not deteriorate report about a 2.2 out of 5, which is closest to the "Disagree" choice. Workers who report that customer relationships did deteriorate average a 2.7 out of 5, which is closer to the neutral category.

Table 3-3 turns to a more general set of outcomes, measuring workers job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Table 3-3: The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Job Satisfaction, Customer Service Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions in Frontline Foodservice and Retail

	(1) Satisfaction With Customer Service Experience	(2) Satisfaction With Customer Service Experience	(3) Job Satisfaction	(4) Job Satisfaction	(5) Plan to Search for a New Job	(6) Plan to Search for a New Job
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Customer Relationships Declined	-0.726***	-0.567***	-0.592***	-0.351**	0.652**	0.419*
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.14)
Fear of Covid		-0.022		-0.033		0.076
		(0.04)		(0.04)		(0.06)
Company Protects from Covid		0.221**		0.347***		-0.280**
		(0.04)		(0.05)		(0.07)
Customers Masked		0.034		-0.054		-0.074
		(0.09)		(0.10)		(0.16)
Hourly Wage	-0.010	-0.005	-0.016	-0.008	-0.011	-0.017
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Usual Hours	-0.005	-0.004	-0.005	-0.002	0.011	0.009
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Schedule Variability	0.120	0.203	-0.394	-0.268	0.327	0.204
	(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.24)
Male	-0.048	-0.033	-0.229	-0.208	0.392*	0.385*
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.15)	(0.13)
Kids	0.409*	0.393*	0.106	0.073	-0.204	-0.192
	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.10)	(0.11)
White	0.159	0.122	0.086	0.020	-0.227	-0.166
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.17)
Age Group						
25-60	0.393	0.354	-0.009	-0.058	0.072	0.132
	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.19)
60+	0.595*	0.481	0.610*	0.445	-0.841**	-0.674*
	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.22)	(0.21)
Constant	4.548***	3.553***	4.697***	3.247**	1.335*	2.476*
	(0.52)	(0.62)	(0.53)	(0.82)	(0.53)	(0.84)
N	662	662	662	662	662	662

Standard Errors Clustered by Company; Multiple Imputation for Item Non-Response; Unless Visibly Absent, All Controls, Including Fixed Effects, Included in Each Model
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

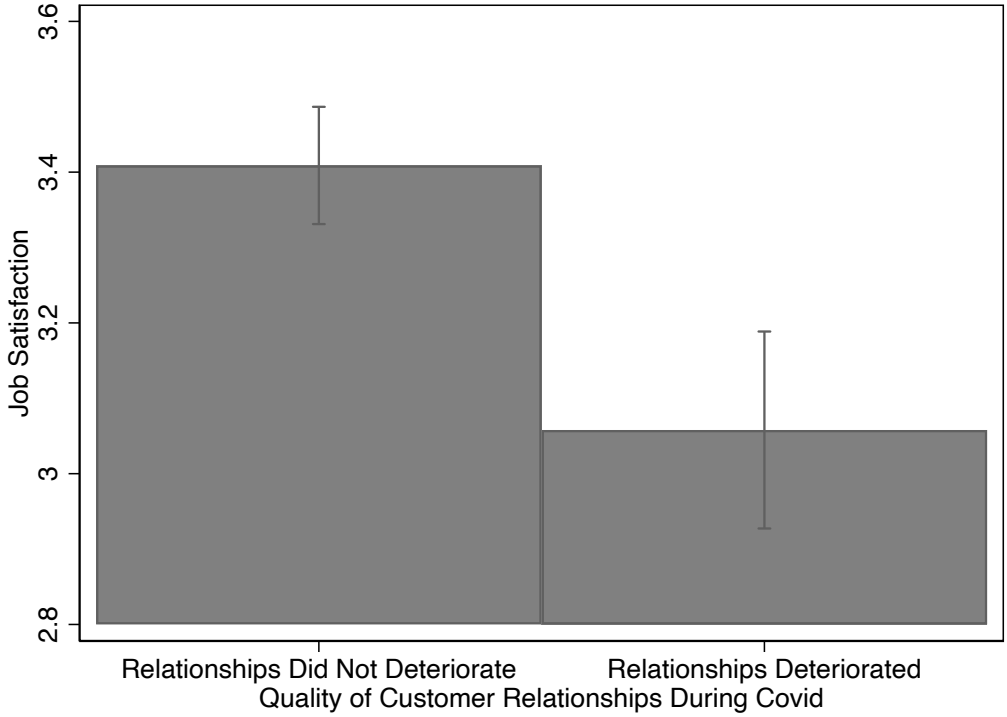
The results in Table 3-3 tell a similar story. As customer relationships decline, workers are .73 points less satisfied with their experience serving customers in the partial model, and .57 points less satisfied in the full model. The standard deviation of this variable is 1.23, so declining relationships with customers is associated with about a .46 standard deviation decrease in satisfaction serving customers. Customer relationships are also associated with overall job satisfaction. As these relationships decline, workers are .59 points less satisfied with their job in the partial model, and .35 points less satisfied in the full model. The standard deviation of overall job satisfaction in the data is 1.32, so declining customer relationships is associated with about a .27 standard deviation decrease in job satisfaction. These models provide evidence for *Hypothesis 3: A decline in the quality of customer relationships will correspond to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions.* Workers are less satisfied with the customer service element of their jobs, but also with their jobs in general, when customer relationships declined.

Not only are workers less satisfied with their jobs overall, they are also more likely to look for a new job when customer relationships decline. In the partial model, workers are .65 points more likely to look for a new job. Even after controlling for the protective effects of the company providing adequate protection against COVID-19 and controlling for overall fears of COVID-19, when customer relationships declined as a result of the pandemic, workers were still .42 points more likely to look for a new job. The standard deviation of this variable is 1.53, so declining customer relationships are associated with a .27 standard deviation increase in likelihood to search for a new job. This provides more evidence in favor of *Hypothesis 3.*

Workers are more likely to want to leave when they feel customer relationships declined.

Figures 3 and 4 below visualize the average marginal effect of a decline in customer relationships during COVID-19 on these outcomes.

Figure 3-3: The Average Marginal Effect of a Change in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 on Job Satisfaction



As Figure 3-3 shows, when workers report a decline in the quality of their relationships with customers, their predicted job satisfaction falls from about 2.7, which is closer to the neutral category to 2.2, which is closer to the "Somewhat dissatisfied" category. The results are in the same direction in Figure 3-4.

Figure 3-4: The Average Marginal Effect of a Change in Relationships at Work Due to COVID-19 on Turnover Intentions

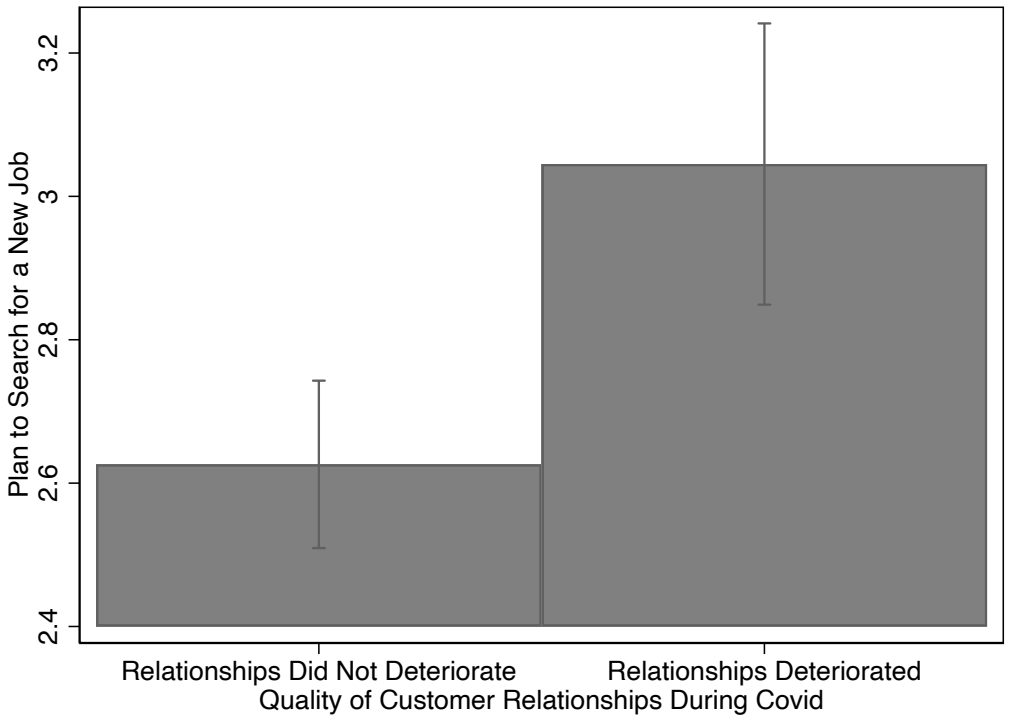


Figure 3-4 shows that as the quality of customer relationships decline, workers increase from reporting a 2.6 out of 5 likelihood of looking for a new job, to about a 3.1 out of 5. These results show that customer relationships play in an important role not only in terms of attachment to and difficulty conducting customer service, but also in terms of overall job satisfaction as well as turnover intentions.

Limitations

While this chapter provides new insights into an important aspect of frontline foodservice and retail work, it is not without limitations. Since the survey used is cross-sectional, it is not comparable to a regression discontinuity study in terms of its ability to isolate the association between customer relationships and these outcomes in order to produce causal estimates. The independent variable I use is composed instead of a worker's own perceived change in the quality of their own customer relationships. In the absence of survey data from before and during the pandemic, though, the measures included in this paper provide some insight into the relationships in flux, which otherwise would be completely unavailable.

To produce more accurate causal estimates of the effect of customer relationships on the outcomes measured in this paper, future research should consider experimenting with management strategies that facilitate better relationships with customers from the workers' perspective. This experimentation strategy, though, should not only include a single company. This chapter uses an innovative sampling technique to measure over employers,

to capture unobserved variation between organizations, occupations, and location (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b). To maintain this advantage, future research should consider experimenting with multiple organizations at the same time.

Discussion and Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic created hardships for workers in nearly every industry. However frontline foodservice and retail workers experienced a unique set of challenges. As shown in this chapter, the quality of relationships between workers and customers declined significantly. In contrast to their relationships with their coworkers and their managers, which remained largely stayed the same as they had been pre-COVID-19, nearly 40% of respondents reported worse relationships with their customers as a result of COVID-19.

While much of the scholarship on service work argues that relationships with customers are consequential for workers (Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Han et al., 2016; Prasetyo et al., 2021) it is often difficult to disambiguate the effect of these relationships on outcomes of interest from confounders. For instance, customer relationships may differ by management strategies between employer, within occupation, or even by the personality attributes of the workers themselves, and these factors are typically stable. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an exogenous shock to service workers, and, as analysis shows, to the relationship between workers and their customers specifically.

This chapter takes advantage of this shock by analyzing associations between a reported decline in the quality of relationships with customers and two sets of outcomes: those specific to conducting service work, and subjective job quality. Results find broad support for the thesis that customer relationships matter for frontline workers. While this may seem like a matter-of-fact association, this is not a foregone conclusion. Unlike other service sector jobs, frontline workers' interactions with customers are rote, highly routinized, and often completely scripted interactions (Leidner, 1993; Ikeler, 2016). Moreover, these are not complex, long-lasting interactions. Interactions with customers in foodservice and retail are deemed to be "encounters" (Korczynski, 2009), where meaningful interactions or relationships are less likely to occur than in other types of customer service jobs. One's ability to follow a script and smile on command might be more associated with personality characteristics or managerial strategies in these types of jobs.

These findings highlight that workers do indeed rely on positive relationships with customers. In particular, results show first that declining customer relationships are associated with workers' greater reported difficulty putting on a happy face, and their lesser concern for whether customers leave happy. This speaks to worker well-being, since difficulty conducting surface acting is associated with worse outcomes for workers. Additionally, this also speaks to organizational efficiency. Workers who are not smiling, or who are not concerned with whether customers leave happy, are less likely to produce satisfying interactions with customers. As previous research shows, customers can tell when workers are faking emotions, and it leads to lower customer satisfaction (Groth et al., 2009). For brick-and-mortar retail stores that are under constant threat of online ordering, positive customer service experiences may very well be essential to the draw of these businesses. This research shows that finding ways to help maintain positive relationships between workers and their customers could produce a greater motivation to produce a

positive customer service experience.

Speaking to the second set of outcomes, this chapter also shows that deteriorating customer relationships are associated with lower satisfaction with the customer service experience, lower job satisfaction overall, and higher turnover intentions. These results highlight again that the human aspect of customer service work, specifically the relationships that workers build with customers, significantly impacts worker well-being. Additionally, the association with turnover intentions suggests that organizational efficiency may also be at risk when customer relationships deteriorate. Higher turnover can lead organizations to operate less efficiently, and expend more resources training new workers. This can be an issue even in service sector enterprises that rely on a contingent workforce (De Stefano et al., 2019; Kacmar et al., 2006).

By identifying the importance of workers' relationships with customers, this chapter speaks to a broader debate about the meaning that customers bring to service work. Research on the meaning customers give to service work often focuses on healthcare, where the job itself seems inherently meaningful (Lopez, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019; Korczynski, 2009). Frontline foodservice and retail jobs are typically thought to be some of the most alienating and least rewarding types of customer service work (Korczynski, 2009; Ikeler, 2016). However, the research in this chapter shows that, even in these jobs, the relationships that workers build with their customers has a significant effect on worker well-being and organizational efficiency. In the face of routinization (Leidner, 1993), the human element can be easy to overlook (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005). Yet, for even the most rote types of customer service, it would behoove employers to ask how they can facilitate a human connection between workers and their customers.

