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## Gender at Work: The Role of Habitus and Gender-Performance in Service Industry Occupations

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Gender at Work: The Role of Habitus and Gender-Performance in Service Industry Occupations

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
Sociology

By

Laura Dean-Shapiro

BA St. Mary's University, 2007

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**Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between gender roles and habitus in service industry occupations. It draws primarily from the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Judith Butler. Data includes an exploratory focus group, non-participant observations and interviews with women currently or formerly employed as bartenders, bar backs, servers, or hostesses. The main themes that emerged included how habitus is affected by views of employment, drug and alcohol use, the naturalization of gender roles, and the effect of appearance standards. This study supports previous feminist works that posit that gender as a performance, not a biological trait. Further this performance is used to navigate specific social experiences such as those in a workplace. This paper also comments on current enforcement of Title VII with reference to gender discrimination.

**Keywords:** Gender, Bourdieu, Service Industry, Title VI

## **Introduction**

Occupation is one important determinate of social location, both in terms of earning potential as well as class status. However, the socially constructed rules governing the presentation of self in a given occupation are also equally important. Arguably all occupations have some facet of gender construction. This study was conducted as a means to explore if and how gender becomes naturalized in the workplace because individuals are required to follow socially constructed narrow scripts assigned to their biological sex. Further, this study explores the possibility that this naturalization is solidified when appearance standards governing the use of cosmetics for women is upheld by verbal cues and, in some cases, by employer policy.

Many feminist researchers are concerned with women's experiences of their gender, as well as how women understand the function of their gender in various aspects of their lives. Most often similar conclusions are reached: women and men experience their public and private lives differently. There is perhaps no more clear manifestation of this difference than through a lens that explores employment. Through this lens, we may have a basis to discuss sociologically pressing issues such as power, structure and agency.

The aim of this study is not to generalize to all occupations, nor all jobs within any field. Rather, this study is designed to explore the lived experiences of women working in specific hospitality, food or beverage service positions. The findings may illustrate a solidarity of experience of this culture-sharing group, or may find little similarity. In any case, the study is intended to develop a conversation around the actual lived experiences of women who rely on service industry jobs for their economic livelihood, and arguably, for some components of their understanding of self in society.

## **Research Questions:**

How do women perform gender while working in the hospitality industry? What are the benefits and costs of maintaining gender norms for women employed in this industry? Does the continual performance of gender in terms of physical appearance reward or harm these women economically?

## **Theoretical Background:**

Pierre Bourdieu's influence on modern understandings of the various forms of capital is central to this discussion. His work was largely influenced by the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Marcell Mauss, Claude Levi-Strauss, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Erving Goffman (Dumais, Forthcoming; Jenkins 1992). Habitus, a term that is now most often theoretically associated with Bourdieu was originally coined by Mauss, and was mentioned by Aristotle<sup>1</sup>. Of course, Bourdieu's work is largely affected by Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. In fact, Bourdieu's most powerful contribution to social theory is arguably the fusion of conflict and structure theories that encourage an understanding of how the actor may operate within social structure while still maintaining some form of agency (Dumais, forthcoming). Today, the debate over whether Bourdieu's vision of the social world was too deterministic or whether individuals had enough "free agency" to control their own lives continues.

Bourdieu contends that individual actions are designed to illicit some desired result, be it on a stage or in everyday interaction. In terms of gender roles, an understanding of both structure and agency is necessary to discuss the lived experiences of women, especially in the workplace. While the function of work in society may be similar across genders, the experience of the workplace may differ greatly based on the cultural capital associated with each gender role.

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<sup>1</sup> This information is available through [anthrobase.com](http://anthrobase.com), a website that defines and cites anthropological theorists work. A full citation is available in the references section of this paper.



Bourdieu's use of habitus may ground this idea. Habitus can be understood as the set of experiences, dispositions and attitudes that drive and inform these individual courses of action. Bourdieu asserts that the habitus is "constituted in practice and always oriented towards practical function" (1974, 436). The habitus must be valued in terms of actual action, not abstract thought. It is the performance of the habitus that illuminates the socially constructed standards through which we have defined ourselves in terms of "woman" or "man." A reconceptualization of gender as a performance in these terms may allow sociologists to reframe both social theory and the public policies it affects. According to Bourdieu, our lived experience affects our thoughts, dispositions and therefore our actions and performances. Therefore it is our habitus, within a given structure, that determines agency.

First, gender should be understood as a performance based on societally constructed traits and behaviors, not a biologically determined predisposition tied to sex (Butler 1990). Rewards may vary for normative performance of successful gender roles, but those rewards are not equivalent for men performing masculinity and women performing femininity. Traits generally regarded as masculine (e.g. rationality, and aggression) are often commended in higher paying white collar jobs. Traits associated with femininity (e.g. passivity and submission to authority) are not. However, these traits are commended in low-wage, traditionally woman-dominated fields, such as secretarial or care work. Bourdieu's explanation of societal assignment of value to particular traits has strong implications here.

The performance of femininity in workplaces with the potential for greater economic capital does not command the same rewards for women as the performance of masculinity does for men. The rewards for a successful performance of femininity may be better understood in terms of social and cultural capital, rather than strictly economic rewards. This is not to say that

economic rewards do not exist for women performing femininity. Rather, I argue that the way in which women reap economic rewards in the workplace relies heavily on a convincing performance of femininity, which is not directly assigned an economic dollar amount, but is nonetheless necessary for job mobility and security.

Bourdieu examined social, economic and cultural forms of capital in most of his writings. Economic capital refers to more tangible concepts such as money and property rights (Dumais, forthcoming). Social and cultural capital are understood as immaterial objects accumulated through performance of the habitus. Bourdieu (1986, 103) explains social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” Cultural capital has similar characteristics but has different functions in the economy. Instead of a collection of goods gained from social networking, cultural capital exists in three states: embodied, objectified and institutionalized (Bourdieu 1986, 98). Bourdieu writes:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, that is in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, ect.), ...and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification that must be set apart because... it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital that it is presumed to guarantee.

The ordered cyclical relationship between the objectified and embodied states of cultural capital is especially powerful in the performance of gender. Following the acquisition of objectified cultural capital (i.e., make-up, hair care products and beauty services), embodied cultural capital can be seen through femininized behaviors which have been internalized as natural and presented in long standing dispositions for the individual. Likewise, when socially constructed gender dispositions are not followed, stigma and a denial of capital accumulation

may be attached to the dissenter. The institutionalized state references educational and academic achievements in Bourdieu's writings.

The inclusion of social and cultural capital is integral to the understanding of economics in a discussion about the accumulation of capital and the maintenance of social status. In this sense, everything and every action has a value, even if society has not given it a price. Bourdieu (1986) writes:

If economics deals only with practices that have narrowly economic interest as their principle and only with goods that are directly and immediately convertible into money...then the universe of bourgeois production and exchange becomes an exception and can see itself and present itself as a real of disinterestedness. As everyone knows, priceless things have their price and the extreme difficulty of converting certain practices and certain objects into money is only due to the fact that this conversion is refused in the very intention that produces them, which is nothing other than denial (*Verneinung*) of the economy.

Social scientists from various disciplines have regarded similar issues in terms of social and cultural capital. Louise Holt (2008) examines Bourdieu's concepts of both social and cultural capital on the performance of the habitus. While Holt's research concentrates on human geography, her concepts are widely applicable to gender in terms of social and cultural capital. Holt argues that the analytic value of social capital (in terms of human geography) could allow for new perspectives in other social sciences. Further, a new, expanded, understanding of Bourdieu's concept may allow social scientists to reevaluate the impact of both social and cultural capital on public policy and law. Holt explains that social capital (for Bourdieu) is highly interrelated to both cultural and economic capital. In terms of gender, sex-ascribed performance has rewarded active participants and punished dissenters. "Bourdieu highlights how the social is one key form of capital that serves to (re)produce socio-economic differentiation and intergenerational (dis)advantage, rather than operating as a 'general social good' (Holt 2008,

228).” In this sense, gender performance has operated as a commodity obtained through social performance and reproduced through generational acceptance of its normalcy. Prescribed gender roles then, do not act as a general good for society, but rather, function as an individual means to accumulate social and cultural capital.

The accumulation of social capital through social networks and the individual’s ability to access and utilize this form of capital for socio-economic rewards are paramount. Social capital is argued to produce and reproduce privilege in terms of economic and cultural rewards, but the individual can only gain social capital if she or he is able to navigate within the given social network. Those individuals who perform their sex assigned gender are more likely to reap the rewards denied to those who dissent from “normal” performance. Holt (2008, 232) writes:

There is evidently a recursive relationship between the development of social and cultural capital. Cultural capital (institutionalized, objectified and perhaps most importantly embodied facilitates the development of social capital. For instance, particular forms of institutional and objectified cultural capital may open up spaces within which particular contingent relationships can emerge (such as a golf club or the university). Further, embodied cultural capital inculcates within individuals the dispositions and manners that facilitate the types of appropriate sociability which allow the ‘alchemy of consecration’ [Bourdieu, 1986] to transform contingent relationships into relationships of mutual obligation.

Based on Holt’s explanation, the link between social and cultural capital can be directly tied to the performance of sex-identified gender roles in terms of service industry workers. Holt draws on Bourdieu’s concept of social capital to highlight “how social networks can reproduce unequal relations of capital in a socio-economic sense, and power in more general terms” (2008, 230). The production of social capital offers a new conceptualization for social scientists as an explanation of gender inequality, even if it has not yet been fully explored. Holt (2008, 230) writes:

Critiques that have illuminated such points have often emerged from feminist perspectives, highlighting gender as an axis of difference... At the same time, these discussions have generally not offered a new conceptualization of social capital that more substantially illuminates gendered differences... Although focusing attention upon the norms reproduced through sociability, feminist discussions have not as yet fully married social capital theory with normalization of power.

Physical appearance is only one aspect of naturalized gender roles. However, it may be the most easily manipulated manifestation of socially constructed norms through the acquisition of objectified and later embodied cultural capital. In terms of public policy, mandated appearance standards are arguably the most blatant form of institutionalized gender norms. Compliance with these norms grants power to the individual and denies social mobility for non-compliance.

To understand the performance of gender as a means of cultural capital accumulation is complicated. However, this examination provides possible insights into women's motivations for compliance with feminized gender norms even when direct economic rewards are not presented.

## **Review of Literature:**

### **Gender as Performance**

The basis of this study, that gender norms actively function in the workplace to assert or deny power, is formed first in an understanding that gender is not a biological attribute that naturally mandates how women and men behave in predestined ways. Instead, I explore this assumed naturalness as a means of stratifying women and men according to scripts that tie biological sex to socially constructed gender. One of the most powerful versions of this script is manifest in mandated appearance standards. These standards are then translated into temporary versions of power that can only be gained by compliance with narrow definitions. Though power

in the workplace is always more fluid than static, it is most illusive when gaining this power means the individual must use social performance to portray traits that are often assumed to be natural. This is especially present in workplaces that require certain appearance standards from employees.

I rely on Judith Butler's now classic examination of gender as performance to ground this assertion. Her explanation of "The Compulsory Order of Sex/Gender/Desire" illustrates and rejects the socially constructed split between sex and gender:

The distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor seemingly as fixed as sex ... gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also discursive/cultural means by which a "sexed nature" or "natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a political surface *on which* culture acts (Butler 1990, 8,9). *[emphasis in the original]*

Butler discusses gendered appearances and the political motivators tied to those appearances with the term "masquerade" borrowed from Lacan. Masquerade, as it relates to appearance, "may be understood as the performative production of a sexual ontology, an appearance that makes itself convincing as a "being" according to Butler (1990, 64). That is to say, the performance of "female" or "male" is essentialized as natural in order to support binary sexual identification.

What exactly the masquerade is masking has been a subject of controversy (Butler 1990, 64). Butler outlines Joan Rivere's (1990, 65) position that masquerade "transform(s) aggression and fear of reprisal into seduction and flirtation". "She (Rivere) suggests that "masquerade" is more than the characteristic of an "intermediate type," that it is essential to all "womanliness" (Butler 1990, 71). Butler continues, "Femininity becomes a mask that dominates/resolves a masculine identification (that) would produce a desire for a female object" (Butler 1990, 72).

Following Butler's thinking, I assert that the masquerade of femininity is especially powerful in lines of employment that directly require the woman-actor to perform in ways specifically designed to elicit sexual desire. Through masquerade, she is able to assert her "womanliness" and derive the powers associated with a convincing performance.

### **Performance to Gain Social Capital**

Morgan (1991) explains the social scripts that dictate the sex-specific appearance that is deemed appropriate for post-modern women. Morgan cites "voices" of individuals affected by pressures to conform to societal expectations of gendered beauty norms. While her research is not presented as theoretically based, her lens maintains a feminist and critical orientation. As described by Creswell, "Feminist perspectives view as problematic women's diverse situations and the institutions that frame those institutions. Critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class and gender" (Creswell 2008, 62).

