THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT

THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT: VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTQ2S+ SERVICE

WORKERS IN WINDSOR AND SUDBURY, ONTARIO

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Lay Abstract

This project explores the rates and experiences of customer violence against service sector workers in Windsor and Sudbury, Ontario, using data drawn from a survey and interviews. Customer violence was found to be common in the sample, and rates of violence were higher for participants who were racialized as non-white, members of a union, and in precarious work situations. Interviews showed how participants often resisted customer violence individually as opposed to with co-workers, and perceived support from management to be lacking and determined by economic considerations.

Abstract

Previous research has indicated the prevalence of customer violence towards workers in the service sector, but few studies have looked at the impacts of this violence for LGBTQ2S+ workers. Drawing from survey results (n=208) and interviews (n=11) with LGBTQ2S+ service sector workers in Windsor and Sudbury, Ontario, this thesis explores the rates and experiences of customer violence for these workers, using chi-square analyses to identify relationships between customer violence and independent variables related to workers' identity and workplace. Further analysis was conducted on qualitative interview data to understand *how* this violence was experienced, as well as how workers resisted and perceived management's response. Customer violence was found to be widespread among survey and interview participants, with participants who were racialized as non-white, union members, and in precarious work situations reporting higher levels of violence. Interviews also showed how participants often resisted customer violence through individual means, and perceived support from management to be lacking and contingent upon economic motivations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In many classic conceptualizations of work, the employment relationship is narrowly portrayed as a dyad; workers and management are seen to be engaged in a dialectic struggle for power and control within the workplace, and other actors are considered secondary to this fundamental dynamic (Lopez, 2010). But what about the service sector, where customers and clients play a prominent role in workplace relations? Research on this industry troubles this dyadic relationship for workers in services, demonstrating the extent to which *customers* represent a third—and integral—vertex in a now-*triangular* employment relationship (Leidner, 1993; Lopez, 2010). What is more, scholars have shown that the inequalities of power inherent in the traditional employee-employer relationship persist in the context of service relations, with customers capable of mistreating and harming employees in their interactions (Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Fleming & Harvey, 2002; Kern & Grandey, 2009).

Here emerges a third point of inquiry; if power inequities exist between customers and *all* service workers, what do those inequities look like for workers who are already marginalized in the labour market and society at large? Does this marginalization permeate the micro-level interactions that play out daily in service workplaces? To be sure, a corpus of scholarship on customer interaction has emerged in recent years, highlighting the extent to which customers can act in ways that are violent towards service workers (see Boyd, 2002; Fleming & Harvey, 2002; Yagil, 2008). Expanding this literature with an eye to identity, studies have also drawn attention to the distinct experiences of women (see Forseth, 2005; Filby, 1992; Guerrier et al., 2000) and workers of colour (see Grandey et al., 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009), with a few also touching on issues of gender identity and sexual orientation (Willis, 2009; David, 2015; Galupo & Resnick, 2016). Despite these efforts, there remains a lacuna in the research on LGBTQ2S+

workers' experiences with customer interaction, with no studies focusing specifically on violence from *customers*, and existing studies on LGBTQ2S+ service workers using primarily qualitative methods[1] (Giuffre et al., 2008; Willis, 2009; David, 2015; Galupo & Resnick, 2016).

Given the rise of violence against the LGBTQ2S+ community in Canada over recent years (Statistics Canada, 2017a), understanding the experiences of LGBTQ2S+ workers is of great import, and scholars have already shown labour market disparities for this group in Canada and abroad (Carpenter, 2008; King & Cortina, 2010; Tilcsik, 2011). As service work continues to be a growing sector in Canada, this research becomes *even more* relevant (Statistics Canada, 2019). In this research project, I will therefore ask the questions: what are the rates of violence from customers for LGBTQ2S+ service sector workers in Windsor and Sudbury, and how do they relate to workers' identities and workplace conditions? Further, how do LGBTQ2S+ workers *experience* this violence, and how do they perceive management's response? In what ways do they resist themselves? To be sure, I will focus on service work performed by workers in food service and accommodation, retail, arts and entertainment, and other low-wage services[2], excluding professional and public services in order to narrow the scope of this project.

Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, I attempt to answer these questions in this thesis, drawing from survey and interview data collected for a broader research project on LGBTQ2S+ workers. Deemed the Work and Inclusion project, this research endeavour brought together scholars and community partners from across Ontario, and included

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[1] The one quantitative exception was conducted by Galupo and Resnick (2016), which had a relatively small sample size of 100 and primarily examined relationships between LGBTQ2S+ workers and their co-workers and managers.

[2] In following Statistics Canada's (2018) industry categories, 'food service and accommodation' includes fast food and hotel positions; 'retail' includes retail store workers; 'arts and entertainment' includes casino and amusement parks workers; and 'other services' is comprised of personal service workers (such as laundry).

researchers at McGill and the Universities of Windsor and Southampton in an effort to document

the work and community experiences of LGBTQ2S+ workers in Windsor and Sudbury—smaller

and deindustrializing cities in Southwestern and Northern Ontario respectively. My own

involvement with this project began in September of 2017 as a research assistant under the

principle investigator Dr. Suzanne Mills, and later expanded to include the role of student

investigator as I undertook this thesis. Data for the project was collected in two phases—with

surveys disseminated in the summer of 2018 and interviews conducted in the summer of 2019—

and I had the privilege of visiting both cities to help with data collection during my work on the

project.

The term *violence* is capacious, and thus necessary to define before moving forward.

According to Fleming and Harvey (2002), violence can be characterized as any real or perceived

action "which results in the threat of, or actual injury (physical and/or psychological) to the

victim in the course of their work" (p. 227). Important here is an attention to *threats* and

psychological impacts when theorizing violence—as well the role of perception as opposed to

intent—which allows for a conception that encompasses symbolic and verbal mistreatment in

addition to material acts like physical and sexual assault. In recognition of these many different

forms violence can take in the workplace, I propose a quadfurcated taxonomy of violence for this

project that attends to both its material and psychological manifestations: *microaggressions,*

discrimination, *harassment*, and *assault*.

Also deemed 'selective incivility' or 'subtle discrimination', *microaggressions* occur

when certain social groups are treated differentially and with less respect than are others, often

through "everyday verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities" (Galupo & Resnick, 2016,

p. 271). In research on the service sector by Cortina (2008) and Kern and Grandey (2009), these

incidents are shown to be on the rise, manifesting as "subtle mistreatments from customers" during the course of the workday that perpetrators may or may not be aware of (Kern & Grandey, 2009, p. 46). As Willis (2009) demonstrates in his study on LGBTQ2S+ workers, these actions are *symbolically violent*, operating primarily "through language, social exchange and the imposition of meaning" (p. 636) to ostracize and 'other' marginalized individuals. An illustrative example is provided through Willis' qualitative research, where a worker shared how he was frequently interrogated about his sexuality as a gay man by his coworkers, singling him out as an 'other' in the workplace. Indeed, in the context of LGBTQ2S+ workers, this form of violence reinforces the hegemony of heterosexuality and normative gender performance in the workplace, operating alongside other forms of violence to create hierarchies at work (Willis, 2009; Payne and Smith, 2016).

Whereas microaggressions are subtle acts of differential treatment, *discrimination* is more overt, occurring when members of marginalized groups are disadvantaged due to prejudicial beliefs, systemic barriers, or exposed to "workplace behaviours that reflect 'blatant antipathy'" and are more outwardly hostile (Jones et al., 2016, p. 1589). The Anti-Defamation League (2018) provides a clearer conceptualization, demarcating the difference between discrimination that directly disadvantages marginalized people (including systemic discrimination, i.e. discrimination in hiring), and 'acts of bias' that include de-humanizing rhetoric. In the context of service work, the former is exemplified by customers who demand a different service provider for prejudicial reasons, and the latter by customers who openly spout hateful ideas—both actions that marginalize service workers based on aspects of their identity and are hereafter classified as *discrimination*.