The first two substantive chapters of the dissertation have focused on the role of customers specifically. While the first chapter highlighted the extent to which customer interactions making work meaningful, the current chapter measured the effect of a loss of such meaning, due to declining customer relationships. But what about other social relationships in the workplace? In the final substantive chapter, I turn to measuring the relationships among workers and their coworkers. Specifically, I focus on how cost-cutting strategies by organizations can affect coworker relationships, and as a result, reduce subjective job quality and increase turnover intentions. Just as the first chapter highlighted the ways in which workers consider their customer relationships from an organizational standpoint, the final chapter focuses on how perceptions of unequal treatment by the organization impact subjective job quality and turnover intentions.

Chapter 4: Comparing What to Whom? Workplace Stratification of Scheduling Practices as a Source of Social Comparison

Abstract

How does the experience of workplace stratification affect well-being? The effect of social comparisons that result from the experience of stratification have typically been measured with respect only to pay. However, the workplace is a core site of stratification, and research has shown that workers consider a wide variety of job characteristics beyond pay in evaluating their jobs. This chapter evaluates work schedule quality in low-wage foodservice and retail as a job characteristic that workers draw upon as a source of comparison, by analyzing an original employer-identified survey of 1,049 respondents from 10 large, national companies. I first establish through free-text responses that frontline workers have multiple pathways to access information regarding coworkers' schedules. Next, I find that frontline workers are more likely to compare schedule quality to their coworkers and compare wages between employers. I hypothesize that this difference may be in part due to the visibility of schedules in the workplace and develop a theoretical distinction between context-specific and context-agnostic positional goods. Further, I find evidence of steep declines in schedule satisfaction, overall job satisfaction, and increases in turnover intentions when frontline workers feel they have worse schedules than their coworkers. In contrast, I find limited evidence for small to modest improvements when workers feel they are treated better than average. These findings demonstrate a clear inflection point around feelings of being treated worse than the average coworker, rather than the linear, incremental effect that is typically assumed in measurements of relative deprivation.

Introduction

Theories of social comparisons have deep roots in sociology. Early references feature prominently in Veblen (1899), where wealth, leisure, and conspicuous goods operate as markers of status in society, and also appear in Marx's *Wage, Labor and Capital*, which urges readers to focus on the "social position" of laborers, and the "social gulf" between labor and capital that grows even when laborers' "material positions" are improved (Marx, 1849, p.211). Since then, multiple theories have been put forward to both develop these early concepts of social comparisons, and measure the effect of social comparisons on well-being. The term relative deprivation was introduced by Samuel A. Stouffer, who used the concept to explain job satisfaction among men in the military (Stouffer et al., 1949; Pettigrew, 2015). Robert K. Merton worked significantly on the concept of reference groups for social comparisons (Merton and Rossi, 1957; Nichols, 2016). Working on a similar concept, some researchers have focused on distributive justice, a theory describing the processes through which individuals come to see a distribution of rewards as fair (Blau,

1964; Cook, 1975). These theoretical frameworks have carried through to more recent research measuring the impact of social comparisons on various outcomes, including migration patterns (Flippen, 2013), adolescent anger and delinquency (Bernburg et al., 2009), and general happiness (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016), to name a few.

However, even though sociological theory suggests that any number of scarce resources may elicit preferential treatment and social comparisons (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt, 2016; Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016), the majority of research has assessed the impacts of social comparisons by evaluating only comparisons of wages or income (Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Kawachi, 2012). While income inequality is undoubtedly a major source of social comparison, it is likely not the only one. Within the workplace, where many individuals claim to make social comparisons (Charness and Kuhn, 2004; Clark and Senik, 2010; Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016), qualitative research has identified a vast array of job quality concerns beyond pay that workers express with respect to their jobs (Reich and Bearman, 2018; Ribas, 2016; Wood, 2020). While some workplace ethnographies identify status hierarchies along these different lines (Ribas, 2016; Wood, 2020), little quantitative American scholarship on this topic measures the relationship between non-income social comparisons at work, and job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

This chapter introduces schedule quality among low-wage foodservice and retail workers as a positional good, or a good that individuals use to make social comparisons. In the last half century, while pay has dropped significantly, work has also become more precarious and schedules have become less stable (Cooper et al., 2019; Kalleberg, 2018; Lambert, 2008). Workers in jobs with temporal precarity are significantly worse off. Unstable schedules are correlated with lower self-reported health and an impaired ability to maintain a stable lifestyle (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a) which can have negative consequences for workers and their families (Carrillo et al., 2017).

While the direct effects of schedule instability have been shown to impact well-being, work schedules possess a number of characteristics that may make them an important positional good. First, research suggests that desirable schedules are unevenly distributed (Storer et al., 2020; Wood, 2020; McCrate et al., 2019). Second, schedules may be more plainly visible to workers than pay. Perceptibility of positional goods has been highlighted as an important, but often overlooked quality of research on social comparisons (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Bertram-Hümmer and Baliki, 2015).

This chapter measures subjective social comparisons of schedules in an original survey of 1,049 workers from 10 national foodservice and retail firms, administered through Facebook advertisements (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b). Drawing on this data set, this chapter first establishes through an analysis of free-text responses that coworkers' schedules are a plainly visible aspect of work in foodservice and retail.

Next, I analyze two aspects of schedule comparisons in order to address ongoing questions regarding social comparison theory while expanding the scope of research in the sociology of work and temporal precarity. First, do individuals compare different goods, such as schedules and pay, to different reference groups? In answering this question, this chapter develops a theory of context-specific positional goods. In so doing, it makes a distinction between comparisons regarding organizational, context-specific, inequality and overall, context-agnostic, inequality. For instance, while individuals may be able to

compare wealth, pay, or clothing to a broad array of potential reference groups, context-specific positional goods such as the assignment of an easier or more difficult tasks in a work group, or working on-call, may be much more easily compared within a workplace context than across other contexts. To the extent that workplace schedules exhibit (a) an unequal distribution that is (b) perceptible to members of an organization, they may be a context-specific positional good. While demonstrations of context-specific hierarchies and positional goods often appear in workplace ethnographies (Burawoy, 1979; Ribas, 2016), research has not adequately explored how different types of positional goods are compared, and the relationship between these more specific positional goods and job satisfaction. Findings from this study show that frontline foodservice and retail workers are significantly more likely to compare schedules quality characteristics to coworkers than wages. On the other hand, frontline workers are more likely to compare wages to workers at similar employers and to friends.

Second, what is the pattern of benefit or harm associated with different levels of subjective relative deprivation or relative advantage? By measuring subjective measures of relative standing compared to coworkers with respect to average treatment, this chapter contributes to research attempting to understand how individuals at different points of a positional hierarchy are impacted by their standing (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Mishra and Carleton, 2015; Hounkpatin et al., 2020). While most research assumes a linear negative effect compared to the best treated individuals in a hierarchy, results from these analyses show a clear inflection point among those who are treated better or worse than average. The effect size of relative disadvantage compared to the average coworkers is roughly twice the effect size of relative advantage compared to the average coworkers for a series of subjective job quality outcomes, as well as turnover intentions. These findings suggest that workers' relative comparisons may not be focused on those at the top, and instead are focused on standing out from the crowd.

Theoretical Framework

Comparing What

Workers consider a wide variety of factors when evaluating job quality. The responsibility and extra duties that come with promotion (Lup, 2018; Wheatley, 2017a), differences in benefits (Kalleberg and Vaisey, 2005), job security (Narisada and Schieman, 2016; Hald Andersen, 2009), self-identification with the employer (Misra and Walters, 2016), and respect from coworkers and customers (Reich and Bearman, 2018; Groth and Grandey, 2012) have all been shown to impact job satisfaction.

In addition, a growing body of research has demonstrated the rise of schedule quality as a fundamental concern for workers in the United States. While work scheduling is a complex topic, with measurement practices that can vary quite widely, Golden (2015) estimates that 17 percent or more of the American workforce experiences irregular scheduling. This irregular scheduling may or may not be voluntary. In voluntary cases, where professional workers have the ability to work from home, for instance, schedule flexibility can have positive effects on workers (Wheatley, 2017b; Kaduk et al., 2019). However, involuntary schedule changes, and involuntary schedule instability more generally,

has a worse outlook. In economic settings where employers are stressed to meet sales goals while lowering labor costs, scheduling practices which force workers to be flexible are common, leaving workers' lives unstable (Lambert, 2008). This instability may be experienced by as much as 90 percent of the early career hourly labor force in the foodservice and retail sectors (Lambert et al., 2014).

When workers experience involuntary variability in their working hours, they face myriad negative consequences. In low-wage foodservice and retail, precarious schedules, including more cancelled shifts, and less ability to get time off, can lead to worse outcomes due to routine uncertainty in schedules. In particular, Schneider and Harknett (2019a) find that greater schedule instability leads to higher reports of psychological distress, worse sleep, and lower levels of reported happiness. Qualitatively, Carrillo et al. (2017) find that work schedule instability can put significant strain on the ability to secure childcare. That is, these unstable schedules create significant work-family conflict, leaving working parents to rely on informal childcare arrangements, and creating instability in children's lives.

Research suggests that unstable schedules, and the harmful effects they produce, may not be distributed equally. Wood (2020) describes in detail how stable, desirable schedules and schedule flexibility are sometimes provided at the whims of managers. As a result, workers must ingratiate themselves to their managers in order to be "deserving" of a good schedule, and a manager's bias can factor into this process. A body of research has identified racial/ethnic gaps in schedule quality (Presser, 2003; Finnigan and Hunter, 2018), and some have made a direct link between these gaps and managerial bias (Storer et al., 2020; Wood, 2020). At the same time, the time pressure that managers are under when making scheduling decisions may be correlated with the use of quick, or automatic, cognition, a process by which implicit association tests suggest biases may become more transparent, leading to an unequal distribution of schedule quality in the workplace (Hofmann et al., 2005). This kind of unequal schedule quality within a workplace may lead workers to compete for hours, with scarce rewards for their flexibility (McCrate et al., 2019).

In this way, schedules may be a particularly salient aspect of organizational inequality. Better, more stable schedules can be seen as a valuable resource, which may be given out selectively within an organization based on perceived similarity along ascriptive characteristics (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Acker, 2006; Ray, 2019). To the extent that a schedule characteristic, such as schedule stability, is scarce and visible, its distribution in the firm makes it a visible indicator of inequality and preferential treatment, and thus a positional good (Hirsch, 1977).

Comparing to Whom

To whom are frontline workers most likely to compare schedule quality? When surveyed, both Europeans (Clark and Senik, 2010) and Americans, (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016) individuals claim that they are most likely to claim they make comparisons to coworkers across a variety of job quality dimensions. Since most Americans spend the majority of their waking lives in the workplace, it would follow that coworkers serve as the default reference group for survey respondents.

However, this chapter argues that the reference group workers measure themselves against is based on the qualities of the positional good that respondents are being asked to

compare. Research in social comparisons has defined positional goods as goods, services, work positions, and other social relationships which are scarce (Hirsch, 1977, p.27). Some goods may be positional in certain contexts, such as the workplace. A recent focus in sociology has identified the organization as an important locus of inequality (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Acker, 2006), focusing on the "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations." (Acker, 2006, p.443). While some job quality characteristics may be comparable across multiple contexts, other salient categories of workplace inequality may be context-specific, and thus only positional within that reference group.

Ethnographic research illustrates the importance of relational workplace dynamics in determining what constitutes a positional good, and thus the objects of comparison among coworkers. Ribas (2016) provides a compelling demonstration of how workers at a meat packing plant are especially attuned to the more and less labor intensive jobs, where perceptions of fairness are based on the racial distribution of the easier versus more difficult jobs. Burawoy (1979) demonstrates the ways in which distributive hierarchies play an important role in developing social dynamics at work. Burawoy argues, for instance, that "it was in terms of the culture of making out that individuals evaluated one another and themselves." (Burawoy, 1979, p.64) This culture of making out is context specific. Within the workplace, the distribution of positional goods, such as assignments to the machines where it is easiest to make out, is desirable to those in the workplace. These positional aspects of a workplace hierarchy do not easily translate beyond the workplace.

As Wood (2020) demonstrates, for frontline retail and foodservice workers, schedule quality may be such a site of social comparison. Workers who are given fewer hours, more unstable hours from week to week, or more time on-call, may be actively comparing their schedule quality to their coworkers.

This distinction between context-specific and context-agnostic positional goods also builds on recent research which has begun to analyze the necessity of perceptibility of inequality as a precursor to social comparison (Bertram-Hümmer and Baliki, 2015; Card et al., 2012; Georgellis et al., 2019). Alderson and Katz-Gerro (2016) conduct a survey of Americans, asking directly about comparisons they make, and to whom. The authors show that comparisons are frequently made based on conspicuous consumption of goods such as cars, clothing or even vacations, in addition to raw income comparisons, demonstrating the importance of visible inequality. Schedule quality, then, can only function as a positional good among coworkers if its inequality is visible among workers, such that workers are able to compare their treatment to this reference group.

Baseline Hypothesis: Workers know of their coworkers' schedules.

In the workplace, pay may actually be a less functional positional good in comparison to schedules or other workplace-specific positional goods. Norms surrounding the impropriety of talking about income in the United States, or employment contracts stipulating wage secrecy, likely render the social comparisons to coworkers somewhat difficult for workers to actually make (Danziger and Katz, 1997; Kim, 2015; Cullen and Perez-Truglia, 2018). A singular focus on wages, then, likely is a problem that has been identified in recent reviews of social comparisons literature (Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Kawachi, 2012) and has sustained some recent critique (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Bertram-Hümmer and Baliki, 2015).

That is not to say that pay is not important. Numerous studies have identified income, in the form of pay (Brown et al., 2008; Subramanyam et al., 2009; Cobb et al., 2021), or conspicuous goods (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Carlsson et al., 2007), as a source of social comparison. Moreover, as a universally understood metric, pay is easily compared between employers since wages are posted on job listings, and, via conspicuous positional goods, comparable to friends, family, neighbors, or others. On the other hand, workplace-specific positional goods, such as schedule quality, may be more difficult or impossible to compare outside of the workplace. These job quality characteristics may simply be irrelevant - for instance, the relative labor-intensity of different jobs can be quite difficult to compare. If schedule quality is more likely to be a workplace-specific positional good, then the following hypothesis would hold:

Hypothesis 1a: Workers are more likely to compare schedule characteristics within the workplace than pay.