Morgan uses the voices of individuals to support her assertion that notions of beauty are understood and embodied when individuals take actions (e.g., cosmetic surgery) to better navigate in society. "Women have traditionally regarded (and been taught to regard) their bodies, particularly if they are young, beautiful and fertile, *as a locus of power* to be enhanced through artifice, and now through artifact" (Morgan 1991, 153). Morgan cites Foucault's explanation of "Docile Bodies" (1975) as the possible political vehicle that drives women to modify their physical appearance, but does not rely solely on this theorist's work. Morgan incorporates facets from the work of Foucault, Butler and others to explore women's motivations despite the costs (both material and emotional) associated with maintenance of physical beauty standards without directly claiming one theoretical perspective.

Susan Bordo (1993) discusses the ways in which the body (specifically women's bodies) are perceived as a medium of culture. Cultural expectations of thinness are central to this assertion, as is the use of cosmetics. Bordo writes:

Viewed historically, the discipline and normalization of the female body-- perhaps the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and in different forms, across age, race, class and sexual orientation-- has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control (1993, 166).

Though my study may or may not find individuals who have undergone or aspire to undergo cosmetic surgery, the underlying concept that society demands specific appearances from women are analogous with Morgan's assertions. Though the extent of economic and physical (or psychological) cost may vary, the reality that these costs are sex-specific remains. Further, these costs, endured at any level, reinforce a naturalization of gender as synonymous with sex. Gender is a performance of appearance in the workplace, by any means necessary, whether those means include lipstick and hair color, or surgery. Morgan writes:

The beauty culture is coming to be dominated by a variety of experts, and consumers of youth and beauty are likely to find themselves dependent not only on cosmetic surgeons but on anesthetists, nurses, aestheticians, nail technicians, manicurists, dietitians, hairstylists, cosmetologists, masseuses, aroma therapists, trainers, pedicurists, electrolysists, pharmacologists, and dermatologists. All these experts provide services that can be bought; all these experts are perceived as administering and transforming the human body into an...ever more perfect object. (1991, 151).

Morgan goes further to emphasize the performance of gender through maintenance of appearance by explaining it as "compulsory." I agree with Morgan that "for virtually all women as women, success is defined in terms of interlocking patterns of compulsion: compulsory attractiveness, compulsory motherhood, and compulsory heterosexuality" (Morgan 1991, 151).



This pattern is especially clear when women are employed in positions that solidify the bonds between these compulsions, such as cocktail waitress. It is in such a position that women are expected to simultaneously embody these three facets of what it means to be a woman. Here, she is the caregiver, the sex-object and the youthful beauty society reveres. “Rather than aspiring to self-determined and woman-centered ideals of health and integrity, women’s attractiveness is defined as attractive-to-men...” (Morgan 1991, 151).

Morgan uses the example of Snow White, the popular Disney character to explain the power struggle between those who can, and do perform their sex-proscribed gender roles and those who cannot or choose not to. “The affirmation of her beauty brings with it privileged heterosexual affiliation, privileged access to forms of power unavailable to the plain, the ugly, the aged and the barren” (Morgan 1991, 153). I assert that this privilege is ever-present in our workplaces, especially those that follow the narrow gendered appearance scripts that mandate youth and beauty above skill and training. Of course, this manifestation of power has little sustainability due to its very nature. Snow White and the young women employed in a high-end nightclub will lose access to this power once they no longer fit the script. At which point they are left with few economically linear employment options.

### **Performances of Class and Gender in the Workplace**

Definitions of beauty and gender appropriate appearance have class connotations. Julie Bettie discusses the intersection of gender and class in *Women without Class: Girls, Race and Identity* (2003). Bettie’s book outlines historical conceptions of beauty as not only linked to race, but as an indicator of class. Bettie points to Joan Jacobs Brumberg’s 1997 study. In this study, Brumberg explains that “Victorian middle-class girls defined themselves through a series of contrasts to the labor and dirt associated with working-class girls” (Bettie 2003, 36). This

assertion is important for two reasons in my study. First, it signals a concrete historical understanding where women and girls define their social positions with masquerade as gender performance. Second, contemporarily, women may use gender masquerade as a signifier of class at work with appearances assumed to mirror their clientele. Further, employers, may rationalize that woman specific appearance requirements are a necessary means to solicit customers who have the economic dollars to consume their high priced services. In short, once masquerade becomes mandatory through verbal or written cues, it becomes part of the service provided. For example, the service of a cocktail waitress is not only about timely drink orders and professionalism. Her socially constructed gendered identity is part of the sale.

Women employed in the hospitality industry belong to different social classes. They may be students from middle class families working for a few extra spending dollars or young women capitalizing on a high tip venue. Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) comments about the reality that age is a determinate about where women can and will gain employment as waitresses. “Why do you-why do we-work here? ...Yes, she made twice as much as a waitress but that place closed down and at her age she’s never going to be hired at a high-tip place” (2001, 179).

Regardless of each waitress’s social class outside of the club, she is under the same requirements for a standard of appearance when she is at work. Her consumption patterns may mark a mimicked social class if she consumes goods that cost a larger percentage of her income than the incomes of women actually belonging to that class. Bettie discusses class and consumption patterns by examining symbolic boundaries between middle and working class women marked by their shopping and buying patterns (Bettie 2003, 42). Cultural Marxism may examine one’s experience of class “in terms of work identity and income but also in terms of... consumption practices” (Bettie 2003, 42). Bettie explains:

...the production of women's experience in these "non-work" sites and women's relationship to production and consumption have historically differed from men's and thus must be examined in order to give an account of the gender-specific experience of class identity and expression of class culture...(2003, 42).

Classed production and consumption of gendered identity has spilled into the lived experiences of women as waitresses. Now it is not only a signifier of cultural capital but a way of projecting an overall appearance of belonging to the same class as the customers they are serving. She consumes the same goods and often the same services as her customers, just at a differently proportioned economic cost. By using the same consumption practices as her customers, she commits a sort of mimicry of class. In this way, consumption is not peripheral but central to her identity achieved through her performance of class and gender. Bettie explains that a narrow examination of class identity through masculinized analysis largely ignores "the transitional objects of women's class identity or mobility, 'the material stepping stones of our escape: clothes, shoes, makeup'" (2003, 43).

Steinhauer (2008) outlines consumption patterns as more fluid today and as less indicative of actual class status, but not less indicative of a *perception* of class. Class and gender masquerade is achieved then through consumption of goods and services once reserved for "legitimate" class members. Steinhauer quotes Dalton Conley, an author and sociologist at New York University, "Whether or not someone has a flat-screen TV is going to tell you less than if you look at the services they use, where they live, and the control they have over other people's labor, those who are serving them" (2008, 136). If we take Conley's assessment as accurate, the picture of mandated consumption for those women working in the hospitality industry becomes even more complicated. To create an illusion of class consistency between staff and customer, management may require employees to maintain a standard of appearance. Historically there has

been a visible separation, but unifying style between customer and employee in the hospitality industry (i.e., most fine dining waiters are required to wear tuxedos). Employees were (and sometimes still are) clearly members of a different class, a class that could not afford the services they themselves were providing. In the nightclub, the uniforms of youth and beauty are now standard. Specifically for women, regulations on appearance go much further than a standard uniform requirement. Makeup, hair products, spa services, gym memberships, dietary regulations and aides, such as weight loss supplements are all used to meet appearance requirements at a cost that is disproportionately gendered simply because men are not expected to partake in these services and goods with the same frequency as women.

Marxists largely explain consumption as non-productive work, historically dominated by women (Bettie 2003, 42). In the case of waitresses and bartenders, consumption is necessary in order to participate in productive work. In some ways this negates the traditional line of thought that asserts that participation in “consumer girl culture” is not a site of resistance but a manifestation of false consciousness (Bettie 2003, 42). Consumption can be reevaluated as mandatory on this stage; it is a way to get and keep a job.

In fact, hair color and cosmetic use has been reported to affect the perception of a female’s ability in professional positions. Kyle and Mahler’s 1996 study found that women applicants who were depicted as brunette and without makeup were rated as more capable and assigned higher salaries. This study cites others, stating that most often perceptions of blonde, brunette and red haired women embody cultural stereotypes (e.g., blondes are less intelligent, brunettes are more studious, red haired women are more temperamental). “In at least one study, blondes were rated as more feminine, and femininity may be associated with negative personnel-related decisions” (1996, 449). Kyle and Mahler’s hypothesis about the use of cosmetics

followed the same line of thought: the less makeup a woman wears, the less feminized and (therefore) more capable she is assumed to be for a professional position. Kyle and Mahler's findings support their hypothesis. This study provides a framework to question assumptions about gender specific appearance standards. While Kyle and Mahler's study found one set of stereotypes to be true, the exact reverse may be found if the same study was conducted about appearance standards for women employed in positions that require femininity.

Patricia Yancey Martin (2003) describes three stories of gender practice in the work place. Two stories are from a telecommunication company and one from an engineering company. While the mandated appearance requirements may differ between a nightclub and a more "professional" environment like the settings Martin describes, a gendered power structure remains. Martin relies heavily on theories of social constructionism in institutional settings. Throughout the article, she calls for a constructionist understanding of gendered action and reaction. Gender functions in the workplace as a set of rules that govern behavior between men and women. Martin uses the term "gendering" to explain this process:

More than a decade ago, social science and humanities scholars started conceptualizing gender as a dynamic process, as practice, as what people say and do, in addition to such static properties as an identity, social status and what is learned via socialization... (Martin 2003).

Feminist theorists extend this understanding of gender as a performance by "questioning claims that gender is irrelevant in rational-technical-legal bureaucracies that are allegedly governed by ends-means considerations..." (Martin 2003, 343). Specifically, Martin's article furthers the argument that the performance of gender norms function in the workplace by reifying of the 'naturalness' of women's and men's appropriate workplace appearance.

While Martin does not specifically tackle appearance standards in her article, two of her central arguments speak to the construction of gender in terms of workplace behavior. "...the gendering practices produced through interaction impair women workers' identities and confidence, and... that attention to the practicing of gender will produce insights into how inequalities are produced in the workplace" (Martin 2003, 343). Understanding the performance of, or "doing gender," as Martin explains is difficult to capture for several reasons. Actions are hard to capture and explain with words as they happen fast and have the undeniable element of emotion. "One can describe...actions... but when all is "said and done," words are pale reflections of the literal "saying and doing" (Martin 2003, 344). However, in order to uncloak the naturalness of gender, we must explore its practice. Like Martin, the goal of my research is to elucidate harmful workplace practices by "bringing to the light of day the multifaceted and subtle practicing of gender, the cloak of gender's naturalness, essentialism, and inevitability" (Martin 2003, 344).

According to Martin, a constructionist understanding of gender in the workplace may encourage a more nuanced understanding of how corporations are able to influence the laws that U.S. Congress considers and enacts (Martin 2003, 343). Martin takes the theory of social construction and molds it to understand specific gender practices in the workplace. Though she does not specifically change the theory of constructionism, she does reevaluate its presence in the workplace with a specific focus on gender. With a more nuanced understanding of the construction of gender, policy makers may expand current implications about how assumed natural behaviors affect women and men at work.

## **Performance, Discrimination Laws and Policies**

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employer discrimination against any individual based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Further, employment practices should not place unfair burden on an individual based on any of these characteristics. However, in at least one case brought before a state supreme court, the definition of what constitutes an unfair burden has been questioned.

In “Employee Appearance Policies and Title VII: New Challenges for Sex Differentiated Standards,” Robert Robinson, Geralyn McClure Franklin, Karen Epermanis, Nicole Forbes Stowell, explains the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal’s ruling in *Jespersen v. Harrah’s Operating Company, Inc.* “This article examines federal court rulings that may limit an employer’s ability to impose organizational appearance policies/dress codes (2007, 287).” The focus of this article is on allegations that policies based on sex-specific guidelines are not equally imposed on both men and women. The ruling in the *Jespersen* case “suggests that federal courts may still permit employers to set standards for their employees, even if those standards differ for male and female employees...” (2007). Prior to 2000, Harrah’s only encouraged female employees to wear makeup, but after instituting the “Personal Best Image Policy,” strict appearance regulations went into place. When *Jespersen* did not comply, she was offered the opportunity to apply for a position that did not require contact with customers as the “Image Policy” was only enforced upon those employees whose positions required direct contact with customers. After thirty days of non-compliance with the policy and failure to apply for a different position, *Jespersen* was terminated. *Jespersen* filed a sex-discrimination suit with approval from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on the basis that the sex-specific requirements were unequal for men and women, and therefore in violation of Title VII. Both local and appellate courts

determined that no unequal burden had been placed on women via the policy, and therefore no violation of Title VII had occurred. Robinson, et al explains:

In Jespersen, Harrah's Personal Best policy clearly conformed to the standards for judicial analysis established by the unequal burden test. However, the complaining party argued that a 1989 Supreme Court decision, *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, held that an employer may not force his or her employees to conform to gender-based sex stereotypes as a condition of employment (2007).

The Harvard Law Review also published findings on the *Jespersen v. Harrah's Operating Company, Inc.* case:

Gender inequality continues to permeate American culture, affecting women both socially and economically. In their personal lives, many women experience insecurity about their appearance on a daily basis. In the workplace, women with all levels of educational experience earn less than their male counterparts. Gender inequality is exacerbated when the personal effects of the narrow standard of beauty are combined with the economic barriers facing women. ...the Ninth Circuit held that a female bartender terminated for refusing to wear makeup did not establish a *prima facie* case of gender discrimination under Title VII. Future plaintiffs should respond by presenting evidence of economic, physical and psychological harms that prove that a requirement that women wear makeup imposes an unequal burden based on gender (2006).