Following the definitions posited by Johnson (1994), the difference between *harassment* and *assault* is here delineated by physical touch. By making this distinction, harassment thus comprises verbal harassment (which includes offensive language and insults) and sexual harassment (or inappropriate sexual advances or actions that do not involve physical touch) (Johnson, 1994). Assault, on the other hand, captures actions that go beyond the use of language and involve physical contact, capturing both physical and sexual assault.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

While the literature on employee-customer relations in the service sector is criticized for its diminutive size relative to the prominence of the service industry in North America (Lopez, 2010), a substantial body of literature nonetheless exists from which multiple understandings and theoretical frameworks are drawn. Over the course of this chapter, I first outline and appraise some of the theories found in the literature on service work, providing a theoretical foundation for my research. In the second section, I present the empirical research on employee-customer relations, exploring in particular experiences of violence, the role of identity, forms of resistance, and management's function in mitigating and exacerbating negative interactions with customers, ultimately assembling a clearer picture of the realities of service sector work. This section also explores the literature on LGBTQ2S+ work, both in the service sector and in general, showcasing the theories and findings that have emerged out of this growing body of scholarship.

Theory: Conceptualizing Service Work

Foundational to the study of the service sector is Hochschild's seminal text, *The Managed Heart* (1983), a ground-breaking theoretical work that has experienced sustained currency in the literature since it was first published (Lopez, 2010). Most significantly,

Hochschild identified how—in addition to performing labour involving the body and the mind—workers in services are additionally required to perform *emotional labour*, which involves manipulating one's own emotions "in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (p. 7). Using the experiences of airline attendants as her focus, service work is shown to commodify emotion, with customer satisfaction representing the product and the managing of one's emotions the labour to produce it. While not explored in depth, *The Managed Heart* additionally contributes to an understanding of workers' experiences of negative interactions with customers, using the term *emotive dissonance* to signify the internal conflict that arises when workers' true emotions are incongruous with their performative emotional labour. As Hochschild explains, this tension is common for workers who are expected to perform emotional labour, and can lead to alienation and strain over time.

In the decades since its release, Hochschild's work has faced criticism that seek to add nuance to the discourse around emotional labour and service work. Notably, Bolton (Bolton, 2000, 2005, 2009; Bolton & Boyd, 2003) argues that Hochschild's emotional labour thesis—while foundational—is reductive insofar as it depicts emotional labour as universally commodified and alienating for workers, replacing it with a new typology that makes room for "a range of emotion work enacted in organizations" (Bolton, 2009, p. 550) including emotion work that is performed of workers' own volition. In a similar attempt to expand the concept of emotional labour, Lopez (2006) posits a *continuum of emotional care*, where employers' actions can range from exerting emotional coercion (as Hochschild argues) to a more positive paradigm that allows employees to develop their own emotional relationships with customers, something he observes in nursing homes. Bringing the study of emotional labour to customer violence,

Boyd (2002, p. 166) shows how managing customer violence requires emotional labour and can lead to 'emotional numbness', an often overlooked workplace hazard.

In addition to emotional labour, the *service triangle* is a second (but not mutually exclusive) theoretical framework for understanding service sector dynamics. While first introduced in the business literature (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985; Kotler, 1991), it has since been adopted by sociologists to demonstrate the multiple relationships present in service work (see Leidner, 1993; Constanti & Gibbs, 2005; Villareal & Lopez, 2010; Anderson & Smith, 2017; among others), placing employers, employees, and customers at the three vertices of the service triangle with each side of the triangle representing the different relationships in the workplace. While seemingly simplistic, this conceptualization recognizes as fundamental the presence of the customer in the employment relationship, rejecting the less critical add-on approach which takes as its starting point the traditional employer-employee dyad (Korczynski, 2013). Indeed, this schema has had significant implications for service sector research; in addition to encouraging researchers to examine the relationship between customers and employees, the service triangle has also ignited inquiry into how customers' expectations can affect the broader labour process, demonstrating how organizational changes are made in the race for customer satisfaction[3] (Korczynski, 2013). As with emotional labour, the notion of the service triangle has similarly been expanded over time, with scholars pointing to the limited ability of the triangle schema to capture the presence of various occupational groups within an organization (Subramanian & Suquet, 2018) as well as the relationships that occur between co-workers (Sloan, 2011). These