Similarly, if pay is a more context-agnostic positional good, then the following hypothesis would hold:

Hypothesis 1b: Workers are more likely to compare wages outside of the workplace than schedule characteristics.

Impacts of Social Comparisons

Drawing on perceptions of relative schedule quality, this chapter also addresses another question central to social comparison theory: what are the impacts of social comparisons for individuals at different points in a status hierarchy?

While many studies measure the effects of social comparisons, research shows that the effects are dependent on whether the respondent is likely to engage in social comparison (Schneider and Valet, 2017; Mishra and Carleton, 2015; Callan et al., 2017). Since workers may misperceive the treatment of their peers (Cullen and Perez-Truglia, 2018), objective measures of relative comparison, such as one's place within a wage hierarchy, may produce mixed affirmative and null results (Jones and Wildman, 2008; Subramanyam et al., 2009; Logan, 1996; Yang et al., 2019; Pham-Kanter, 2009). Since any objective level of deprivation must be filtered through a psychological process in which an individual understands that they are doing worse than those around them, some research tests for different reference groups, for instance to top earners or workers in the same industry (Godechot and Senik, 2015), or workers in the same industry and occupation (Grund and Rubin, 2017), or measures mechanisms such as rank or percentile, as opposed to other measures of social comparisons (Brown et al., 2008).

While multiple measures of objective comparisons tests for different reference groups and different patterns of comparison, a smaller body of literature focuses on subjective measures of relative deprivation (Mishra and Carleton, 2015; Adler et al., 2000; Goerke and Pannenberg, 2015). One underappreciated benefit of measuring perceptions of relative advantage or disadvantage with respect to a positional good is that estimates can be produced for individuals based on where they believe they stand in a hierarchy.

Relative deprivation, the most common theoretical tool, typically assumes a specific effect, measuring objectively how much worse off one is compared to those who receive better treatment. Social comparisons of income have been linked to self-rated health and

happiness outcomes in a number of studies, both internationally and in the United States (Clark and Oswald, 1996; Caporale et al., 2009; Luttmer, 2005; Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016). Most research measuring social comparisons uses the Yitzhaki index (Yitzhaki, 1979; Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Kawachi, 2012) measuring the average dollar amount that all potential referents higher on the income distribution make than a respondent. Within a reference group, this effect is measured linearly. This measurement suggests that the effect size is measured with respect to the top of the distribution, and there is a linear effect as individuals are treated incrementally worse.

Even research that does not use the Yitzhaki Index typically measures a linear effect of social comparisons (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Howley and Knight, 2021). Brown et al. (2008) measures ordinal wage rank in a firm, rather than using the Yitzhaki index, yet still uses a linear model to estimate the effect of a change in wage rank.

Hypothesis 2a: The effects of social comparison are linear.

However, some research suggests that the effects of relative deprivation are non-linear. Storer and Reich (2019) show that frontline workers are invested in how workers are treated relative to their peers in complex ways, valuing even small raises given to new workers as a loss of social status, such that longer-term workers feel they are losing the raises they earned. These findings are in line with last-place aversion, a relational theory which predicts that individuals are particularly averse to being at the lowest rank in a system of stratification (Kuziemko et al., 2014). Shildrick and MacDonald (2013) find that poor individuals make a special effort to distance themselves from poorer neighbors, in an effort to diminish their own sense of poverty. From the perspective of relative comparisons, this theory suggests that the negative effect of relative disadvantage is non-linear, with those who see themselves as being in the worst position significantly worse off than those in the second-to-last position.

Hypothesis 2b: The effects of social comparison are non-linear, with those who perceive themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy receiving additional disutility.

Research Design

Data

To address these hypotheses, I draw on an original survey of retail and foodservice workers. Data from the survey consist of 1,049 respondents from 10 foodservice and retail companies collected in November of 2020. Multiple imputation is used in the case of item non-response for control variables.

The data was collected using Facebook advertising. In short, frontline workers who state that they work at one of the employers sampled in this study are served an advertisement while scrolling through Facebook, which offers a chance to win a gift card in exchange for participation in a survey. Rather than recruiting respondents from Facebook groups, where individuals must be an active member to receive an invitation to participate, users who meet certain criteria are targeted with advertisements. In comparison to other samples drawn from other online platforms (Wang et al., 2015), sampling from Facebook has the advantage that the majority of Americans are active on the platform (Perrin, 2015). The validity of this approach for sampling has been discussed with respect to both the general population (Grow et al., 2021) as well as specifically for targeting frontline workers (Schneider and Harknett, 2019b).

While the sampling method is open to critique, it has important advantages. As a result of employer-specific targeting, Facebook sampling allows for the creation of a nested dataset of workers within firms, creating an employer-identified dataset. Such data are very rare in the United States and provide an opportunity to control for an important dimension of variation among workers. If workplaces are set up differently with respect to approaches to scheduling or the availability of scheduling information, then controlling for this variation is particularly important. Moreover, employer-specific targeting allows for the possibility to identify a sample of workers at the firms where schedule instability has been shown to be of significant concern. Samples derived from Facebook advertising of frontline workers have been used in multiple recent articles to highlight the effects of unstable schedules (e.g. Schneider and Harknett, 2019a; Storer et al., 2020; Schneider and Harknett, 2021)

Dependent Variables

I include five measures of subjective attitudes as dependent variables, ranging from schedule satisfaction to turnover intentions.

Usual Weekly Hours Satisfaction. This variable and the following two are constructed as part of a matrix question, asking "How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your job?" Answers are on a 1 to 5 scale of extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied, with 3 as a neutral category. This question asks specifically about usual weekly hours.

Schedule Stability Satisfaction. This variable is constructed as above, but asks for satisfaction with "Schedule Stability (For example, working the same number of hours every week)."

Shift Notice Satisfaction. This variable is constructed as above, asking for satisfaction with "Shift Notice (For example, a last minute shift cancellation or working on call)."

Job Satisfaction. This variable is constructed with the question "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job at [Employer]?" Answers are on a 1 to 5 scale of extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied.

New Job Search. This question asks respondents on a scale of 1 to 5 "Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it you will make a genuine effort to find a new job within the next 3 months?" A higher response indicates a higher likelihood to search for a new job.

Independent Variables

Coworker Comparison. This variable is constructed with the question "In general, compared to your coworkers, would you say your work schedule is..." Answers are on a 1 to 5 scale of Much Worse to Much Better than Coworkers. Workers are also given a Don't Know/Refuse option.

Controls

I include a number of controls specifically focused on job quality, to control for the main effects of poor scheduling and job quality. *Usual Hours.* The number of hours a worker usually works in a month. *Stability.* This variable comes from the combination of two survey questions. First, a measure of greatest hours: "In the last month, what is the greatest number of hours you've worked in a week at [EMPLOYER NAME?] (Please consider all

hours, including any extra hours, overtime, work you did at home and so forth." This is subtracted from a measure of fewest hours: "In the last month, what is the fewest hours you've worked in a week at [EMPLOYER NAME]? (Please do not include weeks in which you missed work because of illness or vacation." The absolute value of the difference between greatest and least hours, divided by the greatest number of hours, is used to produce a scale where one is maximally stable and zero is maximally unstable. *Shift Notice Characteristics.* I include six measures of schedule instability, asking how frequently workers experience the following characteristics in the past month: *Cancelled Shift*, *On Call Work*, *Asked to Stay Late*, *Asked to Leave Early*, *Asked to Come Late*, and *Asked to Come Early*. For each variable, workers can respond: Never, 1-2 times, 3-5 times, 5-10 times, 11 times or more.

I also include a variety of demographic and human capital controls in each of the social comparison models. *Wage*. The hourly wage a worker reports in dollars. *Tenure*. This variable includes whether the respondent has been on the job for a year or less *Education*. This variable indicates whether the respondent has received at least some college education. *Enrolled*. This dummy variable is coded as a one if the respondent is currently enrolled in school, and a zero if the respondent is not. *Full-Time*. This indicates if the worker worked at the job full time. *Former*. This indicates if the worker was a former employee. *Age*. This variable is coded into three age categories: 18-25, 25-60, and 60+. *Male*. This variable is coded as a 1 if the worker responds as male and a 0 if the worker responds as female or gender non-conforming. *Race* This variable is a categorical variable for race. This variable is derived by asking respondents to check all races or ethnicities that apply to themselves from among white, Hispanic or Latino/Latina, Black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or other. I categorize Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and other all as other. In addition, if two boxes are checked the individual is coded as other, except in the case where white and Hispanic or Latino/Latina is checked, in which case the respondent is coded as Hispanic or Latino/Latina. *Cohabitating*. This variable categorizes whether an individual is living with a spouse or a partner. *Kids*. This is a dummy variable, coded as a one if the respondent indicates they have children, and a zero if they indicate they do not.

Additionally, fixed effects are included for *Occupation*, *Employer*, and *State*. These variables are especially useful, since they control for different employment contexts in different states, and differences in potential for social comparison among employers and occupations.

To Whom and How Do You Compare

To Whom Do You Compare. This matrix question asks, "Who are you most likely to compare each of the following aspects of your job to?" The matrix asks about: Hourly Wage, Usual Weekly Hours, Schedule Stability, and Shift Notice. Responses Include: Coworkers, Workers at similar employers, Friends, Neighbors, Family, and No One.

How Do You Compare. This free-text question asks, "How do you learn about your coworkers' schedules?" if respondents do not choose "Don't Know/Refuse" in response to the coworker comparison question.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean of the imputed variables included in the regression analysis are shown below.

Table 4-1: Descriptive Statistics of Survey

Dependent Variables	
Job Satisfaction	
Extremely dissatisfied	12.76%
Somewhat dissatisfied	20.38%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.14%
Somewhat satisfied	33.24%
Extremely satisfied	20.48%
Turnover Intentions	
Extremely unlikely	33.43%
Somewhat unlikely	14.00%
Neither likely nor unlikely	15.05%
Somewhat likely	18.19%
Extremely likely	19.33%
Usual Hours Satisfaction	
Extremely dissatisfied	8.95%
Somewhat dissatisfied	16.57%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.86%
Somewhat satisfied	31.71%
Extremely satisfied	25.90%
Schedule Variability Satisfaction	
Extremely dissatisfied	13.14%
Somewhat dissatisfied	13.81%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14.00%
Somewhat satisfied	28.57%
Extremely satisfied	30.48%
Schedule Notice Satisfaction	
Extremely dissatisfied	12.19%
Somewhat dissatisfied	10.86%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	32.86%
Somewhat satisfied	22.29%
Extremely satisfied	21.81%

Independent Variables	
Perceived Schedule Quality vs Coworkers	
Much worse	6.29%
Somewhat worse	13.81%
About the same	52.19%
Somewhat better	19.62%
Much better	8.10%

Job Quality Controls	
Hourly Wage	$13.65
Usual Hours	33.30
Schedule Variability	34.62%
On Call	
Never	61.64%
1-2 times	22.66%
3-5 times	8.86%
5-10 times	2.79%
11 times or more	4.06%

Job Quality Controls (Continued)	
Canceled Shift	
Never	80.38%
1-2 times	14.52%
3-5 times	3.17%
5-10 times	0.96%
11 times or more	0.96%
Asked to Stay Late	
Never	35.42%
1-2 times	28.54%
3-5 times	17.16%
5-10 times	7.94%
11 times or more	10.93%
Sent Home Early	
Never	74.21%
1-2 times	18.79%
3-5 times	4.12%
5-10 times	2.30%
11 times or more	0.57%
Asked to Come Early	
Never	41.37%
1-2 times	30.25%
3-5 times	14.82%
5-10 times	6.54%
11 times or more	7.02%
Asked to Come Late	
Never	88.39%
1-2 times	8.72%
3-5 times	2.30%
5-10 times	0.20%
11 times or more	0.38%

Additional Controls	
Full Time	55.46%
Former Employee	8.95%
At Least Some College	59.28%
Year or Less Tenure	40.58%
Has Children	38.40%
Cohabitating	76.57%
Enrolled In School	29.91%
Age	
18-25	45.40%
25-60	42.71%
60+	11.89%
Male	26.23%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	81.91%
Black	3.55%
Hispanic	8.70%
Other	5.84%
N	1049

The table shows that about half of the respondents see their schedules as about the same to others, while 20% see their schedules as worse, and 28% see their schedules as better. Roughly 40% of workers report being on call at least once, and over half of respondents report being asked to come in early or stay late. The sample leans white and Female, and most respondents are cohabitating.

Analytic Strategy

I first present results identifying how workers make comparisons, and to whom respondents make comparisons. I conduct t-tests to identify significant differences among groups.

Next, I present a regression analysis on whether respondents' feelings that their schedules are better or worse than their coworkers are associated with a variety of outcomes. Although each outcome is on a five point scale, this chapter uses OLS regressions, rather than ordinal regressions, based on recommendations from Angrist and Pischke (2009).

The base category for the independent variable is the neutral category, "About the same," leaving two categories below and above the outcome. By comparing to a neutral category, the analysis leaves open the possibility that workers experience relative advantage or disadvantage. Additionally, two categories above or below allow for the effect to be non-linear.

Fixed effects for occupation, company, and State are included in each regression analysis. Finally, standard errors are clustered by company, since respondents were targeted by company.

Results

How Do Workers Compare

Before analyzing schedule comparisons in more detail, it is necessary to first establish whether workers are aware of coworkers' schedules. When respondents were asked to rate their schedules in comparison to their coworkers, they were given the option to respond "Don't Know/Refuse." Of the 1,159 of total survey respondents, 110 of whom are not included in additional analysis samples due to attrition or inability to impute non-response, only 74, or 6% of respondents, checked this box. Respondents were then asked to explain how they knew of their coworkers' schedules in free-text responses. After reading these written responses, four common pathways emerged.