In order to dismantle recurrent themes of gender discrimination in the service industry, we must first address the reality that socially constructed norms have become the basis for employment policy. Then we can discuss the effects that such policies have on the attainment and retention of jobs for women. Additionally, if employer policies based on overt gender discrimination are legal, women may never hope to tackle coercive ploys to abide by narrow definitions of sex-appropriate behavior and appearance.



## **Methods:**

My research strategy is based in the merits of ethnography, which permits the researcher to become personally involved in the lived experiences and realities of the participants (Creswell 2008, 13). The use of ethnography allowed me to develop a theory specifically concerning how women understand, use and internalize specific gender roles in the hospitality industry (Creswell 1998, 37-39) . The ethnographic design of this study enabled me to study the culture-sharing group of women who have been or are currently employed in direct customer service positions. I analyzed four data sets for this paper, including an exploratory focus group that provided insight into the population, eleven interviews, six non-participant observations with accompanying field notes, and field notes based on personal observations.

This study was designed following an exploratory focus group where several women discussed their experiences while employed in the hospitality industry. The women included in this group are now regarded as initial key informants. The data collected during this focus group were used both to develop questions that are included in the interview guide, as well as to enhance an understanding of definitions and the context important to this group. This data set includes notes that led to preliminary pattern matching.

The second set of data included twelve interviews with women who either are currently, or were, employed in any of three direct customer service positions in the hospitality industry including the specific occupations outlined below. Each of these occupations fall under category 3 in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, published by the U.S. Department of Labor. These occupations are specifically explained under subheading 31, Food and Beverage Preparation and Service Occupations:

This division includes occupations concerned with preparing food and beverages and serving them to patrons of such establishments as hotels, clubs, restaurants, and cocktail lounges.

The participants occupational experience are currently, or were formerly, in one of the following occupations at minimum. Each definition following the occupational title is available at <http://www.oalj.dol.gov/PUBLIC/DOT/REFERENCES/DOT03A.HTM>. Numbers 310, 311 and 312 give general descriptions of these occupations, while the sub numbers listed outline specific jobs.

Additional sub-descriptions are provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, but for the purposes of this study, only women whose occupations are categorized below were included as interview participants (i.e., participants will not include cafeteria or hotel staff). Though none of the respondents described working as a hostess, the role of the hostess was discussed by several respondents.

It is important to note here that socio-economic class appears, even if implicitly, in these definitions. Specifically, the duties outlined for formal and informal waiter/waitress require a variety of capacities for the accumulation of cultural and social capital in order to perform the responsibilities outlined below.

### **310 HOSTS/HOSTESSES AND STEWARDS/STEWARDESSES, FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE, EXCEPT SHIP STEWARDS/STEWARDESSES**

This group includes occupations concerned with greeting and seating customers of establishment; and supervising activities of waiters/waitresses, dining room attendants, storeroom workers, and kitchen and pantry workers, except those actually engaged in food preparation.

#### **310.137-010 HOST/HOUSTESS, RESTAURANT (hotel & rest.) alternate titles: dining-room manager; waiter/waitress, head**

Supervises and coordinates activities of dining room personnel to provide fast and courteous service to patrons: Schedules dining reservations and arranges parties or special services for diners.

Greets guests, escorts them to tables, and provides menus. Adjusts complaints of patrons. Assigns work tasks and coordinates activities of dining room personnel to ensure prompt and courteous service to patrons. Inspects dining room serving stations for neatness and cleanliness, and requisitions table linens and other dining room supplies for tables and serving stations. May interview, hire, and discharge dining room personnel. May train dining room employees. May schedule work hours and keep time records of dining room workers. May assist in planning menus. May prepare beverages and expedite food orders. May total receipts, at end of shift, to verify sales and clear cash register. May collect payment from customers [CASHIER (clerical) II 211.462-010].

*GOE: 09.01.03 STRENGTH: L GED: R4 M3 L4 SVP: 6 DLU: 80*

### **311 WAITERS/WAITRESSES, AND RELATED FOOD SERVICE OCCUPATIONS**

This group includes occupations concerned with setting places at dining tables or counters, taking orders for and serving food and drink, answering inquiries relative to items on the menu, and otherwise attending to the wishes of customers.

#### **311.477-018 WAITER/WAITRESS, BAR (hotel & rest.) alternate titles: waiter/waitress, cocktail lounge**

Serves beverages to patrons seated at tables in bar or cocktail lounge. Computes bill and accepts payment. May take orders for and serve light meals and hors d'oeuvres. May request identification from customers when legal age is questioned. When working in establishment serving only beer and wine, is designated Waiter/Waitress, Tavern (hotel & rest.).

*GOE: 09.04.01 STRENGTH: L GED: R3 M2 L2 SVP: 3 DLU: 79*

#### **311.477-026 WAITER/WAITRESS, FORMAL (hotel & rest.) alternate titles: server**

Serves meals to patrons according to established rules of etiquette, working in formal setting: Presents menu to diner, suggesting dinner courses, appropriate wines, and answering questions regarding food preparation. Writes order on check or memorizes it. Relays order to kitchen and serves courses from kitchen and service bars. Garnishes and decorates dishes preparatory to serving. Serves patrons from chafing dish at table. Observes diners to respond to any additional requests and to determine when meal has been completed. Totals bill and accepts payment or refers patron to CASHIER (clerical) II 211.462-010. May carve meats, bone fish and fowl, and prepare flaming dishes and desserts at

patron's table. May be designated Waiter/Waitress, Banquet (hotel & rest.) when serving at banquets.

*GOE: 09.04.01 STRENGTH: L GED: R3 M2 L2 SVP: 4 DLU: 80*

**311.477-030 WAITER/WAITRESS, INFORMAL (hotel & rest.) alternate titles: server**

Serves food to patrons at counters and tables of coffeeshops, lunchrooms, and other dining establishments where food service is informal: Presents menu, answers questions, and makes suggestions regarding food and service. Writes order on check or memorizes it. Relays order to kitchen and serves courses from kitchen and service bars. Observes guests to respond to additional requests and to determine when meal has been completed. Totals bill and accepts payment or refers patron to CASHIER (clerical) II 211.462-010. May ladle soup, toss salads, portion pies and desserts, brew coffee, and perform other services as determined by establishment's size and practices. May clear and reset counters or tables at conclusion of each course [DINING ROOM ATTENDANT (hotel & rest.) 311.677-018].

*GOE: 09.04.01 STRENGTH: L GED: R3 M2 L2 SVP: 3 DLU: 80*

**312 BARTENDERS**

This group includes occupations concerned with mixing and dispensing alcoholic drinks.

**312.474-010 BARTENDER (hotel & rest.) alternate titles: bar attendant; barkeeper**

Mixes and serves alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks to patrons of bar, following standard recipes: Mixes ingredients, such as liquor, soda, water, sugar, and bitters, to prepare cocktails and other drinks. Serves wine and draught or bottled beer. Collects money for drinks served. Orders or requisitions liquors and supplies. Arranges bottles and glasses to make attractive display. May slice and pit fruit for garnishing drinks. May prepare appetizers, such as pickles, cheese, and cold meats. May tend service bar and be designated Service Bartender (hotel & rest.).

*GOE: 09.04.01 STRENGTH: L GED: R3 M2 L3 SVP: 3 DLU: 80*

**312.687-010 BARTENDER HELPER (hotel & rest.) alternate titles: bar porter; bar runner<sup>2</sup>**

Cleans bar and equipment, and replenishes bar supplies, such as liquor, fruit, ice, and dishes: Stocks refrigerating units with wines

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<sup>2</sup> This position is referred to as "barback" by participants.

and bottled beer. Replaces empty beer kegs with full ones. Slices and pits fruit used to garnish drinks. Washes glasses, bar, and equipment, and polishes bar fixtures. Mops floors. Removes empty bottles and trash. May mix and prepare flavors for mixed drinks.  
*GOE: 05.12.18 STRENGTH: M GED: R2 M1 L1 SVP: 2 DLU: 77*

Each of these occupations require direct customer service interaction which may affect the appearance and gender role requirements imposed on the individual. As is noted in the early discussion of *Jespersen v. Harrah's Operating Company*, corporations may base employee manuals and policies on the amount of direct face time employees spend with customers. In non-corporate entities, these rules may be verbal or written and more difficult to enforce, but present nonetheless.

Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling technique. Interviewees ranged in age from 22 to 38 at the time of the interview. The median age was 25 years of age. All interviewees disclosed their age at the time of interview. The interviews were conducted either at a local coffee shop, restaurant or at the participant's home. Each interview followed a guide of ten open-ended questions. The interview lasted between forty minutes to one and a half hours, depending on participant response time. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. After the transcription was checked for accuracy, each recording was deleted as an effort to ensure confidentiality.

The third data set includes observations of locations suggested by interview participants. "Observing...is a skill that requires management of issues such as potential deception of the people being interviewed, impression management, and the potential marginality of the researcher in a strange setting" (Creswell 1998, 125). I followed the steps for observation that Creswell outlines in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*.

Observations occurred in three bars and one restaurant. The following table outlines those locations.

*Table 1*

Type of Location	Length of Observation (in hours)	Date(s) of Observation
Working class, predominately white customer base	10 (2 hours each)	3/20/2009; 3/23/2009; 3/27/2009; 4/01/2009; 4/17/2009.
Nationally owned chain restaurant; moderate pricing	2 hours	4/22/2009.
High-end cocktail lounge	4 hours	4/8/2009; 4/29/2009.

At each site, I observed women who were employed in occupations outlined by the U.S. Department of Labor as they are listed in the appendix. My observations also described the location itself, including socio-economic class implications (e.g., high-end nightclubs, working class bars or pubs, or locally owned middle class restaurants). The majority of observations were conducted in working class bars because the majority of participants mentioned working in these bars at least once. Conversations and behaviors of the participants that related to the maintenance of socially constructed gender specific appearance norms were noted. I noted conversations relating to topics such as weight, clothing preferences, cosmetic use, and the use of appearance enhancing services, such as hair coloring, manicures and pedicures and artificial tanning. Behaviors that signified gender norms included actions such as primping, make-up application throughout the shift, and the use of legal dietary aides, such as diet pills. I also recorded gender specific topics of conversation and behaviors between female employees and customers or management. These included, but were not limited to care-work and sexually explicit innuendos.

These observations and the accompanying field notes comprised my third source of data. Each of the six observations lasted approximately two hours. The observations occurred within a two-month time frame. I detailed my observations with extensive explanations in the form of field notes. These notes were based on short-hand notes I was able to take during the observation that I expanded within two hours after I left the location.

The fourth data source was comprised of personal self reflections. My notes also included hunches and feelings about events and behaviors similar to those described in the observation portion of the study. Just as importantly, my field notes included rich descriptions of the settings as they existed and possibly changed throughout each observation.

Each interviewee, as well as each focus group member, are considered as key informants. (Key informants also include women who were formerly employed in high-end nightclubs or those who currently work at clubs, bars or restaurants.) The informants identities have been strictly protected. I assigned pseudonyms to each informant for the purposes of anonymity. Each informant was informed that she would have access to the data I collected both during the observation portion of the study and to her interview transcript when the study was completed. The purpose of the interviews was to examine the actual economic and emotional cost each woman bore in order to fulfill the sex-normed gender appearance standards and expected behaviors that is required by her place of employment. In addition, a portion of the interview was designed to examine each woman's internalization of her sex-assigned gender.

### **Role of the Researcher:**

As a former bartender and cocktail waitress I possess knowledge of the interworkings of the service industry. I have worked in every type of location described by participants including nightclubs, local working class bars, high end cocktail lounges and restaurants. I began working

in the industry as a hostess at age 16. I began bartending at 18 and continued through my undergraduate and graduate training. I have witnessed many events similar to those described by the participants of this study. However, during the interviews and the focus group, I did not interject my own thoughts nor did I explain that I had personal experience in the area unless directly asked. The findings in this study are reflective of participants' meanings, not my own, nor what "writers express in the literature" (Creswell, 2009, 175). Participants were chosen through a snowball sampling technique. Their anonymity was strictly protected.

**Setting:**

The location of each observation was determined by the interview participant's suggestion. These suggestions included working class, locally owned bars, restaurants and high-end night clubs as well as large chain dance clubs.

**Participant Demographics:**

Ten women participated in interviews. All of the women were white and between the ages of 22 and 38 at the time of their interview. Five women were under 30 years old and five were over. All participants had at least some college education. Four were still in college or graduate school. Three had already earned a bachelor's degree. Eight women answered "female, woman, or girl" when asked about their gender. One called herself male, and one responded that she identified with both male and female genders. Only one respondent had a child, who was still in infancy. Respondent's socio-economic class status was assumed based on interviewee's responses, such as parent's occupation, if the respondent offered this information in the interview. Nine women were upper-middle or middle class. One was working class.



**Ethical Considerations:**

Anonymity of all participants, in either observations or interviews was ensured. This included the employees, management and establishment owners. The actual name of the establishment is not included in findings, nor are the actual names of any of the participants. Instead, I coded data with pseudonyms. These pseudonyms were recorded in separate documents accessible only to me. Any identifying characteristics of any participants or referenced locations were eliminated from the findings.