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[3] As an example, Korczynski (2013) argues that "customer expectations of sexuality can have key implications across a wide array of key dimensions of work organization" (p. 5), affecting the hiring process and relationships between customers, employees, and management, among other organizational processes.

critiques add nuance to the trifurcated relations proposed in the original design, expanding the triangle to consider relationships with other workers in addition to the original conceptions' attention to the worker, management, and customers.

Understanding the Experiences of Workers

With the major theoretical frameworks established, what are the lived experiences of workers in this growing sector? Regarding experiences of violence from customers, research has demonstrated the prevalence of each of the four types of violence outlined in the previous chapter, demonstrating also the role of identity in shaping these experiences. Perhaps the most visceral form of violence, scholars have documented *assault* from customers in a variety of industries—from betting and gaming (Filby, 1992) to hotel service (Gurrier et al., 2000)—with one study citing *physical assault* from as many as 60% of participants (Boyd, 2002). Often more pronounced in workplaces that serve alcohol (Filby, 1992; Boyd, 2002; Fleming & Harvey, 2002; Beale et al., 1998)—although certainly not limited to licensed establishments—assault from customers can have serious implications for the health and safety of workers in services (Fleming & Harvey, 2002).

In addition to assault, research has also shown that *harassment* is endemic in service work, with *verbal harassment* ultimately the most common form of harassment that workers experience (Filby, 1992; Gurrier et al., 2000; Fleming & Harvey, 2002; Yagil, 2008). Due to the lack of physicality involved in this type of workplace violence, harassment can affect a broader range of workers than assault, including workers who conduct service exchanges over the phone in addition to conventional in-person service providers (Korczynski, 2003; Grandey et al., 2004; David, 2015; Boyd, 2002; Gurrier, 2000; Bishop et al., 2009). Speaking first to the literature on *verbal harassment*, research has highlighted a number of treatments that workers are susceptible

to, ranging from 'rudeness' (Yagis, 2008) to outwardly hostile (Boyd, 2002)—and even racist (Filby, 1992; Gurrier et al., 2000; David, 2015) and misogynistic (Forseth, 2005)—treatment, suggesting that experiences of it vary.

With regards to *sexual harassment*, women have been shown to be particularly at risk, and a number of explanatory theories have been forwarded to account for this trend (Hochschild, 1983; Manley, 1993; Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995; Hughes & Tadic, 1998). From an emotional labour perspective, the commodification of workers' emotions—and the coercive managerial practices that follow—can sexualize workers' performances, as seen in Hochschild's (1983) original study of airline workers. Indeed, sexuality is often mobilized by employers for the purposes of accumulation, viewed as simply a component of the product that is for sale (Filby, 1992; Gurrier et al., 2000). Alternative theories view the very *nature* of service work as responsible for the pervasiveness of the sexual harassment of employees; as Hughes and Tadic (1998) argue, service work grants the customer a privileged position in relation to the worker, fostering an environment in which customers' actions go unpunished and deference is expected. Also termed 'customer sovereignty', this paradigm creates power imbalances that impel workers to acquiesce to dehumanizing treatment, including sexual harassment (Bishop et al., 2005).

A more recent addition to the study of service work, inquiry into *discrimination* and *microaggressions* from customers has shown these forms of violence to be a feature of service work, shaping workplace experiences for marginalized workers in particular. With regards to *discrimination*, research has documented how customers request different service providers based on prejudicial beliefs, while others have shown the impacts of hateful exchanges between customers—two cases of discrimination that evoke similar feelings of exclusion for marginalized workers (Humphrey, 1999; Galupo & Resnick, 2016; Willis, 2009). Showing the impact of

subtler instances of discrimination, microaggressions from customers are also documented, fostering an exclusionary work environment and contributing to emotional exhaustion (Kern & Grandey, 2009; Willis, 2009; Galupo & Resnick, 2016).