First, workers knew their coworkers' schedules because physical, printed schedules were posted in a common area, such as a break room or staff area. In stark comparisons to norms of wage secrecy among American workers, workers in these firms can visibly see each other's schedules.

Second, workers were made aware of one another's schedules digitally, either through the use of an app where the schedules of all workers were visible, or through a text message thread where the scheduling manager would send a text to all workers with the schedule.

Third, workers reported discussing schedules with their coworkers, often as a point of conversation, as a shared complaint with other workers, or in the context of trying to switch

shifts with one another. Frontline workers are often tasked with finding a replacement for themselves if they cannot work a shift.

Finally, workers said that they took account of who they saw while they worked and used this as knowledge of who was working when.

Given that the vast majority of workers at these companies claim knowledge of coworkers' schedules, there is ample support for the *Baseline Hypothesis*, which stated that knowledge of schedule quality is a necessary precondition to using it as a positional good. The next set of analyses identify workers' pay and schedule referents.

To Whom Do Workers Compare

Table 4-2 below reports on the frequency that workers claim to compare their wage and various schedule characteristics to other social groups.

Table 4-2: To Whom Do Foodservice and Retail Workers Compare Wages and Schedules Characteristics

	Coworkers	Workers at similar employers	Friends	Neighbors	Family	No One	Total
Wages	34.95	20.48	11.71	0.19	8.38	24.29	100
Usual Hours	48.48***	12.86***	9.05*	0.57	8.86	20.19***	100
Stability	47.33***	13.62***	7.05***	0.67	8.29	23.05	100
Notice	46.48***	11.24***	7.24***	0.38	8.00	26.67	100

Results of two sample T-tests between wage and schedule variable. Confidence levels at .05, .01, and .001. Analysis sample of 1,049.

This table shows that roughly 34.5% of workers claim to compare wages to their coworkers. However, 48.5% compare usual weekly hours to coworkers, schedule stability at 47.5%, and notice at 46.5%. The difference in comparisons from wages are all statistically significant at the 99.9% confidence level. On average, frontline workers are between 30% and 40% more likely to compare schedule quality to coworkers than wages.

On the other hand, many more workers in the sample are likely to compare wages across employers. One fifth of the sample compares wages in this way, while comparisons among schedule characteristics vary between 11% and 14%. Additionally, among friends, comparisons of wages are significantly more likely to occur than comparisons of schedule quality.

The difference in comparison patterns among wage and schedule characteristics suggests that workers are much more likely to compare schedule characteristics *within* the workplace but are more likely to compare wages *between* employers and among friends. For frontline workers, the visibility of schedule characteristics among coworkers likely makes them a salient reference group. Additionally, if, as Wood (2020) suggests, schedule gifts are given out selectively to workers who then feel indebted to their manager, schedule quality may be an important point of tension and hierarchy within the firm. These results provide support

for *Hypothesis 1a* and *Hypothesis 1b*, in that schedules are more likely to be considered a context-specific positional good, whereas pay is a more context-agnostic positional good.

Additionally, less than 1% of respondents claim that they compare to this group. Although a shared geography plays a role in social comparisons, comparisons along the lines of wages and schedule quality are mediated through relationships. Additionally, less than 10% of respondents in any category report comparing to family members. No significant differences between wages and schedules are present in these two comparisons. Finally, in each category, between 20% and 26% of respondents claim to not be likely to compare to others at all.

Impact of Comparisons

The above analyses have shown that coworkers' schedules are visible and discussed in the workplace, and frontline foodservice and retail workers compare schedules to their coworkers at a higher rate than wages. Table 4-3 below now shifts to analyzing the effect of feeling relatively better or worse off than coworkers. The first table below measures the effect of relative comparisons of schedule quality on satisfaction with usual hours, stability, and notice.

The results show that, even after controlling for relative schedule quality in terms of usual weekly hours, schedule variability, and shift notice, satisfaction with these aspects of schedule quality is still highly correlated with perceived job quality.

In terms of satisfaction with usual hours, when workers perceive their schedule quality as much worse, workers are 1.34 points less satisfied than when they feel they are doing about the same as their coworkers. This effect is roughly halved when workers feel they are doing only somewhat worse, with workers .68 points less likely to be satisfied with their jobs. On the flip side, workers that report having somewhat or much better weekly hours than coworkers are significantly more satisfied, though the increase in satisfaction is much smaller. Workers who see their schedules as somewhat better are .23 points more satisfied with their hours than the neutral category, and workers who report much better schedules are .53 points more satisfied. When it comes to usual weekly hours, the positive effect of reporting a much better schedule than average is smaller than the negative effect of having a much worse schedule.

The same pattern holds for schedule stability. For those who report having a much worse schedule, workers are 1.16 points less satisfied with their schedule stability, and somewhat worse schedules are associated with a .72 point decrease in stability satisfaction. Once again, reporting relatively better schedules is associated with higher stability satisfaction, but the effect sizes are much smaller when workers feel they are relatively advantaged, with a .37 point increase associated with reporting a somewhat better schedule, and a .52 point increase in reporting a much better schedule.

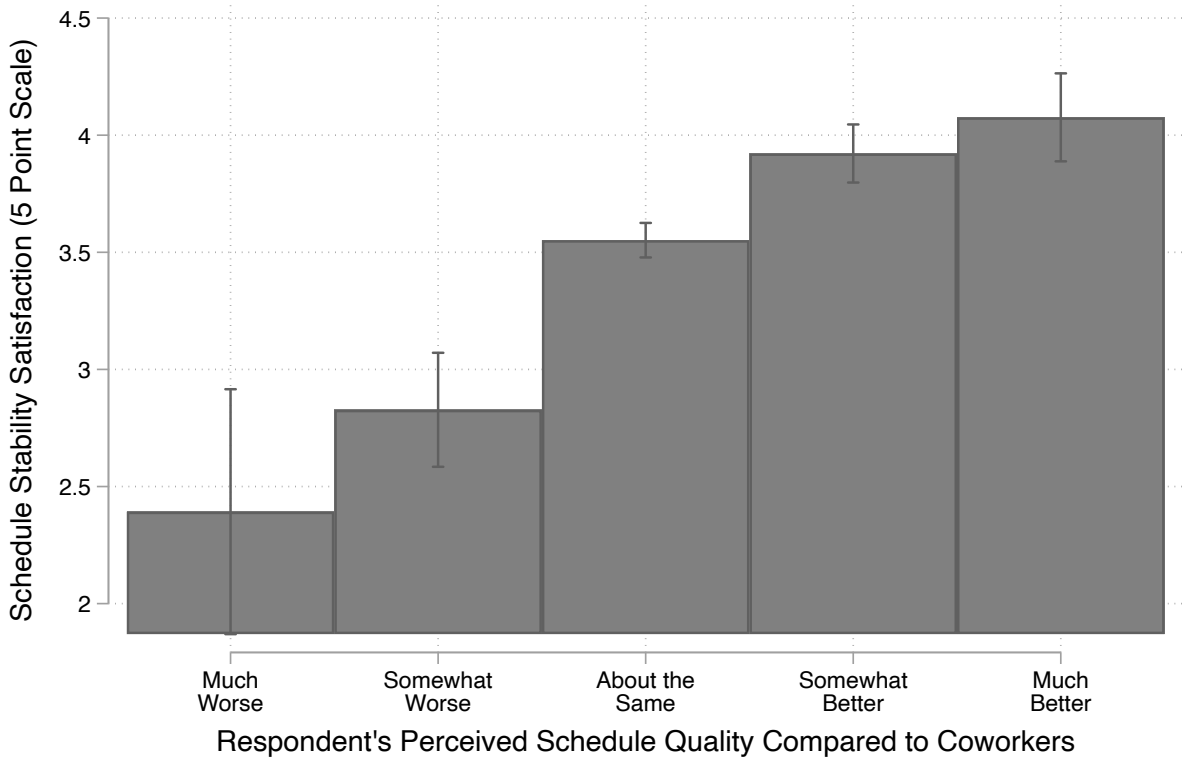
The difference in predicted values at each level of perceived schedule quality are depicted in the figure below.

Table 4-3: The Effect of Explicit Relative Comparisons of Schedule Quality Compared to Coworkers on Usual Hours, Schedule Stability, and Shift Notice Satisfaction Among Foodservice and Retail Workers

	Usual Hours	Stability	Notice
	b/se	b/se	b/se
Relative Schedule Quality			
Much Worse	-1.343***	-1.159**	-1.096***
	(0.14)	(0.24)	(0.15)
Somewhat Worse	-0.678**	-0.724***	-0.404
	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.18)
Somewhat Better	0.234*	0.370**	-0.040
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Much Better	0.527**	0.524***	0.230
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.14)
Hourly Wage	-0.002	-0.003	-0.013
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Usual Hours	0.002	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Schedule Variability	-0.482**	-0.837**	-0.329
	(0.11)	(0.21)	(0.20)
Kids	0.007	0.053	0.068
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.13)
Age Group			
25-60	-0.098	0.015	0.022
	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.15)
60+	0.140	0.039	-0.010
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.22)
Male	-0.071	0.095	-0.072
	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.07)
Race/Ethnicity			
Black	-0.160	-0.319	-0.141
	(0.19)	(0.26)	(0.14)
Hispanic	-0.013	0.156	-0.093
	(0.12)	(0.18)	(0.11)
Other	-0.193	-0.290	0.198
	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Constant	4.529***	4.855***	4.359***
	(0.47)	(0.30)	(0.48)
Job Quality	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1049	1049	1049

Standard errors clustered by company. Multiple imputation is used for item non-response. Job quality includes wages, hours, and multiple stability metrics. Fixed effects included for employer, occupation, and state. All controls, including fixed effects, included in each model

Figure 4-1: The Effect of Schedule Comparisons to Coworkers on Satisfaction with Schedule Stability



Visually, the inflection point is clear. There is a steep decline associated with perceptions of worse treatment, but only a modest increase as workers feel they are treated better than their coworkers.

Finally, in terms of shift notice, the association between perceived schedule quality and notice satisfaction is only significant when workers feel they have much worse schedules than their coworkers. However, this attitude is associated with a relatively large, 1.1 point decrease in notice satisfaction. While the other levels of schedule comparison are not statistically significant, the point estimates follow the same pattern as the other two indicators of schedule quality. For workers who feel their schedule quality is somewhat worse than average, the point estimate suggests workers are .4 points less satisfied with timing (P=.053). For schedules better than coworkers, the effect is near zero, and much better quality is associated with a .23 point increase in job timing satisfaction.

These results show that relative schedule quality plays an important role in whether workers report being satisfied with their schedules. Even after controlling for the characteristics themselves, there is a strong association between perceived schedule quality and various aspects of schedule satisfaction. Moreover, while there are some benefits to being in a relatively advantaged position, these analyses suggest that workers suffer much more from feeling they are in a relatively worse position than their coworkers. As a point of reference, the positive effect size of feeling one has a much better schedule is smaller than

the negative effect of feeling only somewhat worse off.

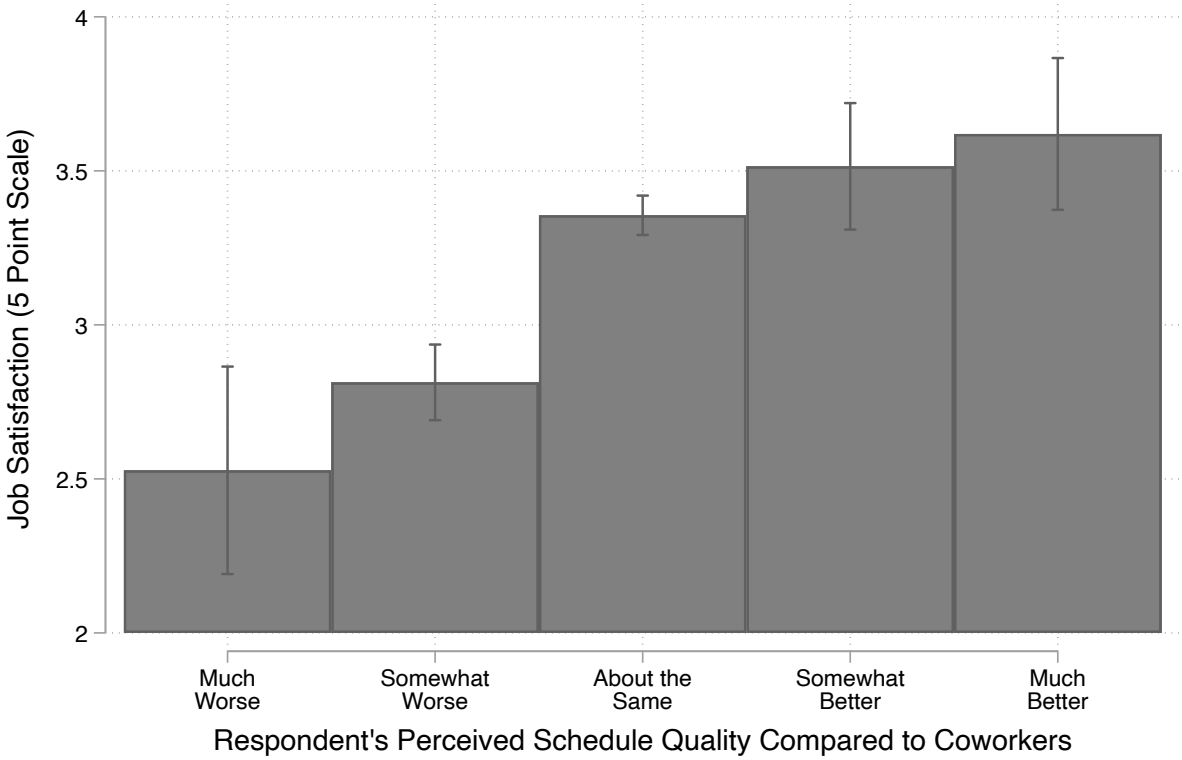
The next table analyzes whether relative schedule quality is associated with overall job satisfaction as well as turnover intentions. Row one for each dependent variable does not include job quality characteristics as controls, while row two does.