Likewise, the data I collected during the interviews was strictly confidential. I distributed an informed consent form to all interviewees. This form outlined my role as the researcher and the purpose of the study. This purpose was clearly stated as an exploratory study to understand each interviewees experience in their workplace.

In my personal log, I recorded hunches and feelings. These notes reflected only my interpretation of events, and were not used to assess any reality besides my own.

**Analysis:**

To analyze the three sets of data, I described, analyzed and finally interpreted transcribed interviews of the women who participated as well as the observations of local bars and restaurants. Observation data is included to highlight the findings discussed as mentioned by interviewees. The description of the interviews followed a “day in the life” format, as the data collected in the interviews came from the stories and lived experiences of each interviewee. Likewise, the description in my personal log also followed a chronological frame work. Both the interviews and my personal log included critical events, but descriptions were not built around these events alone.

To analyze patterns in the observations, I coded for the occurrence of specific themes and events. In effect, I searched for patterns of language and action both from and directed towards participants by management and patrons. To analyze the patterns in interviews, I looked for consistencies (or inconsistencies) in regard to how each participant viewed appearance standards and other gendered behaviors at her workplace. This included coding for emotional and economic costs and rewards, as well as reprimands for compliance or non-compliance with her employer's standards.

My interpretation of each data set relies on the recognized patterns in order to present broad themes. From these themes, I theorized about the existence of mandated gender specific appearance standards and behaviors in the service or hospitality industry. The overall interpretation of the study relied on interweaving all three data sets to assess common themes.

### **Discussion:**

This section outlines and addresses the themes that emerged from both observations and interviews. Each of the themes explores how habitus and gender are linked in the service industry. Further, the necessity of a convincing gender performance by female employees is examined. Five major themes emerged: Naturalizing gender in the workplace, perception of attractiveness, drug and alcohol use, sexuality and symbolic violence. While each of these themes presents a complex component of the construction of habitus, each theme is connected to the others and helps to explain how women appear to understand themselves and their roles in the workplace.

### **Naturalizing Gendered Work Roles:**

Several prominent themes emerged from participants regarding what they considered natural or biological attributes of fellow coworkers, both male and female, and themselves. More

interestingly, however, was how each participant highlighted gender specific expectations, and the repercussions that women face when they did not live up to these expectations as service industry employees. Participants discussed age and attractiveness as influential components of women's experience in the workplace, often qualifying those experiences as unspoken, but widely understood factors that affected whether women were viewed as good at their jobs. Women discussed competition between women, while simultaneously highlighting the possibility for female solidarity in small groups. Most participants spoke of how their perceived gender was highly influential in the specific jobs they were able to obtain (i.e., participants commented that some bars only hire younger, feminine, attractive women).

***“I’m just not strong enough”: Job titles and gender discrimination***

When participants described current or former job descriptions, a common thread appeared. Women were employed as bartenders with a male support staff, cocktail waitresses, hostesses, and food waitresses, but very rarely were employed as self-sufficient bartenders, barbacks or fine dining waiters. The justifications given for these gendered differences were explained as related to either physical ability to complete job related tasks, or that men in those positions provide a safer work environment for female employees. Anna\*<sup>3</sup> explained her first experience working in a family owned restaurant where bartenders were expected to perform all bar duties (e.g. carrying buckets of ice, restocking beer coolers, changing kegs of beer):

They never came out and actually said it, but they didn't have any female bartenders. Actually, now that I think about it, them one time saying they would have to make their batches of margarita mix for the frozen margaritas upstairs, and it was like a ten or fifteen gallon thing they would make of them, so they said something about 'I couldn't carry them down the stairs' which they were right about. I was like, "you're right, I can't. I wouldn't even try it...cause I like my back." So I think that was part of it.

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<sup>3\*</sup> Asterisks are used to denote the use of a pseudonym. All participants, locations and identifying characteristics of coworkers have been changed to protect anonymity.

Anna left this restaurant shortly after this incident when the opportunity to bartend at another bar, with limited barbacking support, was offered through a friend. When Cayla\*, a 22 year-old waitress working at a busy mid-range restaurant discussed her potential to improve her job performance, she sited physicality as the first and most important hindrance:

I mean, you might have to be a little more like a man to be a really really awesome server, because, like me, I cant carry a tray like this, (*demonstrates over her head*), like I have to rest it on my shoulder. I'm really small and not very strong at all, so I could be... I think there is going to be a point where I'm as good as I'm going to get because I'm not going to be a man who is strong enough to carry a tray here and then like five drinks in this hand. Like I can only carry 2 drinks. Like some people can hold 3 or 4 drinks at one time and I have small hands so... I think, like I said, its going to get to a point where I can't get any better unless I was a man.

Analysis of field notes shows that these gendered roles were consistent across locations. In restaurants, women and men worked as servers. In nightclubs, both sexes worked as bartenders, but only women worked as cocktail waitresses. In bars, women worked as bartenders and servers, but none of the locations observed currently employed a female barback.

Several women also discussed physicality as the reason they were able to get jobs. Danielle\* states, "And a lot of times, its hard for male bartenders to get a job, unless you're working somewhere like Screaming Turtle\* or the Aquarium\* at night where they have to break up fights or lift kegs or whatever." In other instances, jobs are assumed to be better suited to women or girls because of the physical requirements. Ella\*, a 22 year old restaurant waitress explains that in her first job working in an ice cream parlor, which she said formed her opinions about work roles:

It was great. It was so much fun. I used to make a lot of money, probably too much money for a 16 year old to be making on a

Friday night, you know, and it was all girls. They didn't hire boys. They said it was because ice cream making is a very delicate task. I always just found it funny. 'Cause you can kind of understand what they mean, and it is a little sexist, but I've seen Lou come in and try to make an ice cream cone, and he just wasn't very good at it. But, it is kind of interesting that it is a feminine task. Scooping ice cream is very feminine. Scooping ice cream and sweeping the floor.

When women do not embody traditional, physical, female gender roles, they face a different workplace experience. Blaire\*, a slender, traditionally feminine-looking woman explains that she was offered a barbacking job at a busy music venue only because the business was desperate for people to work following Hurricane Katrina. Of the ten participants interviewed, Blaire was the only one who mentioned working as a barback. She explained the hiring experience:

He said, "All we have opening right now is as a barback." I was like, "I'll do it." I'd been gutting houses. I was desperate for money. I was like, "Try me." And I totally put it as a challenge. And I could see like the wheels turning in his head. "If I say no, and she's a girl, I could get in trouble. Why don't we just try her and she's not going to work out. And then it won't be a big deal." Like I can tell, he hesitated. And, he was like "I'll have someone call you." And so his manager, Mitch, called me like 3 or 4 days later and he was doing all he could to stop from laughing. Like I could tell in his voice, and I didn't even know him that he was like, "Um, hey, James told me to call you cause you're going to be a barback? Like whatever, we have to put you on the schedule." He totally didn't believe me.

As Blaire continued to describe her experience working as a barback, she discussed her decision to dress in male clothing such as a man's tank top, long denim shorts and a backwards baseball cap. She said this decision was very much a conscious one designed to accomplish two things: functionality and to avoid getting hit on by male customers. Blaire did not believe she was the only woman who has ever barbacked, but she does think it is unusual. She says, "...as much as the rest of Uptown has said I was the first female barback, I don't believe it. Thirty years

ago, some big butch woman was a barback, I think.” Blaire discussed her slender athletic build and feminine features as sometimes problematic when she referenced only one of a barback’s duties: breaking up fights; she did not believe she was unable to perform the necessary job functions to be a successful barback, despite her slender build.

Hannah\* a former professional body-builder and current bartender confirmed the assumption of the necessity for physical strength to perform some bar-related duties. She said, “I was the only female who was ever expected to be there early. I guess I realized why, but it was kind of offensive. Cause I could carry as much as the guys. It just didn’t enter their mind to have them come in early. I took it kind of offensive, but then, it was kind of like getting paid to work out, so whatever and then you’re more in with the guys too.”

***“Its just always been that way”: Tradition based gender discrimination***

Another way that job segregation was legitimized was through comments on tradition. In fine dining restaurants, waiters often net middle to upper-middle-class income, and are traditionally men. Anna\* explained her experience working in a well known downtown restaurant, “From my understanding, the customers didn’t want women either. They wanted male waiters. Because they’d always had them.” After three years as a bartender in the restaurant, despite the fact that she was eligible and drawing benefits on top of her pay, Anna left. “They don’t treat their bartenders well. They don’t make money there. The place is geared toward the waiters making money there and not the bartenders. And so, until they are willing to change that, they are always going to have a turn over of bartenders,” she said. Hannah also discussed the impact of working at one bar for an extended period of time, “...well, now I’ve been there longer, and they take me more serious. But they definitely side with the guys...they have a tendency to take the men more seriously. I think it takes longer to prove yourself. Thats for sure.”

*“Its safer with a man around”*: Assumptions and realities of protection

Most participants highlighted the need for a male presence in the workplace because they felt safer both during and after work. In New Orleans, bartenders’ and cocktail waitresses’ shifts often end at four or five in the morning because state liquor laws do not prohibit bars from serving past any specific hour. In most other states, establishments are only allowed to sell alcohol between specific hours. Blaire’s first experience working in the industry was not in New Orleans. She said:

I guess there are some bars, many bars where you, female bartenders always have a guy there. And its something that obviously didn’t exist at my first job, but I think specifically exists, like is so important in New Orleans and its a gendered scheduling and hiring procedure that I think is really important. That I think absolutely should be in place. That especially in the evenings when it starts getting dark, which every shift, ends up getting dark, or starts dark and ends up getting darker. Um a door guy, a barback, another bartender, um, or like if the manger is in the office, whatever. Like some male presence so that we don’t have to cross the bar. Without that around, we are significantly more vulnerable.

Safety concerns existed during the shift at bars as well, where specific staff members are expected to break up fights between patrons. These staff members are almost always men, regardless of whether they are bartenders, barbacks or security guards. Even when participants complained of job discrimination, they legitimized the need for a male presence by claiming that without it they would not feel safe working or leaving work at the end of their shift. When participants discussed this concern, they rarely mentioned other women as the threatening source. When women were mentioned, it was because the participant believed she might have to break up a fight between female customers, not because a female customer might threaten her directly. In some circumstances, participants’ fear for their own safety was legitimized. Hannah discussed her experience bartending in a small downtown bar following Hurricane Katrina:

Because it was all men in town and we have a bar in the Quarter and we hardly had anybody back ...it<sup>4</sup> was scary down there because they had a kitchen with these two little foreign guys and besides them I was by myself, so people, all men, mostly from out of state, storm chasers and it was pretty scary because they turned really creepy after ten o'clock. The curfew was at midnight. It was pretty uncomfortable. I mean, you are one of the few places open in a place where there is still power out all over the city and you're in a bar that, yeah, there is a camera, but its you by yourself. It's a big bar with who knows, these people down here they could do anything they wanted. I carried. They didn't know that but I took a .45 to work with me every night because they would get pretty... coming on to you but in an aggressive manner where it creeped you out. We didn't have anybody. No security. And then walking to your car at night you had to be scared because it was like a ghost town. And its post curfew and they could be doing anything they wanted, really. You just did not feel safe. ...

Even when special circumstances (e.g., the aftermath of a disaster) did not exist, women questioned their level of safety. And even with a prominent male presence in the bar or restaurant, safety was not guaranteed. "I've been followed home several times. ...they were just somebody who started following me along the way. But I think, at that hour, single female. They assume you're drunk, that you're not going to notice. And I guess thats their MO" said Hannah. In every location I observed, men were also present to close the establishment.

### ***Impacts of Job Segregation***

According to the participants of this study, sex segregation existed in nearly every type of bar, restaurant and nightclub regardless of the employer's motivation for sex-based job segregation. One important impact of this sex-segregation is monetary, where women make less than men based on job descriptions that they could not obtain simply because they were women. Danielle explained the jobs at the high end cocktail lounge where she was employed for nearly a year:

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<sup>4</sup> example of legitimate safety issue



They (*the men at the bar*<sup>5</sup>) get paid a little bit more an hour and it because they are called “managers.” No female managers. There never was one. They (the managers) have a key to lock up and the alarm code. At the end of the night... I heard someone say they got paid more for the carrying the cases but they bring those cases inside and guess who is stocking? We are. Guess who is doing all of the cleaning? We are. Guess who is counting down video poker and the drawer? We are. And then we have a door guy on the weekends who takes the trash out, so what? He’s taking one or 2 bags of trash at the end of the night? And just has a key to lock up?

While safety issues are legitimized (and sometimes legitimate) as remedied by a male presence, and tradition-based discrimination may be explained as a necessity for high end restaurants to succeed, assumptions of physical ability are clearly based on perceived gender norms. Women who presented the more masculinized gender role had a different work experience than those who presented the more traditionally feminine version. For example, Hannah explained that during the time she was body building, she was expected to close her bar alone, or with two male coworkers who provided little in the way of protection as they were slender, small men.

### ***Perceptions and Expectations of Female Co-workers***

Another important discussion about women’s perceptions of each other and their male co-workers engendered four themes. None of these themes are biologically attributed to any specific sex, and yet are understood by participants as natural, or at least accepted as a constant in the workplace. Participants discussed the role that attractive women fill, expectations of other female workers, social solidarity and finally gossip or “cattiness.” Each of these sub-themes were constant across the population of participants, regardless of their perception of their own attractiveness or the type of venue in which they were employed.