The role of identity in determining who is exposed to violence from customers is additionally important to explore. While this was evident in research into discrimination and microaggressions—which necessarily analyzed how power relations and prejudicial attitudes contributed to marginalized workers' experiences (Kern & Grandey, 2009; Willis, 2009; Galupo & Resnick, 2016)— several accounts of *verbal harassment* also documented the role of race, with workers targeted—occasionally with explicitly racist invective—because of their ethnicity (Filby, 1992; Gurrier et al., 2000; Grandey et al., 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009; David, 2015). Women also experienced misogyny from upset customers who channeled their discontent with service in gendered ways, and were at a greater risk of sexual violence (Hochschild, 1983; Filby, 1992; Manley, 1993; Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995; Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Gurrier et al., 2000; Forseth, 2005). But what about the experiences of LGBTQ2S+ workers and service work? While a dearth of research on the differential impacts on marginalized communities exists in the literature (Lopez, 2010)—making it a vital site for research moving forward—there is nonetheless a growing body of scholarship that suggests LGBTQ2S+ workers are targeted based on their sexual orientation and gender identity by customers.

LGBTQ2S+ Workers and Service Work

Before turning specifically to customer interaction, it is important to note the research that has been done on discrimination and violence against LGBTQ2S+ workers in the labour market *at large*. Indeed, research has repeatedly shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans workers face discrimination in the hiring process, with implicit bias against LGB workers

documented in resume studies and other reports expanding this to include trans workers (Horvath & Ryan 2003; Badgett et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2011; Tilcsik, 2011; Mishel, 2016). For LGBTQ2S+ workers who have found employment, scholars have uncovered evidence of further discrimination in the form of income disparities; in particular, trans workers are found to have incomes that fall far below those of the population average, and gay men are consistently shown to earn less than their straight male counterparts (Badgett et al., 2007; Elmsie & Tebaldi, 2007; Carpenter, 2008; Bauer et al., 2011)—although recent inquiries suggest this may be changing (Elmsie & Tebaldi, 2014). Scholars have also shown an income disparity between lesbian and straight women that *favours* lesbian women (Clain & Leppel, 2001; Carpenter, 2008)— suggesting these dynamics are the result of an "overinvest[ment] in market based skills relative to heterosexual women" (Carpenter, 2008, p. 1257)—although this assertion has also been troubled by findings that imply no significant disparities (Elmsie & Tebaldi, 2014).

For trans workers, discrimination also takes the form of impeded bathroom access, something that becomes "a 'daily struggle' for many transgender people" (Griffin, 2009, p. 416). Coming from co-workers and employers alike, this discrimination can lead to hostility, reflecting a deeply engrained transphobia that one study suggests may be hard for some to unlearn (Rudin et al., 2016). Research has additionally uncovered the implications of this discrimination for mental health—connecting bathroom access to anxiety—while also finding examples of inclusion and positive treatment in blue-collar, retail, and public service jobs (Schilt & Connell, 2007).

In addition to *discrimination* in the labour market, violence has been documented against LGBTQ2S+ workers from co-workers and supervisors (Willis, 2009), with trans workers particularly vulnerable if they do not 'pass' or are compelled to provide their employer with

documentation that 'outs' them (Bauer et al., 2011). Microaggressions from co-workers, employers, and clients is also evidenced in the literature, demonstrating the extent to which "they contributed to a hostile and/or heterosexist *workplace climate*" (Galupo & Resnick, 2016, p. 285) and "exclude and single out queer subjects" (Willis, 2009, p. 636). But what about the experiences of LGBTQ2S+ workers in services and, in particular, with customers?