Results from the analysis show that, while the inclusion of schedule quality controls dampen the association between relative schedule quality and turnover intentions, the pattern remains the same. Controlling for scheduling characteristics, when frontline workers feel their schedule quality is much worse than their coworkers, they are .83 points less satisfied with their jobs, and .89 point more likely to report the intention to look for a new job. When workers report somewhat worse schedules, they are .54 points less satisfied with their jobs than workers who report schedules as being about the same as coworkers and are .41 points more likely to report turnover intentions.

While the results are not statistically significant, the point estimates follow the same pattern as the previous analysis with respect to perceptions of relative advantage. Workers are marginally more satisfied and less likely to report intentions to leave when they are somewhat or much better off, though the point estimates are much smaller.

The predicted values of schedule comparisons on job satisfaction are visualized below.

Figure 4-2: The Effect of Schedule Comparisons to Coworkers on Job Satisfaction



These results indicate that poor schedule quality compared to coworkers, controlling for the absolute effects of such treatment, is associated with lower schedule satisfaction, job

satisfaction and higher turnover intentions. On the other hand, relative advantage is often not significantly associated with these outcomes, and uniformly is associated with much smaller point estimates. The non-linearity found in these analyses does not provide support for *Hypothesis 2a*, which suggest a linear relationship between relative deprivation and subjective well-being, or *Hypothesis 2b*, which suggest a larger, significant drop in satisfaction among those at the bottom of the distribution. Instead, this analysis suggests a more linear drop in well-being associated with feelings of having worse schedules than the average coworker and finds some support for more modest increases when workers feel they are treated better than the average coworker.

Discussion

While social comparisons have been a subject of sociological thought since the discipline's inception, the first known use of the term "relative deprivation" is associated with sociologist Samuel A. Stouffer (Stouffer et al., 1949; Pettigrew, 2015). The term was originally used to explain the process by which relative rates of job promotions among a reference group mediates the relationship between a job promotion and job satisfaction. While the theory of relative deprivation has received sustained attention since Stouffer, the focus has shifted markedly away from job characteristics beyond pay.

Research instead has typically focused on comparisons of wages, salaries, incomes and wealth, among different geographic or workplace reference groups. Although work is a central part of American life (Prescott, 2004), and survey respondents typically claim they are most likely to make social comparisons to coworkers (Clark and Senik, 2010), little recent scholarship measures social comparisons at work beyond income. This chapter argues that a lack of attention to the ways coworkers compare non-income job characteristics is a major shortcoming. Not only did other job quality characteristics serve as the initial subject of research on relative deprivation, but contemporary research on organizational inequality has underscored the pervasiveness and impact of unequal treatment beyond pay (Acker, 2006; Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014). The relational nature of organizational inequality suggests that differences in treatment in the workplace beyond pay may make up important dimensions of social comparisons. By expanding the positional goods studied, research can do more than simply widen the scope of social comparisons research. The variation can be used to further develop theories of social comparison, identifying how pay may operate differently than other aspects of inequality (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016).

To this end, this chapter introduces schedule quality as a positional good for frontline foodservice and retail workers. Recent research on scheduling for this group has demonstrated that it plays an important role in workers' lives (Schneider and Harknett, 2019a), and is distributed unequally (Storer et al., 2020; McCrate et al., 2019), making it a likely source of social comparisons.

To further justify schedule quality as a positional good, this chapter first validates the baseline criteria necessary for social comparison, that workers are aware of their coworkers' schedules. As this research indicates, workers possess multiple sources of information regarding coworkers' schedules. Workers learn about coworkers' schedules through printed schedule boards, apps and text messages, conversations with coworkers, and simply by looking around and seeing who else is working. Alternatively, norms of pay secrecy may

make such information relatively more difficult to obtain.

In bringing these literatures together, this chapter identifies a distinction between context-specific and context-agnostic positional goods. Results of a second set of analyses show that frontline workers compare schedules and wages to different social groups. Schedules, with their visible, unequal distribution within the firm, are more likely to be compared within the workplace, to coworkers. On the other hand, wages are more likely to be compared across workplaces, and also to friends. These differences in reference groups are due to the nature of schedules and pay in frontline foodservice and retail today. As a context-agnostic positional good, pay makes more sense to evaluate as a general source of comparison among broad sectors of society. However, for more specific aspects of organizational inequality, such as the extent of schedule volatility these experiences, are more context-specific.

The context-specificity of a positional good is likely tied to the availability of information. While scheduling information is easily available to workers for their coworkers, it may be significantly more difficult to identify information about schedule quality of potential referents outside of the workplace. On the other hand, information about pay at similar employers is more easily available, often included in job postings and sometimes reported on in a national context. As a result, it makes sense that workers are likely to compare wages along these lines. In the same vein, while information about wages may be imperfect in the broader world, individuals can compare pay to friends based on conspicuous consumption patterns (Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016).

Finally, this chapter shows that social comparisons of schedule quality to coworkers are associated with various aspects of schedule and job satisfaction, as well as turnover intentions. Further, these analyses show that the relationship between social comparisons of schedule quality and schedule and job satisfaction is non-linear. While research typically identifies social comparisons in terms of a reference to the best treated in a firm or other reference group, this research does not find evidence of workers feeling incrementally better as they move from the worst spot to the best spot of the schedule quality hierarchy. Nor is there a clear drop off, as theories of last-place aversion would expect, as workers move to the worst-treated part of the hierarchy. Instead, there is a clear inflection point around the perception of being treated better or worse than average. The negative point estimates of feelings of being treated worse than average are typically about twice as large as the corresponding estimates of relative advantage and are more reliably statistically significant across outcomes. These findings suggest that research which focuses on traditional, top down measures of relative deprivation, such as the Yitzhaki index, may not be accurately capturing the social psychological process they attempt to measure.

These findings open multiple additional avenues for research. First, this research begs the question, what other aspects of organizational inequality impact job quality, and in what contexts? As Stouffer suggests, within larger, bureaucratic organizations, promotions may be a more salient source of inequality for workers to use to measure themselves. Although somewhat correlated with pay, when workers are passed over for a promotion, the status comparisons may prove to be particularly important. Frontline foodservice and retail may be a particularly promising area for such research, since multiple distinctions proliferate at work between leads of departments, department managers, shift managers, and other levels, often without significantly shifting pay. Are job satisfaction and turnover tied to promotion

mechanisms in this field?

More broadly, what determines whether a good is context-specific or context-agnostic? Do certain aspects of organizational culture intentionally or unintentionally create a status hierarchy which impacts job quality? What organizational qualities lead an individual to compare, or not compare, an aspect of job quality to coworkers? This chapter suggests that the visibility of schedule quality within the firm makes it more likely to be compared in this context, but research on additional positional goods would be necessary to further develop this theory.

This research also identifies a potential paradox. Individuals who see themselves as being given relatively worse schedules are more likely to seek a new job. Yet, unlike pay, one's social status and relative treatment within an organization is difficult to identify at a potential new job. What happens to workers who leave a job due to social comparisons? Are these workers able to improve their standing somehow, or at the point are they more likely to compare their treatment between jobs, as opposed to within a job?

Finally, this research does not speak to how the racialized and gendered nature of discrimination within organizations manifests itself in social comparisons. Perhaps non-male workers or workers of color may be focused on different positional goods, compare to different reference groups, or are more sensitive to some social comparisons. While this work highlights social comparisons among a demographic that is disproportionately non-male and non-white, over sampling on demographic categories, combined with more targeted questions about the racialized and gendered aspects of social comparisons, could provide significant additional insight into the intersectional nature of social comparisons.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This dissertation has studied how foodservice and retail workers use workplace relationships to both draw meaning from their work and make sense of how they are treated. These relationships are associated with both workers' ability and motivation to do a good job at work, and workers' overall job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The dissertation also highlights the role that employers play in shaping these relationships, and workers' interpretations of their companies' actions. While the topic of customer and coworker relationships in service work has frequently been addressed in sociological theorizing about work, this scholarship often overlooks jobs in foodservice and retail, which are among the most common jobs in the service economy. Compared to the complexity of workplace relationships in other types of service work, foodservice and retail jobs do not seem on their face to be particularly compelling. Healthcare workers, for instance, must provide compassionate care in the process of healing patients, with potentially dire outcomes when becoming burnt out. Salespeople must navigate the fraught line between seeming to care but also doing what it takes to make a sale. Even mall Santa's work in jobs with some inherent meaning (Hancock, 2013). On the other hand, the interactions that workers engage in in foodservice and retail are relatively short, scripted encounters that are not particularly meaningful. Workers in these industries are less likely to develop meaningful long-lasting relationships than in other common service occupations. In a list of customer-facing jobs, Korczynski (2009) describes frontline foodservice and retail jobs as potentially the most alienating. Similar arguments can be made for coworkers, who are often left out of discussions of the service triangle. Yet, I find that these relationships matter to workers' subjective well-being, and to the extent to which they care about their work. These workers find meaning in their relationships, even despite the strict constraints put on them.

The substantive topics taken up in each chapter differ, but taken together they make two main claims. First, workplace relationships with customers and coworkers are important for workers' subjective job quality and turnover intentions. Qualitatively, the first empirical chapter of the dissertation showed the broad and varied ways that customer relationships matter to workers. Inherent in many of the ways that workers discussed customers in job evaluations is an underlying concern for their treatment. From a sense of intrinsic satisfaction derived from helping customers, to an organizational concern for whether others are attempting to do right by customers, workers often expressed concern for their customers. The second empirical chapter then quantified how important these relationships are for workers, and it examined the extent to which customer relationships motivate workers to provide quality customer service. Findings indicated that when customer relationships decline, as they did during the COVID-19 pandemic, workers are less satisfied with their jobs, more likely to look for a new job, and less likely to be concerned with whether the customer leaves happy. Finally, the third empirical chapter demonstrated that frontline workers benchmark their satisfaction with how well they're treated to their coworkers. Even after controlling for their schedule quality, when workers felt that their schedules were relatively worse than their coworkers, they were less satisfied

with their jobs and more likely to look for new jobs. In sum, the dissertation shows that customers can give the job both a sense of meaning and a broader connection to the community, while coworkers provide a comparison point for gauging how well or poorly workers are being treated. Not only do I demonstrate that that workers are concerned with the treatment of customers and coworkers, I show that they play a statistically significant role in altering outcomes that are of interest to both worker well-being and organizational efficiency.

These chapters also suggest that workers are alert to how their employer treats customers and coworkers. Workers notice what their managers are doing, and it shapes their actions and attitudes. Workers who are intrinsically motivated by a desire to help customers are frustrated when they feel that their company does not care about customer service. Moreover, feeling as though the organization doesn't care about its' customers is more significantly associated with turnover and job satisfaction than both the frequency of positive or negative customer interactions, and one's reported difficulty conducting surface acting. Additionally, workers are aware of it when they are treated unequally with respect to their coworkers, and this competitive system has significant adverse effects. Although workers benefit somewhat from feeling that they are treated better than their coworkers, workers are much more worse off when they feel they are treated less well than others. This suggests that creating an unequal system designed to distribute a useful but scarce resource may actually produce adverse effects for organizations.

These conclusions are drawn from analyses of two datasets, using qualitative and computational text analyses as well as regression analyses. These two datasets are both employer-identified, meaning that it was possible to sample across and control for differences among multiple employers in different industries. Such data, along with my multi-methods approach, is relatively uncommon the in the sociological scholarship on service work, which tends to rely on interview or ethnographic data from a small number of individual establishments to theorize the impact of customers on well-being (e.g. Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Lopez, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom and DiCicco-Bloom, 2019; Korczynski, 2013). The management literature also typically draws upon surveys or human resources data from a single employer (e.g. Grandey et al., 2004; Groth et al., 2009; Hurley, 1998; Goodwin et al., 2011). My approach also differs from that used in most studies of social comparisons, which frequently are based on national datasets that do not have subjective data regarding how workers feel they are treated or on data from outside of the workplace (e.g. Clark et al., 2010; Alderson and Katz-Gerro, 2016; Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Kawachi, 2012). The multiple datasets and types of analyses in this dissertation provide for a larger-scale, and a more robust investigation. In addition, the inclusion and analysis of free-text data provides greater insight into how workers evaluate their jobs than is possible in research that relies on quantitative survey items alone.

These findings advance multiple fields of sociological theory. The research presented here is the first study to consider schedule quality as a source of social comparison, and one in a significant minority to look beyond wages. In comparing two separate sources of social comparisons within the workplace, this dissertation demonstrates that workers compare different goods to different reference groups and develops a theory of what predicts these differences. In addition, this dissertation shows that the psychological effects of unequal treatment are not distributed equally. Workers are harmed when they perceive themselves

as receiving inferior treatment to a much greater extent than they benefit from perceiving themselves as receiving superior treatment. These findings suggest that there are material advantages to be had for organizations by treating workers more equitably. In particular, equitable treatment is likely to aid in producing a satisfied workforce that is less likely to look for new jobs.

Second, and most notably, this dissertation calls into question the sociological focus on how interactions with customers negatively shape the experience of work for service workers. If even frontline foodservice and retail workers sometimes find meaning in short, relatively anonymous interactions with customers, then researchers may be overly focused on surface acting and emotional labor in their theorizing about service work. In revealing that customer interactions can be a source of meaning and satisfaction in jobs where nearly everything seems stacked against workers, this dissertation argues that customers are not merely another aspect of a negative experience at work. Given that this bright side of customer interactions appears not only in healthcare or other meaning-laden occupations, but also in foodservice and retail work, this dissertation suggests that there is something about even brief customer interactions, and the human connection that one makes with the greater community, that can make these jobs meaningful. If companies were to nurture this connection between workers and customers, they would likely benefit not only from higher retention, but also from a more motivated workforce.