### ***The Role of the Pretty Girl***

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<sup>5</sup> Danielle\* did not explicitly say the phrase “men at the bar.” This explanation was implied by the preceding question and answer.

The participants in this study discussed the role that attractive women play in the industry both in reference to themselves and to the other women they had worked with. This section of the paper discusses only the latter: how other women may be hired and treated based on their physical appearances. Often participants highlighted what they believed to be common hiring and promotion practices as well as the function of those practices. Anna said:

I've seen a lot of places where they'll have the really cute girl in front bartending that doesn't really know how to bartend and then they'll have the guy behind her that *does* know how to bartend kind of pick up her slack and she's supposed to sit there and look pretty just to make the extra money. I think she's doing exactly what they wanted her to do. And talk to the men and show just enough cleavage that they will throw more money at her.

Anna continues by explaining that the women she is referring to are hired exclusively for their appearance, not for their skill or intelligence. Anna said, "I've *heard* bartenders say that: 'Yeah, we hired her because she's cute. I just pick up the slack and we make more money that way.' And the girl is a dumb as a door. I mean an idiot." Danielle and Felicity shared Anna's view, but also commented that some skill is necessary to keep a job, even if a woman is hired based on her physical appearance. Danielle explains that she thought that the function of hiring practices are, at least on one level, based on monetary gain for the establishment. "I think people will want young and fresh, and people that can handle volume and are good looking. Because that brings in clientele. Especially men. ...For the most part people want female bartenders, especially attractive female bartenders." It is not surprising that male customers are assumed to comprise a larger population of paying customers when social norms, such as men buying drinks for women, are heavily prevalent in heterosexual bars. During observations in bars and nightclubs, men and women were customers. More often than not, men bought drinks for women either with their own money or money given to them by women.

### *Working with Other Women*

Once women were hired, specific gendered behavior patterns were noted. Participants noted that women were often “high maintenance” in terms of an expressed need for attention from co-workers and management as well as “emotional” regarding sensitivity to stressful situations. Interestingly, Gretchen\* commented that she did not believe that working with women was any different than working with men except, “the only difference that I can think of is that the girls cry more when they are upset. ...It’s just natural I guess for women to get more upset than men. Or at least to show it.” During the observations, no female employee was seen crying, but this behavior may be more common behind the scenes.

When women did not express emotion in this expected way, participants also commented. Cayla said: “there are just some girls that because they’ve been working there so long they have developed this tough outer shell, and nobody fucks with them. And I respect that, but sometimes it’s kind of abrasive.” In either instance, when women do or do not show emotion in the workplace, it is not considered positive. Through these two examples we can see the expectation for women’s emotionality, such as crying, to be natural, and the absence of that type of emotion as a learned response to working conditions over time.

Expectations of gendered behavior were also discussed in great detail by participants in two contrasting, yet complimentary forms. Participants Cayla and Ella explained that women may find solidarity in small groups, but that in large groups of women where men are also employed, cohesive workplaces were harder to come by.

When participants found it difficult to work with other women, the most prominent explanation offered was that other women were “catty.” This specific phrase was used by every

woman who participated in an interview. Cattiness was explained as “being dramatic” or “gossiping.” Ella, who was 22 at the time of the interview said:

There are certain people you can joke in a certain way with, and there are other people you can't. And there are a lot of girls at work that don't like each other, it's always the women. They make so much drama out of nothing. It's amazing. Certain girls take offense very easily and others don't. The cliques and power struggles....

A slightly different perception of the same types of behaviors was offered by Felicity, a 35 year-old bartender. “I've really been fortunate working with other females because I find them to be a bit snarky at times and I tend to get along with women a lot better than some other women do....” Felicity continued by explaining that she had gained weight and aged, so she no longer filled the “role of the pretty girl” and actively tried to appear “non-threatening” to other women. Felicity’s discussion of the impact of her appearance and behavior choices was not unlike other participants. Each recognized the importance of their own gender performance and the gender performances of their coworkers.

### ***Examining Female Vulnerabilities: Behavior and Appearance Standards***

Four major themes emerged involving a conversation about the ways female employees are vulnerable in their workplaces. These vulnerabilities include: gendered personal appearance, self-monitored behaviors, accepted behaviors by others, and drug usage.

Participants commented that they actively chose to gender their appearance in either a feminine or masculine way, for very different, and specific reasons. Blaire asserted that by masculinizing her appearance, she was able to somewhat avoid sexual advances by men while she was working as a barback. Ella offered an opposing viewpoint for gendering her appearance by using cosmetics. “ I feel like (its a) habit more than anything. Also, it's that, makeup makes me feel like I'm presenting a more, not even necessarily beautiful image, but a more put together

image.” All female employees working during observations wore at least a minimal amount of make-up.

Participants, particularly younger participants, discussed monitoring their behaviors with regard to gender specific behavior. They commented that certain behaviors are expected from men but, when preformed by a woman, elicited a much different response. Cayla explains a situation where a female co-worker was receiving unsolicited attention from a male co-worker. She said: “And you know that would never happen to a guy. I mean, unless it was like a psycho girl, which I’m sure has happened but I think its definitely more likely to happen to a girl which really sucks.”

Harassment, in physical, psychological and sexual terms, was understood as a constant in the workplace for each of the participants. Even when one form was not present, another may be. These harassments were usually perpetuated on women by male coworkers, or management. Harassment by customers was discussed as “a thing of the past,” but harassment by fellow workers or management was still very active. Cayla said:

As far as what I know about the past, sexism used to be way worse. I mean its still exists in the employee culture, so maybe if women start being completely intolerant of that... I mean that’s what I would hope. My real hope is that it isn’t like that anymore and you don’t have to feel, you know people asking you everyday if you have a boyfriend or telling you they wished you didn’t have a boyfriend or stuff like that cause, you know no one really says that to guys. And if they do say that they’re considered crazy or slutty or whatever. I mean, but guys can just do it... I don’t know, I’ve never really learned what to say to that to make it stop. It would be nice for that to never happen again one day. Where you could just work and, have fun ...but why does it have to be so much a conversation about inherently sexual undertones?

Each of the overarching themes examined here relies on the naturalization of gender roles both in and out of the workplace. However, in discussions specifically concerning the

perpetuation and acceptance of harassment and discrimination, naturalization may seem unavoidable to some women. Cayla said:

But like I said, unless we do away with gender, I don't know if that is ever going to change. Because I do believe that guys are just naturally horny mother-fuckers. Its not going to change.

Drug usage, which is discussed in more depth in a separate section of this paper, was also understood as a key way that women are more vulnerable in the service industry than their male coworkers. Blaire says, "...being female and not being totally sober makes us exceptionally vulnerable, especially in atmospheres that tend to be male dominated. I mean, in bars, men tend to be in control, they're the loudest, they're spending the most money, and even just being a woman." While no overt drug use appeared during observations, it is possible that, like showing emotions such as crying, this behavior occurs out of the direct customer's sight.

### *Naturalized Gender and the Construction of Habitus*

As women learn how to navigate their environments, including their places of employment, they may rely on roles learned outside of the workplace which are assumed to be natural to their biological sex. In other, perhaps less frequent, instances, they may consciously embody roles not assumed to be tied to their sex. In either case, the workplace world is navigated by the performance of gender and affected by the expectations of naturalized gender behaviors. According to some participants, simply being a biological woman makes her more vulnerable. It is also possible, however, that the assumed natural feminine role enhances this vulnerability. Escaping the role is problematic though. When women behave in non-naturalized ways (e.g., physical aggression, non-feminine physical appearance) they are reprimanded by both fellow coworkers and management. If habitus is constantly changing and refined in order to better navigate social situations, any assumed biological characteristic may seem impossible to change.

## **Personal Physical Attractiveness: Playing the Gender Role**

Several issues emerged when participants discussed how being considered attractive by conventional standards affected their work experience. Participants talked both about their own physical appearance and that of their coworkers to explain how physicality affects the job experience from the moment they are interviewed. Those interviewed explained how their age, weight, cosmetic usage and hairstyle has colored their experiences, as well as how much these performances cost. Participants highlighted that appearance alone did not determine work experience. Instead, appearance and specific personality traits worked together to aid or to hinder positive outcomes.

## **Clothing, Cosmetics and Cuts: What it Takes to “Bring it all Together.”**

When women discussed how they were required to look for a specific job, the type of venue was the first point of difference. Women working in high-end cocktail lounges discussed how they were required to wear nicer clothing, which lead to an extra expense they would not have had otherwise. Danielle explained that in one upscale bar, women were required to wear black dresses or skirts and not allowed to wear pants of any kind. She went on to explain that men at the same location could wear any color pants and shirt they chose. Women working in local working class bars talked about functionality of clothing. For example, Blaire said she consciously bought pants with back pockets so that she could easily use her bottle opener, as well as tennis shoes because they were more comfortable.

In jobs where uniforms are not required, women consistently commented that certain, specific ways of dressing, such as wearing a low cut shirt or tight pants would determine how much money they made. Some women said that they chose not to dress that way even though they assumed that women wearing more sexually provocative clothing made substantially more

money. Of the women who chose not to dress in this manner, all said it was because they were too shy, or too old. Felicity\*, a 35 year old working at a small working-class bar, commented that while she dressed more provocatively when she was younger and thinner, she relied now on her personality to make more money. She went on to say that she consistently makes an effort to put other women at ease by not portraying an overly sexual appearance. She said:

That almost helps me because I know both sides of it now, because that helps with the, I mean I could do it the other direction too, but it would be harder for me to put people at their ease. If I was still 20 with all the hour glass thing going on, with a nice low cut and trim waisted, bright eyed, then it would be harder for me to put people at their ease, I think. Would I make more money? Probably not for me because you would have to play towards a certain element, and that would be men, and I've found that as long as they are comfortable with you, they give it to you anyway. So, yes, I guess your appearance does make a difference, but if you're good at it, it doesn't matter what that appearance is. And for me at this age and place, of where I am in my growth, with my personality, it would almost be harder.

Women working in restaurants discussed clothing only in terms of uniform requirements, such as “black and whites.” In a conversation about gender roles, this uniform is perhaps the most interesting. The uniform generally consists of a white button down dress shirt, usually purchased in a men’s department, black long pants and a neck tie or bow tie. The uniform is explained to have two functions: to look professional and to assure that all employees look the same. We can recall here how specific jobs are more likely to be occupied men, such as fine dining servers, where the highest incomes are found. When women did occupy these roles, they are expected to dress as men, with the exception of expectations of cosmetic usage.

Several participants also commented on how customers responded to the way they wore their hair and the expectation that they wear make-up to work. This expectation came both from customers and management. Several participants commented that when they did not wear make-



up, they were asked if they were ill, or if something else was wrong. Ella concluded by explaining that make-up made her feel more equipped to do her job. She said:

Makeup completes the package. It makes you look like you have at least put some effort into it, I guess. But, more than that, when I have makeup on, I feel more put together, I feel like, it's like the last step before I go out the door and if I don't do it sometimes I start to feel like I'm not fully prepared.

The amount money participants spent on their appearance varied from minimal to an estimate of nearly half of her income. Most said that some portion of their income was spent on specific clothing they would not otherwise purchase. Several commented that they would buy cosmetics and hair services such as highlighting anyway, so they did not consider it an additional expense. The time commitment to get ready for work varied in the same way. When participants said they did not spend much money or time on their appearance, they thought they were unusual. Ella said that while she had spent a few thousand dollars on make-up, hair products and cuts, she had probably spent a lot less than other women. Blair's comments were similar. She said:

If I have to get to work, I can get there in 3 minutes. Like if I have to be there for 9, I make sure that I'm home for 8:30. So that I can like... part of it is like I need to calm down. I need to eat some food, um part of it is like so I can change and get dressed. But I also don't think I'm typical. Appearance is important to me, but at the same time its not as important as it is to many other women. I think many other women spend much more time, much more money.

When participants discussed the hiring process at bars and restaurants, they consistently noted that appearances, specifically youth and attractiveness were key. Danielle and Kathryn both commented that most bars with high earning potential would not hire overweight or unattractive women. The other factor that held women back, according to participants was age. Even when women were thin and attractive, if they were over thirty-five, they were considered to

have aged out of the business. Danielle says: “I mean you have to be at least somewhat easy on the eyes. And nobody wants to go to a place and see a 50 year old woman-bartender. Especially a woman looking haggard and like she’s been run over by a bus because she’s been in the service industry so long.” The locally-owned working-class bars were the only location where women who appeared to be over the age of 30 were visibly employed in direct customer service positions.

While age was a constant determinate of how women in the industry are perceived, youth did not guarantee a job. Anna, 35, commented that she could not get a job at The Mad Hatter\*, a locally owned busy college bar because she was too old. When asked if she could have gotten a job there when she was younger, she said, “No. Because I wasn’t cute and perky enough.” In one instance, a participant viewed her age as a positive. Hannah, 36, commented that her income has not changed because of her age “now that cougars are in” but has changed because of the economy. A ‘cougar’ by popular definition is an older woman who dates younger men. Cougars are considered attractive by the same standards as younger women, meaning they still appear young and are thin.