Providing a theoretical framework to the topic of LGBTQ2S+ service work, Hollibaugh and Weiss (2015) propose the notion of *queer precarity*, which recognizes the ways in which LGBTQ2S+ workers are made precarious not only by their overrepresentation in low-wage work, but also by how their "multiple genders, sexualities, and orientations intersect with the lived realities of class and race" (p. 19). At work, this leads to an employment relationship that extends beyond the traditional conception of economic precariousness; in addition to experiencing the insecurity that accompanies low-wage and contract work, workers are also vulnerable to discrimination from employers and violence on the job due to their identities, something that can lead to concealment and fear at work (Hollibaugh & Weiss, 2015). According to the authors, this is particularly pronounced for LGBTQ2S+ workers who are visibly "queer and gender non-conforming" (Hollibaugh & Weiss, 2015, p. 20)—exemplified by the fact that these workers are more susceptible to poverty, discrimination and violence.

Adding empirical weight to this theory is scholarship that works at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and labour studies. Echoing the aforementioned findings on violence, experiences of verbal harassment and physical assault directed at LGBTQ2S+ workers from customers has been documented (Willis, 2009; David, 2015), with name-calling often assuming a homophobic character (Willis, 2009). With regards to sexual harassment, Giuffre et al. (2008) documents how sexual orientation "adds another dimension to this harassment" (p. 265), with

lesbian and gay participants describing sexualized teasing and advances from clients in low-wage and professional services alike. Indeed, one lesbian participant recounted advances from men who interpreted her sexual orientation as a 'challenge', and two gay men described sexual joking—and even a case of stalking—from customers (Giuffre et al., 2008). While these particular incidents were perpetrated by straight customers in mainstream workplaces, Giuffre et al. also point to the prevalence of harassment in LGBTQ2S+-friendly spaces, with customers making unwanted advancements under the impression that it is acceptable in this type of environment.

Beyond incidents that can be classified as *harassment* and *assault* are interactions with customers that fall under *discrimination*, including reports of customers requesting a different service provider altogether (Humphrey, 1999). According to Ryan-Flood (2004), this discrimination may be partly informed by the very nature of service work itself; whereas manual or cognitive labour is often characterized by the labour process and product, service work may render the worker indistinguishable from the service they provide. This conflation is particularly problematic for LGBTQ2S+ workers, since "activities based on presumptions of heterosexuality are often required to sell services to clients" (Ryan-Flood, 2004, p. 11), and heteronormative gender performance may be expected from customers when purchasing a good or service.

The fourth form of violence, literature has also drawn attention to *microaggressions* against LGBTQ2S+ workers, or violence which is subtler and serves to reinforce workplace stratification. Indeed, qualitative research by Willis (2009, 2012) finds evidence of homophobic joking and homophobic exchanges between customers—interactions that can lead to feelings of unsafety for LGBTQ2S+ workers—and Galupo and Resnick (2016) show how microaggressions hurt job satisfaction, workplace relationships, and overall wellbeing. What is more, those who

are gender non-conforming in the service sector are similarly targeted and pressured to 'self-regulate' their gender performance, reflecting the hegemonic status of gender roles and heteronormativity of the workplace (Hines, 2010).

Finally, the literature shows how violence at work can lead to fear and concealment of workers' LGBTQ2S+ identities, something Hollibaugh and Weiss (2015) cite as a survival strategy in order to stay safe and employed at work. Indeed, fear of customers and clients is well documented in the literature on LGBTQ2S+ workers (Bowring & Brewis, 2009; Colgan et al., 2008; Humphrey, 1999), and LGBTQ2S+ participants in qualitative studies have reported concealing their identities to avoid negative interactions (Ryan-Flood, 2004; Willis, 2009). According to Ryan-Flood (2004), this was particularly common in low-wage service environments where union density is low and turnover is high, with workers often avoiding discrimination through concealment and leaving jobs when necessary for their safety or wellbeing.

Overall, while the research presented here represents an important foundation to the study of LGBTQ2S+ workers and interactive service work, there are gaps to be filled. In particular, only one of the studies mentioned in this section utilized quantitative data, and this study had a relatively small sample size of 100 and focused exclusively on microaggressions, leaving room for statistical investigations into the broader topic of customer violence (Galupo & Resnick, 2016). What is more, only one study on LGBTQ2S+ workers looked exclusively at low-wage service work and none of the studies examined customer violence specifically, suggesting a more in-depth analysis of the particularities that accompany work in the service sector is needed (David, 2015).