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Appendix A

This section describes the machine learning model used to classify the mentions of customers as organizational or occupational. First, the text from all Pros and Cons sections of written reviews from the Glassdoor dataset, before any data cleaning or deletion, were used to build a word embedding model. The word embedding model was developed using Word2Vec and Continuous Bag of Words, a program which uses positional information about each word in each review to generate a vector of 300 numbers which represent a single word. These numbers can be used to reduce the number of variables in a regression from every word that appears in Glassdoor (a traditional Dictionary method), into a smaller set of 300 variables, creating a more parsimonious regression model. While the number of variables is smaller, the word embeddings contain additional positional information. These numbers have embedded meanings which can be used to understand how words or concepts are grouped together, as demonstrated recently by Garg et al. (2018) and Kozlowski et al. (2019). Although other word embedding models are available using other corpora, building a model using the Glassdoor corpus is preferable, since there are a number of occupation, industry, or company specific terms that are used interchangeably. For instance, the word "guest" is sometimes used in place of customer, and the word embedding model developed using the Glassdoor corpus more accurately captured this similarity in usage.

Randomly sampling 600 of the 1,000 reviews mentioning customers that I hand coded, I trained a machine learning model for the "occupational" and "organizational" orientations, which I discuss in detail in the qualitative analysis. Of the remaining 400 hand coded reviews, 200 were used to further develop the model, and 200 were used to test the accuracy of the model. The machine learning model used is a Bidirectional Long-Short Term Model with Attention. To build a model which identifies which of the 300 word embedding vectors predict a certain orientation towards customers, these models first build a prediction iterating over each word in a single review as one would read it in a sentence. The model is also bidirectional, in that it also iterates through a review in reverse, starting with the last word in the review. This method is superior because it accounts for context. The long-short term nature of the model, as well as the attention layer, allow the model to keep certain, more predictive words, in memory as the model iterates over the entire review. This method is described in detail by Liu and Guo (2019). While these models are notable for their ability to efficiently analyze large, complex, data sources, they are equally capable of building predictive models with small datasets.

For example, consider a review that states "Depending on where you're stationed, you will deal with a lot of rude and unreasonable customers. Very strict dress/conduct code I started to loathe wearing that stupid sweaty hat! Wouldn't stay there for long, unless you're after a management position." In this review, the occupational hazard orientation is in the middle of the review, so a straightforward reading of this review from a machine learning model may end up upweighting irrelevant comments, such as "stupid" or "management" when these words are not being used in connection to customers. However, the attention layer should upweight a phrase such as "rude and unreasonable customers" in a model meant to predict an occupational orientation towards customers. In the test dataset, occupational predictions were made with 76% accuracy, with a 95%confidence interval between 70% and 82%. The organizational predictions were made with 80% accuracy, with a 95% confidence

interval between 75% and 86%.

In Table A-1 below, I demonstrate the variation between the qualitatively coded and machine coded model. Each cell in the table represents the percentage of the qualitatively coded orientation that was machine coded into a specific category. The first two qualitative codes, Organizational and Organizational Plus, identify the codes that included an organizational orientation or an organizational orientation plus any other orientation. In both categories, roughly 80% of responses are correctly machine coded, with the other 20% coded as neither or including both the organizational and occupational orientation.

Table A-1: Qualitative and Machine Coding Tabulations

	Machine Learning Model Coding				
	Organizational Orientation	Occupational Orientation	Organizational and Occupational	Neither	Row Total Percent
Qualitative Coding					
Organizational	81.04	0.95	3.79	14.22	100.00
Organizational Plus	80.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	100.00
Occupation	0.68	87.07	2.49	9.75	100.00
Occupation Plus	15.00	32.50	37.50	15.00	100.00
Experience	11.48	3.28	0.00	85.25	100.00
Intrinsic Value	6.62	9.56	0.00	83.82	100.00
Total	22.37	46.31	3.80	27.52	100.00

Similar machine coding results occur with the Occupational and Occupational Plus orientations. Roughly 87% of occupational orientations are correctly coded by the machine learning model. Finally, one may be concerned that the qualitatively coded Experience or Intrinsic Value orientations may be coded systematically incorrectly. However, over 80% of both qualitatively coded orientations are machine coded as neither. There is some variation, however, with the Experience orientation being slightly more likely to be miscoded as an Organizational Orientation (11%) and the intrinsic value orientation to be coded as occupation (10%). To correct for potential coding errors due to machine miscoding, I bootstrap standard errors in the models.

Table 4-4: The Effect of Explicit Relative Comparisons of Schedule Quality Compared to Coworkers on Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions Among Foodservice and Retail Workers

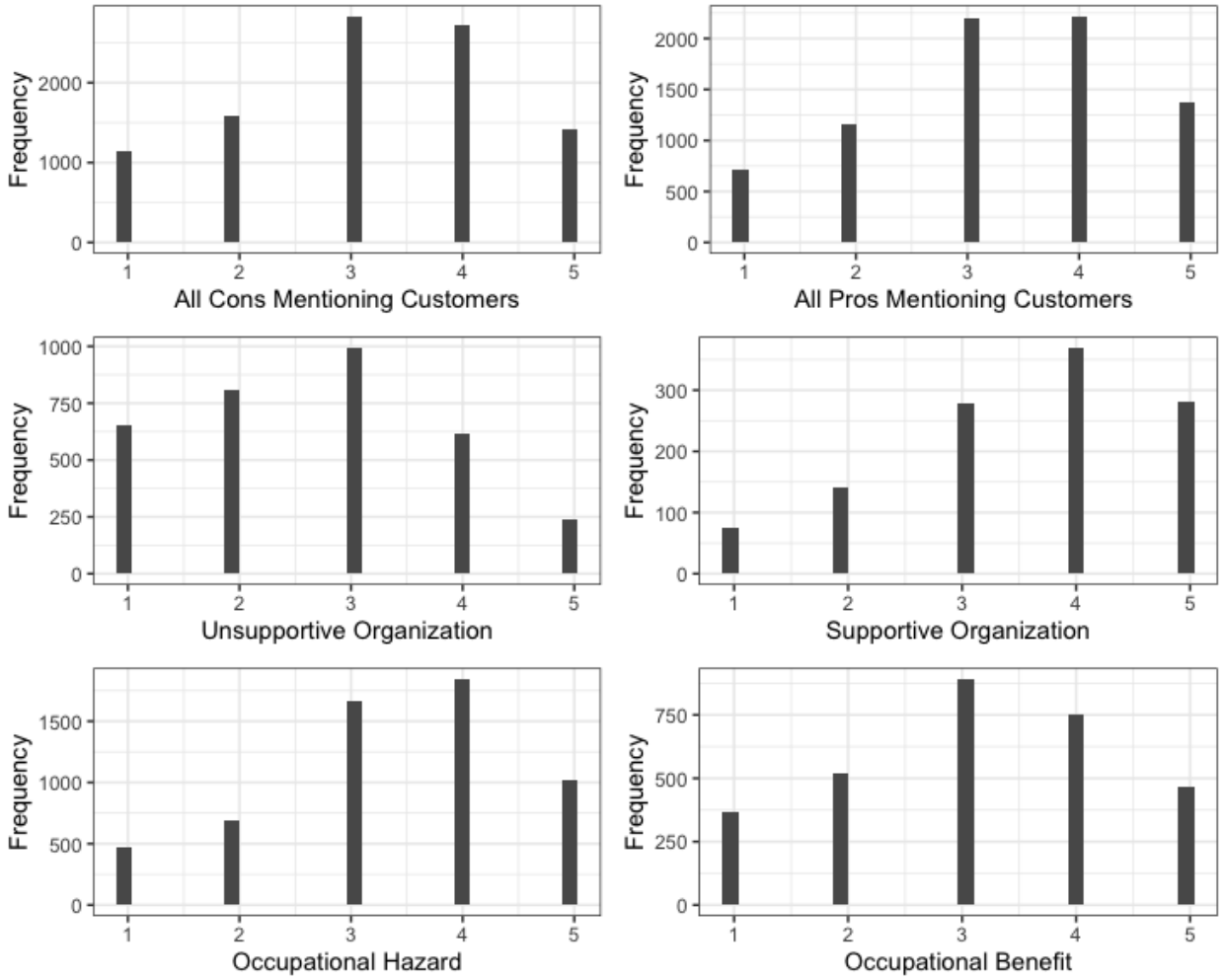
	Job Satisfaction		Turnover Intentions	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Relative Schedule Quality				
Much Worse	-0.918***	-0.828***	0.973**	0.885**
	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.24)	(0.23)
Somewhat Worse	-0.592***	-0.542***	0.476**	0.409*
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Somewhat Better	0.155	0.159	-0.203	-0.184
	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Much Better	0.275	0.264	-0.350	-0.296
	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.20)	(0.18)
Kids	0.236	0.160	-0.278	-0.210
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.10)
Age Group				
25-60	0.183	0.150	-0.300	-0.189
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)
60+	0.707**	0.653**	-1.062***	-0.879**
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.16)
Male	-0.139	-0.166	0.314*	0.348*
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	0.154	0.155	0.366	0.335
	(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.33)	(0.30)
Hispanic	-0.029	-0.058	0.132	0.115
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.21)	(0.24)
Other	-0.070	-0.095	0.070	0.081
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Hourly Wage		-0.004		-0.013
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Usual Hours		0.010		-0.003
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Schedule Variability		-0.031		0.271
		(0.18)		(0.18)
Job Quality	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1049	1049	1049	1049

Standard errors clustered by company. Multiple imputation is used for item non-response. Job quality includes wages, hours, and multiple stability metrics. Fixed effects included for employer, occupation, and state.

Appendix B

This section provides additional descriptive characteristics of the Glassdoor data. Since Glassdoor reviews are not randomly sampled, one might be concerned that the reviews are bimodal, only providing highly negative or highly positive reviews. The figure below contains a histogram for the reviews overall which mention customers among the Pros and Cons, as well as broken down by each of the four orientations towards customers.

Figure B-1: Histograms for Glassdoor Ratings by Customer Orientation



The histograms show that the reviews approximate a normal distribution, though there are more responses at the extremes than a normal distribution would predict. However, in nearly all cases the modal response is a three. The graphs overall look quite similar for the Pros and Cons, with ratings centered between 3 and 4. Reviews that describe customers as either an occupational hazard or a benefit are somewhat similar to the overall reviews. However, reviews which implicate the organization in discussions of customers seem to be more extreme than the rest of the reviews.

The next table demonstrates the patterns of missingness among key control variables in

the process of listwise deletion, as well as the average main review among the overall dataset and the datasets mentioning customers.

Table B-1: Missing Items in Glassdoor Data

	Overall		Pros Customer Mention		Cons Customer Mention	
	N	Main Review	N	Main Review	N	Main Review
All Reviews	183,592	3.24	18,086	3.24	24,399	3.17
Removing Pharmacy Workers	176,210	3.26	17,339	3.30	23,136	3.20
Not Missing Location	88,676	3.21	10,126	3.31	12,250	3.15
Not Missing Job Title	78,884	3.20	9,797	3.30	12,917	3.16
Contains Job Title and Location	61,615	3.20	7,776	3.30	9,861	3.17
Final Data	61,587	3.20	7,656	3.31	9,668	3.17

As the table shows, for the overall dataset, about 48% of respondents do not include location information, 43% do not include job title, and 34% do not include either. These two variables make up the bulk of the missing data. There is a similar process for the Pros and Cons data, though in the end about 42% of respondents mentioning customers in the Pros are included, and 40% of respondents mentioning customers in the Cons are included. The retention of more data in the Pros and Cons data is likely due to respondents being both more likely to include detailed written job reviews and also more likely to include other identifying information. Given this pattern of missingness, one would have to impute these missing variables for over half of the overall dataset with few other control variables to use to predict these high order variables. Additionally, one may have questions about whether these variables are missing at random, an assumption of multiple imputation, especially since there is a high likelihood of skipping both of these identifiers. As a result, I use listwise deletion.

The table also shows differences in the main review for the dataset including reviews not mentioning customers. These reviews, which average a 3.20 rating, are between the reviews mentioning Pros with a 3.31 rating, and the reviews mentioning Cons, with a 3.17 rating. This shows that the datasets are relatively similar to one another.

Appendix C

The first set of quantitative analyses are presented in Table C-1 below. These analyses are conducted for reviews mentioning customers in the Cons section. The analyses in Tables C-1 and C-2 are both conducted using four models. In the first model, only the two different orientations towards customers are included. In the second model, controls for the length of the review are included. The third model adds all additional controls excluding fixed effects. The full model includes all controls, as well as fixed effects for Company, Year, and State.

Table C-1: The Effects of Organizational and Occupational Orientations on Glassdoor Ratings - Cons Model

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Organizational Orientation	-0.628***	-0.478***	-0.481***	-0.456***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Surface Orientation	0.178***	0.083**	0.088**	0.090***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Pros Characters		0.002***	0.002***	0.002***
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Cons Characters		-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Department Manager			0.047	0.046
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Store Manager			0.046	0.156*
			(0.06)	(0.06)
Current Employee			0.259***	0.237***
			(0.02)	(0.02)
Full Time			0.045	0.017
			(0.03)	(0.02)
Less Than Year			-0.008	0.010
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Urban			0.031	-0.033
			(0.02)	(0.03)
Constant	3.284***	3.285***	3.109***	2.997***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.18)
N	9668	9668	9668	9668

The first model confirms what descriptive statistics indicated in the previous section. Workers who see their interactions with customers hindered by the organization are significantly less satisfied than average, associated with a .63-star rating decrease. Workers who conceptualize negative interactions with customers as simply an occupational hazard rate their job more highly on average, associated with a .18-star increase. However, these findings are significantly attenuated by controls. As one might expect, a longer Cons

sections is associated with lower satisfaction, while a longer Pros section is associated with higher satisfaction. Current employees are also much more satisfied overall. Interestingly, managerial level, tenure, and working in an urban area do not significantly affect the overall rating. Full time workers are slightly happier overall, although the significance of this variable drops out as company fixed effects are included. In the full model, workers who have negative conceptualizations of customers and who see the organization as unsupportive are associated with a .46-star decrease in their job rating. Workers who see customers as an occupational hazard are slightly happier with their jobs, as this orientation is associated with a .09-star rating increase. However, this is a fairly small effect size and is just on the verge of statistically significance.