Several participants commented that they thought that managers and owners qualified their appearance based hiring decisions with one specific assumption: when women are young, attractive and thin they are assumed to bring in more business. Each business may be looking for a specific appearance (e.g., the girl next door, the sexy woman) and when women do not fill that role they are unlikely to gain employment. Danielle said that while she has been hired as “eye candy” at some jobs, she was not hired at others because she was not “flamboyant enough” with her appearance. While Danielle was very physically fit, she did not have breast implants nor did she wear excessive make-up. For these reasons, she believes she was denied employment at

several busy nightclubs and bars, regardless of her experience. She said she believed being hired depended heavily on the image that managers and owners were trying to build for the bar.

In other instances, participants said they were hired despite their appearance, but only for daytime shifts, when fewer customers were in the bar. More often though, participants commented that women were hired where they worked because the manager liked how they looked, either because the manager was sexually interested in the new hire, or because the new hire had the right look for the venue. When women were hired based on their appearance, they expected that their female coworkers would be as well. Kathryn\* said:

My friend was doing the marketing and she called and said we need pretty girls to come and work and I said, 'I've never carried a tray in all my life. I'm not going to be able to do that.' And she said, 'yeah, you will, just come.' They (*all the women working at the club*) were all pretty. Then, towards the end, some of them were not that pretty... some of them looked like they worked in the grungy part of the French Quarter. And the place kind of started falling apart because they lowered their standards for everything.

When women are hired based on appearance or experience, they are expected to perform as if they are on stage. Participants said that they were told by customers to gain weight, loose weight, wear their hair down or up, and wear more make-up, among other things. Hannah said, "I think when you're a bartender, just like with body building, I think certain things stand out. Certain things give people license to say whatever they want. You're under scrutiny all the time." Hannah continued by explaining that while some comments from customers were out of concern, many times, comments were directed at women in the industry simply because of the type of job they held.

Each of the participants interviewed commented on whether it was easier to work if you were seen as attractive or as less than attractive. Most often, women who saw themselves as attractive said that it may have been easier to get a job, but that once hired, they faced more

harassment than their less than attractive coworkers. Cayla, who considered herself attractive, says:

I mean yeah, I'd say its affected... cause then you know you have the guys in the kitchen telling you you're pretty and they didn't really say that to the girls that I guess weren't considered traditionally attractive. And you know, I mean, its just, you have to deal with how to accept the guys compliment without giving them any hope that you appreciate it, which is hard because you don't want to be a bitch, which, you know, it just gets annoying.

Gretchen, 35, also commented on the burden of attractiveness. She says now that she is older and has gained weight, she believes her female customers are more likely to be receptive to her appearance. She says: "I mean ...I was thinner and talking to tables of women, they were a lot less friendly. Now it's more like what's up sister kind of thing or maybe that it's also the I've gotten older factor than when I was 18 and the young little server coming up to your table."

Regardless of outcome, every participant commented that their age and appearance weighed heavily on their experiences in the service industry. While costs and time spent on appearance may have varied, some percentage of each participant's income was spent on creating or maintaining their appearance. Clearly the performance of gender exists outside of the workplace, but in the service industry, specific manifestations of this performance are regarded as necessary to gain and to retain employment. In this industry there is a certain type of hyper-vigilance about gendered appearance standards. Regardless of whether a woman presents herself as young, attractive and thin, or as more matronly, her physical appearance colors her experience.

### **How Habits Get Rewarded**

Alcohol and drug use was discussed by each participant as an integral part of their job experience. The women interviewed talked about using as a common behavior amongst their

coworkers. Often, participants discussed drug or alcohol usage as unavoidable. While the types of drugs used varied by the type of location where each participant worked, alcohol use and abuse was constant across all types of locations, and each specific job. Most often, women spoke about the easy access to and abundance of cocaine, marijuana and, less frequently, ecstasy. Alcohol abuse was discussed as problematic for both themselves and their coworkers. Several women discussed their personal choice not to drink while working, citing that they did not want to become alcoholics. They also thought that their older female coworkers were unable to find non-service industry work due to alcoholism and drug addiction. None considered themselves to be addicts or recovering addicts.

### **Why do women drink at work?**

Two major themes emerged when women discussed why they thought other women used alcohol and other drugs during the time they were employed in the service industry. First, some women referred to alcohol usage as a way to cope with the stress of the environment, as well as the internal stress of being ‘on stage’ during a bartending shift. Anna said:

I do remember this bartender one time telling me that she would come in on her shift, at 8 o’clock at night and slam a beer. Every night. And usually, she was pretty shit housed by the end of her shift. She did it because she said she didn’t like being behind the bar because it made her self conscious because she thought everyone was looking at her.

Kathryn described a similar feeling, “In that industry, if you don’t want to be there its like somebody pulling your teeth out. I mean, you have people blowing cigarette smoke in your face. You know, somedays I felt like that, like I really don’t want to be here. So I would start drinking in order to be there. And thats when you’re actually abusing yourself.”

Secondly, and more frequently, women discussed their alcohol and drug usage as a necessary part of the job. It is important to note here that all participants were employed in

locally-owned bars and restaurants. Women who were employed in bars with predominately working-class white customers discussed the unwritten requirement to drink during their shift most often. “The history of bartending is when a customer offers to buy you a drink, you take it. It’s money for you, it’s money for the bar, and you get a drink. They’re offering something to you. You can’t say, ‘I’d rather have the money,’” explains Blaire, a 25 year old who has worked as a bartender for 4 years. Blaire further explains that, after two months of bartending during the day, she stopped taking shots during her shift, but was reprimanded by the owner of the bar for not drinking with her customers. Another participant, Danielle, explained that when she refused offers to drink from customers, she was reprimanded by her manager and told she was not personable enough. Danielle said:

...when you work in a neighborhood bar, customers have big pull over you. Like if you piss anybody off, you can lose your job like that. And it’s just all about them liking you or not. And I don’t drink behind the bar when I work. I never really have and when I first started working at the Silver Frog\*, like I said, I used to work with some trashier people, like that’s their lifestyle. They were just drinking shots left and right and getting fucked up every night with the customers and here I come and I’m like, ‘no, I don’t want a shot.’ So I’m not ‘personable’ now. And I got in trouble, I got fussed at by the owners so many times, like, ‘you really need to be more polite.’ I was like, ‘are you kidding me?’” I was being ganged up on because of the clientele. They were like, ‘Oh, we don’t like her. She doesn’t do shots behind the bar, you know, she’s not personable because she’s not getting shit faced with us’. That’s one thing that really pisses me off about working some place with regulars, especially a dive. Because they’re all alcoholics.

When participation in specific activities determines the likelihood that an employee will keep their job, the impact of that participation is obvious, even if not overtly described by management through formal declaration (e.g., written policy manuals). It is unlikely that in any other industries, employees would be expected to participate in physically harmful behaviors

such as drinking or drug use. Indeed, those behaviors would most likely not be tolerated in other industries.

### **Cocaine becomes Normalized: The Use of Illegal Drugs**

Participants discussed the use of illegal drugs, particularly cocaine, as a common and frequent part of the bar and restaurant culture. Most women said they did not use drugs, but those who discussed their own use, defined that usage as a part of their past that they greatly regretted. In addition, their usage all revolved around their place of employment, not their social lives outside of work. Danielle discusses her own drug use as a direct result of working in a nightclub environment, where she says that most, if not all of her coworkers, both female and male, used cocaine frequently. “It (the nightclub) introduced me to a nightlife which I wouldn’t have been exposed to at such a young age... it was pretty awful actually...I mean, the people I met, the decisions I made and being exposed to drugs and stuff,” says Danielle. She goes on to say that two years later, she was working at another similar nightclub. She said, “It was the first and last time I did as many drugs as I did. If I could go back, I would have never worked down there.”

Kathryn, a 31 year-old former nightclub cocktail waitress and bartender cites a similar experience when she described the nightclub environment: “I mean everybody knows about Studio 54. Especially anybody who was clubbing in the 70’s. They don’t want their daughter in that environment. Drugs, partying... all that. There were a lot of drugs there. A lot of coke. But I didn’t really do coke that much at that time. It was more so after.” While Kathryn explains that she rarely used drugs while working in the nightclub, her experience changed greatly when she started bartending alone at night at a smaller local bar. She says:

There was this neighbor to the place. She started bringing me bags of cocaine and tell me, “I want 70 for them. Whatever else you can sell them for, you can keep.” And I mean, this is out of the blue, and I was just thinking, ‘what do I do?’ Cause I really wasn’t into

coke at the time. I mean it might happen every once in a while... but she would hand them to me, so I put them in the drawer, and as the night would go on, I would think about them and you know, I could do them if I wanted to, you know what I mean? And she told me I could have one. And then eventually, I would take a little out of it and I would think, "I'll get rid of it. I can get rid of it. Im not going to do it." And then by the time you know it, I've done 2 of them, so I'd have to sell the other ones for more than 70 to pay for the other one I did. It started to bring me down a lot. But she was always there. Kinda like the devil on your shoulder kind of thing.

### **Gender and Drug Usage**

Drug usage among female coworkers was discussed by participants in two very specific ways. First, cocaine, and to a somewhat lesser extent, alcohol, was seen as a way to control and influence female employees by managers. Several participants cited that drugs came from, or were, at least, made available by male managers. Blaire explained, "You can hardly deny the amount of drug usage that goes on, especially among the women. A lot of times, you hang out with your manager, like go on a date with him on Saturday night and he gives you your stash for the week. Managers had control over all of this." Many women bonded with managers through a shared use of cocaine in the hopes of securing better shifts, according to Blaire and to other participants. However, they end up relinquishing power as they become addicted. Hannah, a 36 year old bartender explains her experience with other women was often colored by their appearances and drug usage. Hannah explained that most of the women she worked with got their jobs because they were friends with a manager or owner, and that their employment had little, if anything, to do with their skill sets.

They were the big boob, super skinny type. Probably doing coke in the bathroom. Actually, a lot of them were doing coke in the bathroom. I would just show up, do my job, get the hell out and go to the gym. I was working at these private parties and there was this little clique of girls who had known each other forever. I would go to clubs and see this little pack. I mean it didn't take much to figure it out when they would offer it up in the bathroom.



I think a lot of people do drugs. They're readily available.  
Everybody knows everybody.

The long term effects of this type of drug use did not go unnoticed by any of the participants. In fact, most interviewees under 35 assumed that older female co-workers were addicted to either drugs or alcohol or both and could no longer find employment in another industry. Many said that, if a woman had not left the industry before the age of 40, she would probably never leave because she was either too concerned with having fun or was too mentally incapable of functioning in a non-service occupation. None of the women I spoke with viewed their own drug use as tying them to the occupation.

### **Habits and Habitus**

If we consider that one of the functions of habitus is to help the actor maneuver within a given social institution or structure, it is not surprising that drug use among women working in the service industry could constitute one manifestation. This is especially true when the behavior of consumption is rewarded by management. When drugs and alcohol are used as a means of escape, women develop another form of habitus that allows them to more easily navigate the pressures imposed by customers and management. Habitus is understood to be a fluid and changing set of rules, patterns of thought, behaviors or tastes. Even though drug and alcohol abuse is arguably detrimental to the individual user, the sociological understanding of the influence of habitus may offer an explanation to why women continue to use drugs and alcohol while employed in an environment that required the usage in the first place. Further, the detrimental effects of prolonged drug and alcohol use is one of the most prominent reasons the women in this study give for leaving the industry. If the industry encourages a perception that drug and alcohol use is acceptable, and to some extent expected, perhaps these women are choosing to avoid further addiction as a way to avoid a negatively perceived habitus.

## **Sexuality at Work**

Sexuality is a constant feature of women's experience in the study of many workplaces. Where other professions have made substantial improvements to address harassment by fellow coworkers, customers and management, the service industry has moved less quickly to enforce policy. In short, nine of the ten women interviewed commented that in some way sexuality was present in their workplace. Most often this played out in an assumption that coworkers were performing sexual acts with managers to get better shifts, or using overt sexuality to sell more alcohol. Participants also discussed the relationship between heterosexual coworkers, and how homosexuality is received in the workplace.

When women discussed how sexuality affected their working experience, they most often said that other women would perform oral sex on managers to get better shifts, but none said they participated in this behavior. Also, none of the women interviewed said they had concrete evidence of this behavior, but wholly believed that it did happen. Kathryn commented that female coworkers had spread rumors about her behavior, but that those rumors were unfounded. She said:

I remember people being uncomfortable, I mean, they never told me they were uncomfortable, so I don't know that they were but I remember a girl I work with saying, "Kathryn makes so much money. She must be giving blow jobs in the back room." She was spreading that. And that pissed me off. And I've never given a blow job to anybody.

While women may not actually be performing these acts to the extent that such rumors suggest, some sexual advances by male managers are tolerated by some women more than others. Anna discussed what she called "the slime factor" which she explained as a feeling of violation. "The Slime Factor" was not something she could articulate with exact clarity, but she did contend that all women were aware of it. However, some were more willing to ignore it in

the hopes that they would get better shifts or receive other rewards. She said, “I think some people, some women will use, use the knowledge that there is the slime factor to get what they want out of the situation. Not caring, in the long run, what the whole grand scheme is...” The “grand scheme,” to Anna, was a sense of personal space not violated by expectations of sexual favors or tolerance of sexual innuendos.