Resistance and Managerial Intervention

With the experiences of violence established, I will now turn to the implications of these interactions for workers, and what they do to resist them. For individuals who were the victim of customer violence, reactions ranged from decreased job satisfaction (Willness et al., 2007; Bishop & Hoel, 2008; Sloan, 2012) to mental health impacts such as depression (Bishop & Hoel, 2008), anxiety (Bishop et al., 2009), stress (Sloan, 2012), and emotional exhaustion (Grandey et al., 2004), in addition to strain from the necessary emotional labour associated with this work (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey et al., 2004; Constanti & Gibbs, 2005). What is more, while organizational impacts such as increased absenteeism and turnover, and decreased productivity and service quality have been documented (Willness et al., 2007; Yagil, 2008)—potentially providing impetus for management to ameliorate working conditions—these issues are likely outweighed by economic concerns, with management ultimately putting "profit before people" by using a service model that privileges the customer and endangers the worker (Boyd, 2002, p. 164).

The strategies used by workers to resist customer violence can be partitioned into individual and collective strategies. Individually, workers are shown to minimize their emotions in an attempt to get through abuse (Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Boyd, 2002), doing so by staying in role (Gurrier et al., 2000; Grandey et al., 2004) and even dismissing objectively abusive interactions as 'part of the job' (Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995). As Grandey et al. (2004) show, however, while these minimization methods for coping may help workers get through abusive interactions, they ultimately help the employer and maintain the primacy of customer service over workers' health and safety. When workers opted to address the issue through more direct means, such as confronting the customer directly (Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Constanti & Gibbs,

2005; Bishop et al., 2009) and involving their employers (Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Gurrier et al, 2000), they were exposed to potential discipline and even job loss (Gurrier et al, 2000; Bishop et al., 2005), demonstrating the limited efficacy of individualized responses.

Resisting customer abuse collectively constitutes a second set of strategies utilized by workers in the service sector. Indeed, coordinated efforts between different *groups* of frontline workers within an organization is shown to give workers increased autonomy from management when dealing with problematic customers (Subramanian & Suquet, 2018), and relationships between *co-workers* can be mobilized for support when confronting customers and in the aftermath of abuse (Hochschild, 1983; Bishop et al., 2005; Sloan, 2012). Further, co-worker support can even take the form of brief uses of humour in 'unmanaged spaces' (Gurrier et al, 2000; Bolton & Boyd, 2003), creating 'communities of coping' (Korczynski, 2003) within the workplace to transform emotional labour from individual to a more collective form (Hochschild, 1983). While these collective resistance strategies proved effective at mitigating the negative effects of customer violence on employee wellbeing in some cases (Korczynski, 2003; Subramanian & Suquet, 2018), it is additionally important to note that they are not always capable of surmounting the stress associated with abusive work environments (Sloan, 2012).

Finally, this discussion of resistance raises important questions about the role of management in confronting customer violence. Indeed, research demonstrates how managerial imperatives around service quality minimized employees' ability to confront harassers (Hughes & Tadic, 1998; Constanti & Gibbs, 2005), with some managers going so far as to expect workers to field sexual advances from customers as part of the job (Filby, 1992), and claim that violence from customers is indicative of bad customer service and thus the responsibility of the employee (Bishop et al., 2005, p. 592). What is more, Boyd (2002) draws attention to the ways in which

work intensification and poor training in organizations exacerbates incidences of violence, leaving employees overwhelmed and ill-equipped to handle irate customers. When managers did intervene, their support for workers was shown to reduce the negative effects of abuse, but this appeared to be a near-aberration in the literature (Deery et al., 2002).