The next table moves to measuring the ratings associated with positive mentions of customers.

Table C-2: The Effects of Organizational and Occupational Orientations on Glassdoor Ratings - Pros Model

	(1) b/se	(2) b/se	(3) b/se	(4) b/se
Organizational Orientation	-0.464***	-0.212***	-0.214***	-0.181***
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Surface Orientation	0.230***	0.179***	0.177***	0.129**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Pros Characters		0.001***	0.001***	0.001***
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Cons Characters		-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Department Manager			-0.056	-0.033
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Store Manager			0.047	0.071
			(0.06)	(0.06)
Current Employee			0.229***	0.226***
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Full Time			0.017	0.001
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Less Than Year			0.046	0.056
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Urban			0.006	-0.047
			(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	3.323***	3.286***	3.165***	2.504***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.19)
N	7656	7656	7656	7656

Results from the analysis of the Pros sections demonstrate an even starker contrast between organizational and occupational conceptualizations of customers. Workers who

see their interactions with customers as helped by a supportive organization rate their jobs higher. In the full model, this orientation is associate with a .16-star increase. However, when workers see interactions with their customers as an occupational benefit, such as when they think the customers are nice, they are overall less satisfied with their jobs. Indeed, in the first specification, an occupational benefit orientation is associated with a .24-star decrease in job rating. In the full model, the effect size nearly mirrors the effect of a supportive organization. Seeing workers as an occupational benefit is associated with a .17-star decrease in overall job rating. With respect to the controls, the same trends from the Cons model appear in the Pros model.

The sizable negative coefficient on occupational benefit is likely due to the base category that makes up the uncoded reviews. In the Cons model, both codes that were identified in the qualitative section were coded. The remaining, uncoded reviews, are ones in which the language surrounding customers could not definitively be categorized into one of the two groups. In the Pros model, however, additional uncoded perspectives make up the base category, in addition to reviews which could not be definitely categorized. One uncoded perspective, the intrinsic meaning perspective, is likely associated with higher levels of job satisfaction than views of positive interactions as only being "nice." This third positive orientation constitutes a base category in the analysis, leaving workers who see their customers as simply an occupational benefit as less satisfied than the uncoded category.

Appendix D

The survey results are presented using chained multiple imputation. The multiple imputation allows for the recovery of 258 responses which would have been missing due to item non-response. Given that many respondents are missing only a few controls, and that the controls are not high order categorical variables, this dataset is a good candidate for multiple imputation. Dependent and independent variables were not imputed, but were included in the imputations for control variables. The most imputed response is age, which 88 respondents did not include. The least imputed response is whether the worker is a current or former employee, which is not particularly surprising given that this is one of the first questions in survey. As a robustness check I also include a regression using listwise deletion in Tables D-6 and D-7.

One may be concerned that the survey data differs from the typical demographics of workers in these jobs. In order to address this concern, the first table below compares the current survey demographics to the Shift Data comparisons as presented in Table 1 of Schneider and Harknett (2019b). However, the question of how different the sample is from the population is inherently difficult to answer. That is because the nationally representative data sources sample all service sector workers, while I sample workers from 10 specific companies. If the demographics in the ten firms included in this sample vary from the overall distribution of workers in frontline industries, then the demographics of the survey will differ from the CPS. This is even more likely in the current sample than in the Shift Survey, where 38 large employers are included. In this case, the sample is even more specific, making the survey benchmarks, which are already not specific to the population of workers at these select firms, less likely to be the same. In Appendix Table D-1, I include a table comparing my data with the analysis reported Table 1 of Schneider and Harknett (2019b), which considers the overall Shift data with respect to multiple benchmarks.

Table D-1: Sample Demographics in Comparison to Schneider and Harknett (2019b)'s Table 1

Respondent Characteristic	Facebook Sample (%)	Shift (%)	ACS (%)	CPS-ASEC (%)	Facebook (%)
Female	74	73	55	55	60
Age					
18-29	51	67	59	59	61
30-39	12	17	19	18	22
40-49	11	13	14	14	12
50-55	26*	2	8	9	6
Race/Ethnicity					
White, Non-Hispanic	81	75	54	54	-
Black, Non-Hispanic	3	4	15	16	-
Hispanic	10	13	22	21	-
Other, Non-Hispanic	6	8	9	7	-
Education					
HS or less	38	39	51	54	-
Some college/Associates Degree	49	52	40	37	-
BA or more	13	9	9	9	-
Enrolled in school	29	37	32	46	-

**8% in the 50-55 range, 18% 55+*

In general, the data is much more in line with the Shift data than with the other nationally representative samples. The samples lean somewhat heavily towards White respondents and Female respondents. It should also be noted that the current sample includes respondents over the age of 55, while the Schneider and Harknett (2019b) paper compares only respondents under the age of 55.

One may also be concerned that the Glassdoor and Facebook Data differ in meaningful ways, wonder about the distribution of key customer oriented variables among both datasets, or be curious about the distribution of attitudes by company and occupation. To provide additional context, Table D-2 presents key characteristics for the Glassdoor data, such as the overall review, as well as the organizational and occupational orientation for the Pros and Cons mentions of customers.

Table D-2: Key Glassdoor Customer-Oriented Variables

	Pros Customer Mentions			Cons Customer Mentions		
	Main Review	Organizational Orientation	Occupational Orientation	Main Review	Organizational Orientation	Occupational Orientation
Company						
Burger King	3.09	3%	14%	3.09	15%	78%
McDonald's	3.17	4%	22%	3.08	13%	84%
CVS	2.83	15%	10%	2.53	56%	37%
Walgreens	3.08	9%	9%	2.85	42%	51%
Dunkin'	3.16	6%	15%	2.99	22%	71%
Starbucks	3.78	8%	21%	3.73	23%	69%
Home Depot	3.37	11%	8%	3.18	47%	42%
Lowe's	3.36	9%	7%	3.26	45%	46%
Target	3.32	9%	7%	3.11	45%	50%
Walmart	3.13	8%	10%	2.90	38%	56%
Occupation						
Manager	3.33	9%	10%	3.23	42%	51%
Cashier	3.25	11%	12%	3.00	37%	58%
Sales	3.23	9%	8%	3.05	43%	48%
Food Prep and Serving	3.54	6%	23%	3.43	16%	77%
Other	3.14	8%	7%	2.99	40%	49%

The results show variation by both company, and occupation. For instance, the occupation food prep and serving, as well as fast food and coffee shop companies have the highest levels of the occupational orientation. However, even within these industries, there continues to be significant variation, with Starbucks workers being coded at an occupational orientation about 33% more often than Dunkin' workers, and a similar breakdown between McDonald's and Burger King workers.

Table D-3 provides a comparison point among respondents sampled via Facebook. However, it should be noted that the data here do not prove a one to one comparison. The Facebook data asks about specific orientations that were derived by the Glassdoor data. In addition, the wording that produces the Glassdoor "Main Review" is not equivalent to the job satisfaction dependent variable.

Table D-3: Key Facebook Survey Customer-Oriented Variables

	Job Satisfaction	New Job Search	Difficulty Putting on Happy Face	Satisfied with Employer Treatment of Customers	Frequency of Nice Customers	Frequency of Rude Customers
Company						
Burger King	2.93	2.97	3.66	3.77	4.55	3.61
McDonald's	3.16	3.00	3.76	4.01	4.61	3.60
CVS	2.84	3.10	3.41	3.56	4.59	3.75
Walgreens	3.09	2.67	3.58	3.92	4.61	3.58
Dunkin'	3.21	3.04	3.58	4.20	4.80	3.63
Starbucks	3.38	2.70	3.26	4.05	4.73	4.18
Home Depot	4.08	2.01	4.17	4.41	4.72	3.08
Lowe's	3.20	2.99	3.70	3.70	4.69	3.68
Target	3.59	2.53	3.62	4.28	4.51	3.23
Walmart	3.21	2.65	3.38	3.70	4.34	3.59
Occupation						
Manager	3.20	2.71	3.60	3.86	4.61	3.89
Cashier	3.32	2.86	3.77	3.85	4.77	3.60
Sales	3.35	2.63	3.63	4.06	4.67	3.28
Food Prep and Serving	3.18	2.96	3.44	4.10	4.71	3.80
Other	3.31	2.67	3.60	3.88	4.44	3.49

The Facebook data also shows significant variation among company, industry, and occupation, for instance with respect to satisfaction with how the respondent's employer treats customers.

Compared to the Glassdoor data, the Facebook data does show similarities. For instance, CVS, Walgreens, and Burger King are all at the bottom tier of both job satisfaction and Glassdoor's main review, and Home Depot, Starbucks and Target are within the top four rated companies in both datasets.

However, there are some differences between the data, for instance when comparing job satisfaction. In the Glassdoor data, Starbucks workers have the highest rating, and the mean is .41 points higher than the second highest rated company Home Depot. In the Facebook data, Home depot has the highest rating, .49 points above the next highest rated company, Target. Starbucks is the third highest rated company in the Facebook data. workers have the second highest rating. Food Prep and Serving workers also rate their jobs the highest of any occupation in the Glassdoor data, perhaps due to the representation of Starbucks workers with this title, whereas in the Facebook data these workers rate their jobs the lowest.

While there are differences along these lines, there are multiple possible explanations. First, the Glassdoor data includes data over a long period of time, compared to the Facebook survey which was fielded over a week nearly two years after the Glassdoor sample is closed. Second, the Glassdoor and Facebook dependent variables are not worded the same. However, even among both of these datasets which vary somewhat from one another in multiple ways, they both show that organizational concerns about how customers are treated is associated with the outcomes at hand.

The next set of tables correspond to the survey results presented in the figures in the main text of the analysis. Table D-4 below presents the results from a set of regressions with the dependent variable as job satisfaction. All controls are included in each of the models.

Table D-4: The Effects of Perceived Treatment of Customers and Difficulty Conducting Emotional Labor on Job Satisfaction

	(1) b/se	(2) b/se	(3) b/se	(4) b/se	(5) b/se
It Is Difficult To Put On A Happy Face					
Strongly Agree	-0.661*				-0.495**
	(0.19)				(0.14)
Agree	-0.316**				-0.283*
	(0.07)				(0.09)
Disagree	0.215*				0.034
	(0.09)				(0.08)
Strongly Disagree	0.697***				0.291*
	(0.09)				(0.11)
Satisfaction With How the Company Treats Customers					
Extremely dissatisfied		-0.675*			-0.561
		(0.21)			(0.27)
Somewhat dissatisfied		-0.456*			-0.481*
		(0.16)			(0.18)
Somewhat satisfied		0.505***			0.410***
		(0.09)			(0.07)
Extremely satisfied		1.075***			0.876***
		(0.12)			(0.12)
How Often Are Customers Rude					
Rarely			0.104		-0.022
			(0.27)		(0.24)
Monthly			-0.100		-0.151
			(0.30)		(0.27)
Weekly			-0.173		-0.185
			(0.29)		(0.23)
Daily			-0.641*		-0.372
			(0.25)		(0.19)
How Often Are Customers Nice					
Rarely				-0.338	-0.428
				(0.49)	(0.40)
Monthly				0.190	-0.236
				(0.57)	(0.42)
Weekly				-0.187	-0.564
				(0.48)	(0.34)
Daily				0.304	-0.340
				(0.49)	(0.36)
Constant	3.241***	2.884***	3.893***	3.642**	3.462**
	(0.57)	(0.55)	(0.66)	(0.75)	(0.69)
N	849	849	849	849	849

Table D-5 corresponds to a regression measuring turnover intentions.

Table D-5: The Effects of Perceived Treatment of Customers and Difficulty Conducting Emotional Labor on Turnover Intentions

	(1) b/se	(2) b/se	(3) b/se	(4) b/se	(5) b/se
It Is Difficult To Put On A Happy Face					
Strongly Agree	0.524				0.342
	(0.28)				(0.22)
Agree	0.105				0.067
	(0.13)				(0.13)
Disagree	-0.283				-0.100
	(0.14)				(0.12)
Strongly Disagree	-0.770***				-0.386*
	(0.13)				(0.14)
Satisfaction With How the Company Treats Customers					
Extremely dissatisfied		0.767**			0.726**
		(0.19)			(0.18)
Somewhat dissatisfied		0.314			0.358*
		(0.19)			(0.15)
Somewhat satisfied		-0.546**			-0.442**
		(0.11)			(0.11)
Extremely satisfied		-0.981***			-0.769**
		(0.15)			(0.19)
How Often Are Customers Rude					
Rarely			0.126		0.246
			(0.21)		(0.28)
Monthly			0.203		0.246
			(0.23)		(0.24)
Weekly			0.261		0.275
			(0.26)		(0.26)
Daily			0.704**		0.465
			(0.17)		(0.22)
How Often Are Customers Nice					
Rarely				0.548	0.617
				(0.57)	(0.54)
Monthly				0.106	0.486
				(0.78)	(0.61)
Weekly				0.487	0.881
				(0.70)	(0.57)
Daily				-0.167	0.448
				(0.69)	(0.59)
Constant	3.025*	3.283**	2.292*	2.325*	2.470*
	(0.91)	(0.80)	(0.92)	(0.95)	(0.80)
N	849	849	849	849	849

I also include various robustness checks. The first column of Table D-6 includes the full model (corresponding to column 4 of Table D-4), but does not present the fixed effect coefficients and the two insignificant independent variables. The dependent variable is job satisfaction.