When women discussed sexuality in reference to customers, the type of location determined what was regarded as appropriate behavior. In places where women wore uniforms (e.g., black and whites) sexuality is more closeted. But in places where women chose what they wore to work, some women used overt sexual behaviors to increase sales. While working at a busy downtown nightclub, Danielle explains an experience she was uncomfortable with. She said:

You know how with the tooter shots you can put the put the tooter in your mouth and give it to the other person? I was totally against that, but I really wanted to sell these last few shots on my tray, just so I could get out of there and go home and the only way I could get that done was this guy was like, ‘okay I’ll buy the rest of these shots if you put one end in your mouth and give me the shot.’

Danielle goes on to explain that after selling her last shot she realized her father was present. She refused to sell shots in that manner again despite protests from her manager.

The sexuality component between coworkers was discussed in two ways: dating and physical affection without dating. In the service industry, it is not uncommon for coworkers to act out in ways that would most likely be uncommon in other jobs. For example, Cayla explained her feelings about physical affection between coworkers. When asked why physical affection was accepted in the workplace she said:

I guess because they saw everybody else being all touchy-feely and stuff, and then at a certain point I had to not do that. I was like, okay, I’m not hugging... ‘cause all I would do is hug but I was

like, alright. I thought it was a friendly thing. And now it's turning into this creepy sexual thing that I don't like.

In addition to physical affection in the workplace, most participants commented on the prevalence of "hooking up" between coworkers. The assumed repercussions of partaking in these non-committed sexual exchanges differed between men and women. Further, several participants commented that when men "hooked up" with several women in the workplace, the women who were involved in the situation caused problems or "drama" when they were scheduled to work the same shifts.

Nine of the ten participants self identified as heterosexual. Blaire identified as an "out" lesbian. While the sample of this study is not large enough to discuss the impacts of homosexuality in the workplace, it is important to note that Blaire's experience was largely colored by her sexuality. She said that amongst straight girls, she was less likely to be promoted or given profitable shifts regardless of her work ethic or time spent at one location.

### **Symbolic Violence**

There are several ways in which the effect of habitus appears between coworkers, between employees and management and between employees and customers. One of these, the use of symbolic violence, is consistent in each of these relationships. Many sociological theorists have not explored the relationship between symbolic violence, habitus and gender. Beate Kraus (2000) offers this explanation and asks us to reconsider the inherent implications:

It [symbolic violence] provides the sociological view with access to a wide field of phenomena that would otherwise remain beyond the range of a systematic analysis. Symbolic violence operates in face-to-face interactions, thus constructing and reproducing domination in direct interactions between people. Above all, however, this is a violence that is not recognized as such; it is a subtle, euphemized, invisible mode of dominating, a concealed form of violence--the realization of a world view or social order anchored in the habitus of the dominating as well as the dominated.

The service industry provides a concrete example of the reality and power of symbolic violence between men and women. Each of the participants commented that at some time they had endured some version of overt verbal sexual harassment or fear of repercussion for questioning the motives of an employer. These occurrences were in addition to physical sexual harassment, which was often regarded as unfortunate, but widely accepted as the norm. I argue here that in each of these instances, the underlying reason that these forms of harassment are so normalized is the social structure that supports them. The women employed in service industry jobs are regarded as the lesser in the power dichotomy for at least two reasons: gender and social class.

When participants discussed their relationships with management, they consistently regarded “good” relationships as unusual. More often, the women interviewed cited that many experiences with management were at best degrading and at worst verbally abusive. This trend was constant regardless of whether the participant had a man or woman as a boss, though substantially fewer respondents had ever worked for a woman. Blaire explained the power dynamic between female employees and male bosses as obvious. She said, “I think those relationships are impossible to remove from the power dynamic, the male manager... I mean you have manager, power, plus male plus they were all white.” According to Blaire and several other participants, if she challenged, or questioned her manager’s decision she feared she would be fired or lose profitable shifts.

When discussing customer-employee relationships, similar dynamics emerged. However, one important distinction was prominent. Among the women interviewed, many said they had been touched inappropriately by customers while working in nightclubs. Danielle said that many times her breasts and genitals were grabbed or groped by customers while working as a cocktail

waitress, and that customers were rarely reprimanded for the behavior because the club was too crowded and busy for her to exactly identify the attacker. These situations were not uncommon.

Blaire explained a specific experience during her time working as a barback:

I had a case of Bud Light above my head that I was bringing to the front bar. And, I was on my way out, and... God, my heart's racing. Some guy reached between my legs and wouldn't let me go. Like just held on to me. And I was like, "Holy Shit. Stop." And he was like, he was saying something and he was like "Heeey!" And he was like holding me really hard. And I like freaked out. I spun around and brought the beer back to the beer room and I like freaked out. I like panicked. And I was like, this is horrible. this is not...like what the fuck just happened? And I told the bartender. And this is amazing, she's like 40 and been in the service industry her whole life. And she was like, "Come on girl. Like, tell me that shit hasn't happened to you before." And I was like, yeah, but it didn't make me panic like this. Like wholly shit, I'm in trouble.

In this and other situations, participants reported that managers would not hesitate to reprimand customers that an employee complained about. However, the employee had to be able to confidently identify the customer. Yet, even when attackers were identified, few faced more serious repercussions than being asked to leave the premises.

When women worked as bartenders, however, the potential for physical confrontations is limited by the physical distance provided by the bar top. The participants in this study often said that being a bartender was sometimes easier than being in other positions because behind the bar it is easier to put space between oneself and a customer.

Another way that customers asserted dominance over employees was by questioning the employees social worth by denouncing the employee's assumed class status. Many participants cited that customers treated them with more respect if the customer knew that the employee was also a student pursuing a different career path. Cayla said:

This one guy... came in with his family, it was him, his wife...he was a middle aged guy, his son and daughter-in-law, or whatever,

And they were like, “oh, do you go to school?” And I told them I (did), and at the time I was thinking about majoring in sociology, getting a social work degree or whatever. So I told them that and the dad, or whatever, was like, “You’re not going to make any money doing that.” And I was like, “okay, that’s... not really important to me.” And his wife turns to him and says, “Honey, not everyone can be a lawyer like you.” It’s like that, they just assume that I don’t have the brains... I’m a waitress... I don’t have the drive... Like I couldn’t have been doing anything else.

Danielle discussed a similar situation where a customer became angry after a heated exchange. During this interaction, the customer asked Danielle what she thought about the sex of single parents raising male children. Danielle responded that she thought the only determinate should be who was a better parent, not the sex of the parent. The customer then said he thought that only men should raise boys, because if women raise boys alone, the child will become a homosexual, or a “pussy.” Danielle said that she was enraged by this comment and told the customer that the comment was ignorant. The customer then responded “I’m ignorant? What kind of idiot is a bartender and hasn’t graduated from college by 27?”

When women discussed relationships between opposite sex coworkers, women also reported instances of verbally and physically uncomfortable situations. In a workplace where physical affection (e.g., hugging; kissing on the cheek) was often consensual, the line of inappropriateness was blurred. Participants reported repeatedly turning down romantic and sexual advancements from male coworkers. Yet these male coworkers were not terminated despite complaints to management. Cayla explained that even after complaining to her manager about constant unwelcome flirtations from a male coworker, the only response she received was “we’ll talk to him.” She said that the coworker was never formally reprimanded about the situation to her knowledge, but was later fired for some other reason.

Even in situations where women were physically assaulted, some degree of symbolic violence existed. The acceptance of this behavior allowed the attacker to escape without punishment, which became a vicious cycle that fueled continued dominance over the dominated. The service industry is a stage where social norms encourage a hierarchy of men over women, customer over server, manager over the managed. In these spaces, even national policies designed to protect employees from harassment are largely ignored or at least interpreted very loosely.

### **How Long Can All this Last?**

Because of the strict guidelines regarding appearance and behavior standards, few participants believed that a long term career was possible in the service industry. Instead, many spoke of their jobs as temporary jobs, not as long term careers. Participants cited two reasons for the short term nature of the job: their own desire to work in the industry and the lack of support the industry provides aging women. Kathryn's thoughts were echoed by several other respondents. When asked how long she thought women could work in the service industry she said:

They *can* work in it forever but it's not very pretty. Its not very nice when you see a 50 year old-lady behind a bar, all wrinkled up, with a long cigarette, being a bitch to all the young girls cause she got pushed out 20 years ago. Cause it was time for her to get out 20 years ago, and find something else to do. Cause at that point its not being kind to yourself.

The job itself is physically and emotionally demanding. Participants discussed feeling like a poorly paid therapist to many customers, while being harassed by others. They worked long, often irregular hours, rarely with any additional benefits such as health insurance, job security or pension plans. The job is simply designed to be short term. When women stay in the industry past their youths, the types of jobs they are able to obtain often change from higher end



cocktail lounges to working-class local bars and restaurants. Younger women interviewed consistently cited drug and alcohol use as the reason that older women were ‘stuck’ in the industry.

One respondent said she would like to own her own bar and believed she had a work ethic that would produce a profitable business. However, without funding, she also believed her desire would go unfulfilled. Although respondents claim to earn near middle-class incomes, the lack of income stability because the majority of participant’s income is comprised of gratuities make them an unattractive candidate for a small business loan. When women discussed their incomes, they said that when working in a busy bar or restaurant, they could make about \$40,000 or more a year working full time, 40 to 50 hours a week.

All of the women interviewed had a least some college education. Many had already earned their undergraduate degree. Only one woman, Felicity, who is still employed as a bartender said she planned to stay in the industry. She believed her experience to be different than many of her coworkers because she came into the industry after pursuing work in an office environment. Interestingly though, Felicity also commented that her job was dependent on both the economy and her ability to maintain a happy, outgoing personality. Of the women who were still in school (either undergraduate or graduate), each believed they would leave the industry as soon as they graduated. Of the women who had already earned their degree, but were still working in the industry, none saw their own employment as permanent. Or, at least they hoped it would not be.

Ella talked about how her mother worked in the industry because the flexible scheduling allowed her to be home to take care of her children more regularly. Like many other service industry employees, Ella’s mother used the non-rigid hours and unpaid time off to care for

household responsibilities that Ella's father's job requirements would not allow. Ella said that her mother was not pleased to learn that she had become a waitress because she feared the job would trap her and slow her progress in graduating from college. Danielle said she wished she would never have to bartend again. However, because she was supporting herself through college without parental monetary support, other jobs with schedule flexibility and low or unpaid internships were not an option because she could not earn enough to pay her bills. Hannah, who worked as a graphic designer for many years prior to her re-entry to the service industry said, "I might have to change bars, but I'm hoping not to stay in the industry. I just have kind of been trapped in it since Katrina. I lost everything."

The reasons that service industry jobs are appealing often mirror the reasons these positions are considered jobs, and not careers. The schedules are flexible, but not reliable, the money is fast but not constant, and the profits are substantially higher than women with the same skill sets could find in other, more respected, occupations.

While many service industry employees build strong friendships with their coworkers, many considered these relationships to be fleeting or unhealthy. The culture of the occupation includes highly stressful realities, including alcohol and drug use. Several participants spoke of solidarity among female employees, but only in small groups. More often, they spoke of the cattiness or gossip that tainted their relationships with the women where they worked.

Consistently, participants said that they hoped the women who followed in their footsteps would only work in the industry because they enjoyed the work, not because they did not have any other option. It seems that for women to enjoy their work, they must learn to play a very specific gendered part. Those who enjoy it are often young, gregarious and aware of how their appearance affects their job experience. As women age in the industry, they may trade

appearance standards for nurturing behaviors as they accept jobs in less lucrative locations (i.e., Felicity consciously tried to put other, younger female employees at ease when they started working with her). Each respondent commented at some point that her personality, in conjunction with her perceived attractiveness, determined her success rate. When asked about what it takes to succeed in the industry, Kathryn explained that the carefree attitude often found in younger women explains their success. She said:

...it's just when you're working in that industry, you're on stage, a platform. So you're there entertaining everybody. And you're not thinking about going home and changing your baby's diaper and making some soup. Nobody wants to be around that. But if you're like, 'woo-hoo! Everybody come party!' Then they say, 'okay! We'll be there in 5 minutes!' It's like totally different. It's like when you are in that industry, you really have to be mentally stuck in it because, you really can't be too diverse and make a lot of money doing it....Because if you have to be responsible the next day, you're not going to make a lot of money. You literally have to put yourself into it where you're doing what everybody else is doing. You have to BE in it.

While the concept of the stage was readily recognized by most of the participants, none outright commented that their performance at work was an extension of their gender performance when they were not working. It seems fairly clear though that, at least, according to this set of respondents, the requirements of overt gender performance held some significance in their work lives.

### **Conclusion: Gender Roles and Habitus at Work:**

Gender roles have been at the forefront of many feminist conversations about workplace experiences. Women learn workplace roles, dispositions and behaviors which may translate into likes or dislikes especially regarding what is deemed to be socially appropriate or expected in the workplace setting. As women are rewarded for sex-normed gender behavior, they may internalize this reward as received for something natural, or essential to their woman-ness. For

example, if a woman focuses on maintaining a pleasing physical appearance or engaging in carework and she is rewarded with promotions verbal praise from her manager, she may be more likely to believe that her participation in reinforcing gender norms is natural.