Table D-6: Robustness Checks on Job Satisfaction Regressions

	Full Model b/se	Ordinal Logistic Regression b/se	No Company FE b/se	No State FE b/se	Listwise Deletion b/se
It Is Difficult To Put On A Happy Face					
Strongly Agree	-0.495**	-0.745**	-0.502**	-0.451*	-0.544**
	(0.14)	(0.26)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.14)
Agree	-0.285*	-0.446**	-0.295*	-0.327*	-0.184
	(0.09)	(0.17)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Disagree	0.034	0.122	0.007	-0.003	0.024
	(0.08)	(0.15)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.11)
Strongly Disagree	0.283*	0.631**	0.294*	0.262*	0.304
	(0.11)	(0.23)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.15)
Satisfaction With How the Company Treats Customers					
Extremely dissatisfied	-0.552	-1.349*	-0.551	-0.555	-0.815*
	(0.27)	(0.58)	(0.26)	(0.24)	(0.31)
Somewhat dissatisfied	-0.479*	-0.938***	-0.496*	-0.411*	-0.576
	(0.18)	(0.27)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.33)
Somewhat satisfied	0.413***	0.596***	0.440***	0.440***	0.252*
	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.10)
Extremely satisfied	0.880***	1.571***	0.926***	0.931***	0.653***
	(0.12)	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.13)
Schedule Scale					
1	-0.138	-0.372	-0.174	-0.102	-0.224*
	(0.11)	(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.09)
2	-0.212	-0.486*	-0.235	-0.206	-0.161
	(0.12)	(0.21)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.08)
3	-0.255	-0.647*	-0.293	-0.219	-0.182
	(0.13)	(0.25)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.10)
4	-0.401*	-0.881**	-0.481**	-0.356*	-0.331*
	(0.14)	(0.28)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.11)
5	-0.121	-0.381	-0.142	-0.082	-0.112
	(0.18)	(0.32)	(0.21)	(0.16)	(0.28)
6	-0.720*	-1.495*	-0.786*	-0.682*	-0.710
	(0.29)	(0.61)	(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.36)
Usual Hours	-0.003	-0.004	-0.004	-0.001	0.003
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Full Time	-0.069	-0.154	-0.112	-0.106	-0.048
	(0.15)	(0.26)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.15)
Some College+	0.013	0.019	0.061	-0.026	-0.065
	(0.06)	(0.13)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.09)
Less Than Year	0.487***	0.886***	0.515***	0.493***	0.596***
	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.12)
Kids	-0.045	-0.141	-0.060	-0.075	-0.042
	(0.10)	(0.19)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Cohabitating	-0.024	-0.006	-0.036	-0.037	0.055
	(0.13)	(0.23)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Enrolled	0.126	0.243	0.129	0.213*	0.175
	(0.11)	(0.20)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.10)
Hourly Wage	-0.014	-0.025	-0.012	-0.013	-0.007
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)
Schedule Variability	-0.256	-0.429	-0.289	-0.291	-0.114
	(0.21)	(0.35)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.27)
Age	0.010*	0.018**	0.010*	0.011*	0.012*
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Male	-0.017	-0.062	0.008	-0.001	-0.109
	(0.12)	(0.24)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Race					
Black	0.230	0.323	0.166	0.246	0.275
	(0.22)	(0.36)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.31)
Hispanic	-0.013	0.085	0.029	-0.075	-0.160
	(0.12)	(0.24)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Other	-0.234	-0.338	-0.200	-0.234	-0.304
	(0.20)	(0.35)	(0.19)	(0.16)	(0.25)
Freq. of Customer Contact					
Sometimes	-0.382	-0.413	-0.467	-0.420*	-0.582*
	(0.26)	(0.38)	(0.28)	(0.16)	(0.25)
Often	-0.122	0.061	-0.157	-0.206	-0.235
	(0.24)	(0.36)	(0.27)	(0.20)	(0.14)
Always	0.046	0.346	0.006	-0.048	-0.073
	(0.27)	(0.39)	(0.30)	(0.24)	(0.19)
Constant	3.459**		3.654***	3.318***	2.840**
	(0.68)		(0.66)	(0.52)	(0.76)
N	849	849	849	849	591

The second column conducts an ordinal logistic regression as a robustness check against treating the dependent variable as continuous. The third and fourth columns remove company and state fixed effects respectively. Finally, I include a model where I conduct listwise deletion rather than multiple imputation. The patterns of significant and coefficient sizes are stable throughout each robustness check. Particularly notable is that the results are somewhat inflated when excluding company and state fixed effects, which suggests that, as expected, unobserved variation in management strategies among companies is indeed impacting these results.

Table D-7 conducts the same robustness checks as the previous table but for new job search.

Table D-7: Robustness Checks on New Job Search Regressions

	Full Model b/se	Ordinal Logistic Regression b/se	No Company FE b/se	No State FE b/se	Listwise Deletion b/se
It Is Difficult To Put On A Happy Face					
Strongly Agree	0.348	0.558	0.372	0.317	0.600*
	(0.22)	(0.35)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Agree	0.068	0.123	0.088	0.087	0.133
	(0.13)	(0.21)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.15)
Disagree	-0.098	-0.093	-0.037	-0.081	0.031
	(0.12)	(0.21)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.19)
Strongly Disagree	-0.377*	-0.566*	-0.347*	-0.394*	-0.383
	(0.14)	(0.23)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.19)
Satisfaction With How the Company Treats Customers					
Extremely dissatisfied	0.718**	1.291***	0.696**	0.735**	0.409
	(0.19)	(0.30)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.25)
Somewhat dissatisfied	0.359*	0.622*	0.338	0.319	0.186
	(0.15)	(0.29)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.28)
Somewhat satisfied	-0.443**	-0.529**	-0.453**	-0.444**	-0.584***
	(0.11)	(0.20)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.11)
Extremely satisfied	-0.772**	-1.100***	-0.812**	-0.796**	-0.853**
	(0.19)	(0.27)	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.23)
Schedule Scale					
1	0.095	0.170	0.138	0.033	0.096
	(0.17)	(0.30)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.16)
2	0.486**	0.743***	0.507**	0.420*	0.437
	(0.13)	(0.22)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.19)
3	0.344*	0.504*	0.385*	0.273	0.342
	(0.13)	(0.23)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.22)
4	0.554**	0.888***	0.600***	0.448**	0.596**
	(0.12)	(0.20)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.16)
5	0.609*	0.708*	0.648**	0.572*	0.715*
	(0.18)	(0.29)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.29)
6	0.637	1.041*	0.647	0.553	0.402
	(0.33)	(0.49)	(0.32)	(0.27)	(0.41)
Usual Hours	0.013	0.020*	0.013	0.010	0.011
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Full Time	-0.098	-0.104	-0.075	-0.079	-0.163
	(0.15)	(0.21)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.19)
Some College+	0.124	0.181	0.122	0.146	0.248
	(0.09)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.18)
Less Than Year	-0.207	-0.293	-0.207	-0.211	-0.310
	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.15)
Kids	0.028	0.081	0.022	0.097	0.153
	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.12)
Cohabitating	0.057	0.101	0.061	0.093	0.112
	(0.16)	(0.20)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.17)
Enrolled	-0.314*	-0.363*	-0.307*	-0.390*	-0.378*
	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.16)
Hourly Wage	-0.014	-0.023	-0.009	-0.017	-0.047
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Schedule Variability	0.437	0.642	0.415	0.451	0.496
	(0.23)	(0.35)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.25)
How old are you?	-0.014*	-0.022***	-0.014*	-0.016**	-0.014*
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Male	0.225	0.278	0.234	0.245	0.217
	(0.14)	(0.21)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.13)
Black	0.408	0.551	0.451	0.366	0.279
	(0.39)	(0.58)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.44)
Hispanic	0.205	0.190	0.187	0.241	0.169
	(0.19)	(0.32)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.28)
Other	0.166	0.058	0.097	0.175	0.332
	(0.28)	(0.38)	(0.29)	(0.26)	(0.31)
Freq. of Customer Contact					
Sometimes	-0.268	-0.265	-0.153	-0.038	0.061
	(0.31)	(0.47)	(0.27)	(0.23)	(0.33)
Often	-0.607	-0.904*	-0.515	-0.477	-0.457
	(0.31)	(0.39)	(0.30)	(0.25)	(0.32)
Always	-0.619	-0.932*	-0.496	-0.482	-0.589
	(0.34)	(0.42)	(0.32)	(0.28)	(0.34)
Constant	2.432*		2.179*	2.542**	3.438*
	(0.81)		(0.70)	(0.72)	(1.28)
N	849	849	849	849	591

The regressions follow the same pattern for both independent variables.

Appendix E

In the body of chapter 3, I use ordinary least squares regression, treating the 5 point scales as dependent variables. However, as a robustness check, the tables below reproduce Tables 3-2 and 3-3 of the main text using ordinal logistic regressions.

Table E-1: Robustness Check Ordinal Logistic Regression: The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Emotional Labor and Attachment to Customer Service

	(1) Company Provides Valuable Service b/se	(2) Company Provides Valuable Service b/se	(3) Difficulty Putting On Happy Face b/se	(4) Difficulty Putting On Happy Face b/se	(5) Important Customers Leave Happy b/se	(6) Important Customers Leave Happy b/se
Customer Relationships Declined	-0.536**	-0.261	0.942***	0.698***	-0.440***	-0.279*
	(0.18)	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Fear of Covid		0.113		-0.031		0.191***
		(0.10)		(0.07)		(0.05)
Company Protects from Covid		0.614***		-0.419***		0.470***
		(0.07)		(0.09)		(0.08)
Customers Masked		0.056		-0.128		-0.273
		(0.26)		(0.20)		(0.22)
Hourly Wage	-0.022	-0.013	0.012	0.001	0.009	0.017
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Usual Hours	-0.000	0.006	0.009	0.006	-0.002	0.002
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Schedule Variability	-0.110	-0.011	0.213	0.117	-0.412	-0.397
	(0.30)	(0.24)	(0.37)	(0.40)	(0.25)	(0.21)
Male	-0.431*	-0.375	-0.055	-0.114	-0.543**	-0.484**
	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.16)
Kids	0.147	0.083	-0.435*	-0.437*	0.413*	0.336
	(0.33)	(0.37)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.23)
White	-0.093	-0.158	-0.148	-0.092	0.298	0.282
	(0.19)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.24)
Age Group						
25-60	0.454	0.423	-0.046	0.003	-0.040	-0.057
	(0.39)	(0.40)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.24)	(0.22)
60+	0.902	0.695	-0.496	-0.311	0.400	0.304
	(0.47)	(0.51)	(0.32)	(0.35)	(0.42)	(0.38)
Cut 1	-5.220**	-2.214	0.608	-1.494	-5.013***	-2.654**
	(1.65)	(2.16)	(0.80)	(0.93)	(0.73)	(0.84)
Cut 2	-4.502**	-1.453	1.911*	-0.114	-4.137***	-1.768*
	(1.65)	(2.17)	(0.84)	(0.97)	(0.70)	(0.84)
Cut 3	-3.580*	-0.471	2.755**	0.777	-2.571***	-0.154
	(1.63)	(2.15)	(0.87)	(0.95)	(0.67)	(0.80)
Cut 4	-1.684	1.590	4.301***	2.369*	-0.839	1.674*
	(1.57)	(2.10)	(0.89)	(0.95)	(0.61)	(0.74)
N	662	662	662	662	662	662

Standard Errors Clustered by Company; Multiple Imputation for Item Non-Response; Unless Visibly Absent, All Controls, Including Fixed Effects, Included in Each Model
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The tables show that, if anything, the point estimates are larger and more significant using this specification.

Table E-2: Robustness Check Ordinal Logistic Regression: The Effect of Declines in the Quality of Customer Relationships on Job Satisfaction, Customer Service Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions in Frontline Foodservice and Retail

	(1) Satisfaction With Customer Service Experience	(2) Satisfaction With Customer Service Experience	(3) Job Satisfaction	(4) Job Satisfaction	(5) Plan to Search for a New Job	(6) Plan to Search for a New Job
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Customer Relationships Declined	-1.222***	-0.975***	-1.008***	-0.630***	1.024***	0.705***
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Fear of Covid		-0.039		-0.047		0.154
		(0.07)		(0.07)		(0.10)
Company Protects from Covid		0.476***		0.702***		-0.423***
		(0.06)		(0.09)		(0.11)
Customers Masked		0.060		-0.157		-0.131
		(0.15)		(0.17)		(0.27)
Hourly Wage	-0.010	0.005	-0.030	-0.022	-0.026	-0.046
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Usual Hours	-0.008	-0.004	-0.011	-0.006	0.019*	0.016*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Schedule Variability	0.159	0.336	-0.693	-0.546	0.474	0.286
	(0.36)	(0.33)	(0.36)	(0.40)	(0.31)	(0.39)
Male	-0.108	-0.048	-0.374	-0.367	0.621**	0.646**
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.22)
Kids	0.886***	0.872**	0.144	0.147	-0.266	-0.307
	(0.25)	(0.29)	(0.24)	(0.26)	(0.17)	(0.20)
White	0.259	0.180	0.218	0.112	-0.273	-0.207
	(0.23)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.29)
Age Group						
25-60	0.783	0.757	0.032	-0.099	0.068	0.224
	(0.44)	(0.47)	(0.31)	(0.30)	(0.28)	(0.31)
60+	1.045*	0.843	1.103**	0.837	-1.510***	-1.267***
	(0.50)	(0.55)	(0.40)	(0.44)	(0.36)	(0.37)
Cut 1	-4.102***	-2.156	-4.895***	-2.527	0.847	-0.676
	(1.01)	(1.33)	(0.96)	(1.62)	(0.68)	(1.22)
Cut 2	-2.701**	-0.682	-3.147***	-0.631	1.625*	0.156
	(0.99)	(1.28)	(0.92)	(1.57)	(0.67)	(1.24)
Cut 3	-1.666	0.410	-2.374**	0.227	2.405***	1.000
	(1.06)	(1.35)	(0.91)	(1.59)	(0.66)	(1.25)
Cut 4	0.144	2.346	-0.431	2.461	3.791***	2.473
	(1.08)	(1.37)	(0.88)	(1.56)	(0.67)	(1.28)
N	662	662	662	662	662	662

Standard Errors Clustered by Company; Multiple Imputation for Item Non-Response; Unless Visibly Absent, All Controls, Including Fixed Effects, Included in Each Model
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$