However, gender roles are different from other social roles because gender permeates all of the various roles women play in a given society. It permeates women's performance of occupational roles, familial roles, and friendship roles, among others. This is why gender roles appear more "natural" than other social roles, such as the role of a professor or the role of a friend. It is also for this reason that this study goes beyond simple gender role analysis to argue that there is a gender habitus, much in the same way Bourdieu talked about a habitus derived from one's social class background or class of origin. Moreover, this gender habitus is even more strictly policed and enforced in the service industries discussed in this thesis that rely heavily on feminine beauty, attractiveness, youthful appearances, and flirtatious or at least accommodating gender performances. The hierarchy within service industry occupations, where male bosses tend to supervise female workers only exacerbates the demands for such normative gendered performances, as the voices of the participants of this study revealed. This dichotomous hierarchy of boss over worker and man over woman plays an especially powerful role when employment stability and earning potential are heavily determined by the employee's subscription to normative gender roles.

Even in the case of a desire to resist (i.e., women who wear cosmetics and feminine clothing only to work), the woman-worker in the hospitality industry is faced with an inevitable consequence. If she does not actively perform her culturally normative gender, her employment options are limited. As we heard from the participants of this study, women must also learn how to perform femininity on different stages (e.g., working class bars versus high-end cocktail

lounges) as they age. The weight of these expectations did not go unnoticed by the participants of this study. In fact, just as Bourdieu explains the “game of culture” so could we begin to understand gender in this setting:

There is no way out of the game of culture, and one’s only chance of objectifying the true nature of the game is to objectify fully as possible the very operations which one is obliged to use in order to achieve that objectification (Bourdieu, 1979:12).

For women working as servers, bartenders, and hostesses this game of culture, and gender, becomes clear very quickly. For these women, “the very operations” Bourdieu writes about in broad terms of culture more specifically revolve on their ability to perform a cultural standard of femaleness assigned to their biological sex.

The goal of this study was to apply Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and cultural capital to the performance of gender in a specific work place - the service industry. Throughout this thesis, I have been suggesting that there is a gender habitus in the same way that Bourdieu discussed a class-derived habitus. However, after completing this study, I found that the class lens was unavoidable; that gender performances were always inflected by class, just as class performances are always inflected or imbued with gender. The participants in this study described their gender performance as similar to a performance of class in terms of cultural capital. Their likes, dislikes, dispositions and knowledge of products and services were designed to mirror the class of the customers they served. While this study did not directly explore each woman’s class of origin (the familial economic class that each woman was born into), certain markers did emerge. For example, only one participant viewed her employment as possibly permanent. Every other participant adamantly opposed the idea that she might have a career in the industry, if she even believed long term employment was possible. When participants explained why they did not

want to work in the industry long term, higher education was often cited. For women who had already completed college degrees and returned to the industry, hospitality work was explained as a means to ‘get by’ until they found a white collar job. For the women who were still in school (either graduate or undergraduate), hospitality work was explained as a job that they planned to leave immediately upon graduation and finding a job in their field.

While not every participant in this study adapted to her workplace environment in the same way, several patterns of behavior emerged consistently across age and location differences. Participants either themselves used drugs and alcohol, or spoke of the impact of use on coworkers and closely monitored how their romantic relationships might be viewed by others. Most wore makeup to work and styled their hair, even when they did not do so in their non-working lives. At some point in each interview, participants commented that they felt required to monitor their behavior in order to appease customers, regardless of how the customer treated them (i.e., even when customers were verbally or physically abusive, participants were unlikely to mirror the customer’s behavior). However, depending on the class of customers served by the workplace, accepted customer behaviors changed. In summary, this study found that the way that women navigate the social aspects of working in the service industry changes with the location where a woman is employed, her physical appearance and personality and age.

The intersection of female gender roles in the service industry consisted of different manifestations of gender habitus. Participants did not inhabit only one singular role nor did they perform the female gender uniformly. However, the participants suggested that, as women age, they may understand her work roles differently and then access the power associated with the age-prescribed performances deemed more socially appropriate. Appearance standards and perception of the role of attractiveness are present throughout each woman’s life course, but are

markedly different in their function. Indeed, the participants involved in this study explained the role of appearance as a fluid but omnipresent force. Several women over thirty explained that as they aged, gained weight and were less able to present the same youthful image they had depended on previously to navigate their environment, they became more nurturing to younger women in order to make their workplace less hostile. Interestingly, however, when younger participants (those under 30) described the older women they worked with, they did not note this nurturance. Rather, they often described older women as mean, hostile or pathetic. Older women (and men, to a lesser extent), were described as ‘stuck’ in the industry due to lifestyle choices that included drug and alcohol abuse. Long term employment in the industry was never seen as a choice by others, but rather as the negative result of not having any other employment options. Only two of the ten women interviewed considered their jobs as chosen careers; both of these women were over 35. Both of these women spoke extensively about their caregiving to younger employees. In short, even when women described personal behaviors that would be considered nurturing, their coworkers did not recognize this behavior. Perhaps with future research, this contradiction could be further examined. It is possible that with a larger sample size and more specific questions about nurturance, researchers could study not only how age and social roles intersect in service industry workplaces, but also provide more detailed information about how the roles of older women are perceived by younger coworkers.

Most of the women interviewed expressed a strong desire to leave the industry to pursue other careers. The motivation to leave was explained in two ways: employment options for older women are not as plentiful, and older women who did remain in the industry were viewed as angry, mean, pathetic, and overly opinionated. Anna explained her experience working with Jane, a female coworker:

...the only thing I've been able to figure out from some of what they've told me, cause she's in her mid-forties, I *think she's hitting menopause*. And, its *just not working out well for her*. But you know, she works, twelve years, four nights a week at a bar. I couldn't do four nights a week now. I would kill people. Thats why I only do one. And even *one* day, sometimes I'm like "Ahhhh." Cause its just, after 15 years, you just don't, I've lost the patience for a lot of what people do in bars.

While some participants were somewhat sympathetic to older employees experience, most understood these experiences as a direct result of the woman not leaving the industry when she should have. But, some women do work in the industry past their youths, so they must learn to cope with the same socially imposed rules as their younger counterparts. Overall, a woman's age, appearance and gendered behavior influenced her experience.

Each woman's habitus is designed and altered by her social experience. In this study, we saw how important and engrained gender habitus is in the hospitality industry for women. They were taught to perform, in very specific ways, to create an illusion of natural behaviors. In each workplace, participants were expected to mirror or appear to out-rank customers. For example, Danielle, who grew-up in a middle class family, said that when she worked in a high-end cocktail lounge, she "was expected to dress up, sometimes nicer than the customers." In working class bars, participants said their behaviors also mirrored customer's class. We saw this in the expectation that participants would drink during the day with their customers. In each class of location the options for behavior choices were limited to socially constructed gender norms. Youth and attractiveness was celebrated as an asset. Aging was not. In each of the locations described, a certain hyper vigilance about the normative performance of gender emerged. In a world still dominated by patriarchy, youth and beauty were potential portals to access power. However, that power is fleeting since the longevity of youth and beauty is finite and no job, in



the service industry or elsewhere, is guaranteed. When a job is designed for limited duration based on appearance standards and expected gender behaviors, workers are left with little option but to conform to the roles expected of them, if only for a short while. As discussed in the finding section, the amount of money and time each participant spent on their appearance varied. However, each participant did spend some portion of their income on appearance-related products used either specifically for work, or for work and non-work activities. When participants did not spend a large portion of their income on appearance-related products and services, they believed they were the exception and that most other women spent more to appear attractive at work.

The long term effect of gender habitus on service industry women workers is unavoidable given current interpretations of Title VII. It is not surprising that in *Jespersen v. Harrah's Operating Company*, Darlene Jespersen was not victorious. Whether or not Jespersen's termination was truly a direct result of her refusal to wear make-up, or more covertly, a refusal to perform her cultural gender in her workplace is not explained in the Nevada's Supreme Court decision. Jespersen, like the participants in this study, faced a socially imperative and tangible issue every day she went to work: perform as a specific, feminized type of woman, or go home. It is not so simple to say that women have few sources of protection from gender based discrimination in the service or hospitality industry. We must also recognize that until more cases citing unequal burden of performance are brought forth and assessed with a more nuanced understanding of socially constructed gender, the women working in this industry will not see equality achieved.

**Limitations:**

This study was limited in several ways. Race, both of spaces and participants, is perhaps the most profound limiter. First, only white women were interviewed or participated in the exploratory focus group. This focus group provided the first group of potential interviewees; these participants then suggested other women who might like to participate. Due to this snowball sampling procedure, the sample might have been more homogenous than if other sampling techniques were employed.

By limiting the race of interview participants, I was unable to discuss the impacts of race as a social category on both hiring and employment experiences. Further, including women of different races could have illuminated differences in perception of the importance of appearance, and the role that attractiveness played in their search for employment. For example, in *On Beauty*, Zadie Smith discusses race in the United States including variations of racial authenticity, social perceptions, cultural capital and class mobility for African Americans, white Americans, Britons and Caribbean immigrants. Further, studies have highlighted how sexuality and attractiveness are interrelated, especially in the African American community (Stephens and Few 2007).

Second, it is possible that the location of the study influenced behavior patterns. This study was conducted in a Southern, metropolitan city in the United States. If conducted in another region, or a smaller or larger city, differences may have emerged. Several participants commented that their experiences may have been unique because they specifically worked in New Orleans, and the bar culture in New Orleans is unique. Most attributed this difference to 24 hour liquor availability and a more lax response to alcoholism and drug use. Also, this study was conducted during a well publicized recession. If the economy was more solid at the time of the

interviews and observations, participants may have offered different opinions about their employment experience.

Third, because demographic questions did not include direct questions about income socio-economic class was not confirmed. These assumptions were based on participant's comments about their parent's incomes, their own educational attainment and, sometimes, less frequently, on the actual economic dollars she earned. Since this paper is theoretically based in Bourdieu's analysis of class and the forms of capital, future studies should include specific demographic questions that would ground each participant's social position at birth.

In the future, I would pay more attention to the following class issues: the job itself, participant's class and customer's class. More carefully defined, the class of the job would be more specifically analyzed for class markers such as wage versus salary, level of education required, the close supervision of employees by bosses, the lack of autonomy and the nature of the manual labor required to perform job related duties. With a more clear answers to these questions, we may explicitly place service industry work as a working class job, regardless of the actual monetary incomes earned by workers. Second, I would locate the class of the participants in two ways: their ascribed class (or class of origin) and their currently achieved class. These class statuses should be measured with some consistency. For example, I might use educational attainment as a marker both of the social class each participant was born into, as well as her current educational attainment to determine her current social class. Third, the class nature of the customer base should be more uniformly defined. I would more carefully define the markers of class at each location (i.e., what makes a working class bar different from a high-end lounge).

Another limitation of this study was that only one participant self-identified as homosexual. However, a large portion of the data she contributed mentioned that her sexuality

negatively affected her work experience, despite her overt attractiveness and job skills. The locations where participants worked were also understood as primarily heterosexual bars and restaurants. Since heterosexual locations are understood as the norm, gay and lesbian bars will certainly elicit different experiences for women on the various dimensions examined in this study. While lesbian bars have not been researched as widely as heterosexual and gay bars as specific social spaces, some data has emerged that highlights racial performance, particularly whiteness, in lesbian spaces (Held, 2009).

Finally, this study was limited because most of the participants in this study believed their jobs were only temporary. Previous research has cited family-work conflicts as a possible reason for the high number of temporary workers (Magnini 2009). Only one participant in this study had children. She was also the only participant who discussed family responsibilities as a factor that limited her ability to find work in the industry. However, it is possible that family responsibilities were not the only factor that contributed to participant's view that service industry employment is short term. For example, women who grew up in different classes, or those who aspire to become a member of a different class, may not view hospitality work as congruent with their goals, regardless of family or child care responsibilities.

While interviews from ten participants provides reliable data because of the length and depth of the interviews, this study may be extended by including quantitative surveys (e.g., about actual dollars spent on appearance altering goods and services) in order to provide more rich and complex data. A triangulation of methods would allow the researcher to provide statistical sampling, which can be used to influence policy makers.

**Future directions:**

Future research on this subject may be extended to include other races of participants and locations. This extension could allow the researcher to discuss how bars and restaurants are assumed to be normatively white. The experience of women of color in white bars and restaurants as well as their experience in locations that are not white will provide new and complex directions for research. (By referring to the race of a location, I am referring to the culture of the groups of people who inhabit the space, including customers, employees, management and owners.) Also, this study could be applied to male workers to understand how their performance of gender appears in similar or different workplaces. For example, researchers might look at how men perform gender in the hospitality industry. It is possible that men are compelled to perform masculinity in order to avoid ridicule by coworkers and management. This possibility would mirror well documented compulsive male heterosexuality in school settings discussed by other feminist researchers (Pascoe 2007). One of the most important findings in this study was the change in a woman's experience as she ages in the service industry. With a longitudinal design study, we may understand how each woman's experience changes over time if she remains employed in the industry. This longitudinal design could allow the researcher to more fully examine one of the most common and compelling points raised by participants: that service jobs are only short-term jobs, not long-term careers. Additionally, although this study was not designed originally to locate participant's social location at birth, future researchers might find it appropriate to ask participants to recount their childhood relationships to their parent's social location. Those narratives may shed a different light on their understandings of their work environments.

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**Vita**

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