In sum, the literature on service work and employee-customer relations has a substantial theoretical and empirical base that highlights the experiences and resistance efforts of workers in the service sector. Nevertheless, significant gaps emerge with regards to the role of identity and experiences of marginalized groups—particularly for LGBTQ2S+ workers (although this literature is growing)—and the majority of studies that have been conducted hitherto used qualitative methods, leaving room for quantitative investigations into the topic. Thus, the research proposed at the outset of this thesis is both important and warranted, simultaneously addressing a question of great import *and* sizeable lacunae in the literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In order to uncover the trends in workplace experiences for LGBTQ2S+ service sector workers—as well as bring life to these trends through experiential data—I adopt a mixed methods approach, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data from workers to find the rates of violence from customers as well as the experiences from workers themselves. In this section I outline these data collection methods—as well as their corresponding modes of analysis—to contextualize the results to follow. Further, I explore attendant ethical considerations and ways in which my own positionality is implicated in this work, drawing attention to the care that must be taken when working with marginalized populations as well as my partial-insider status with participants.

Survey Data

Data Collection

For the quantitative portion of this project, a survey was circulated to members of the LGBTQ2S+ community in the Greater Windsor and Sudbury Areas for completion between July and November of 2018, garnering 673 participants. Designed jointly by researchers with the Work and Inclusion project and reviewed by community advisory committees and research partners, my role in the survey design was to draft questions capturing the experiences of service sector workers—questions which were then dispersed throughout the broader survey. In total, five questions related to customers were included in the survey, which also asked questions pertaining to the workplace and community and personal health.

To gauge rates of customer misbehaviour, I used the question that asked participants to select all that apply from a list operationalizing the types of violence workers could experience on the job from customers, with an option for participants to write-in their own experiences if they did not identify with the options provided, as well as select 'none of the above'. Operationalizing microaggressions and discrimination, participants could select from 'subtle forms of exclusion', 'not respecting gender pronouns', and 'being denied access to bathrooms'. To capture harassment and assault, participants were given the options 'verbal harassment or bullying', 'sexual harassment', and 'physical harassment or violence'.

Other questions included customers as an *option* in the list of answers—such as the question 'who are you out to at your current workplace?'—providing additional data on the impact of customers on participants' work experiences. These questions, combined with the abovementioned question on violence, generated a survey that captured the *types* of violence experienced, the *rates* at which they were experienced, and the *context* in which these incidents

take place. In addition, by collecting other demographic information, a number of variables can be controlled for—such as gender, sexual orientation, and racialization, to name a few—that allowed for an intersectional analysis. These variables, as well as how they were coded, will be presented in greater detail in the next section on data analysis.

To recruit participants to take the survey, respondent-driven sampling (RDS)—combined with community outreach—was used to engage the community in the research. Similar to snowball sampling, RDS relies on the interconnectedness of the research population to garner participants; where it differs is the manner in which this population is reached. Whereas conventional sampling provides incentives for *participation* in the study, RDS provides additional incentives for participants to *share* the research with other members of their community, allowing for researchers to access 'hidden populations' that they would otherwise be removed from (Meyer & Wilson, 2009, p. 28). To accomplish this, we offered participants a $5 gift card as an incentive for *participation*, as well as incentive to *share* the study by giving participants unique referral codes. Participants could then share these codes with their networks, and were entered in a draw to win an iPad if they successfully referred five people. In addition to participants sharing the survey with their community, advertisements were posted—both online and physically—directing traffic to the online survey, and partners—including unions—used social media accounts and email lists to disseminate further. This strategy was coupled with more intensive on-the-ground recruitment, with researchers and project partners attending community events—including Pride events in each city—to talk to potential participants face-to-face.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, data from the survey was exported as an Excel spreadsheet and reviewed for suspicious answers and other inconsistencies. In total, five participants were identified as taking the survey with ulterior motives (i.e. using the survey as an outlet for expressing hateful views), and these participants were removed from the dataset. In order to analyze the quantitative data collected through the survey, I used STATA, a statistical analysis software, to recode variables, create frequency tables, run cross-tabulations, and perform chi-square analysis on the aggregated data to establish relationships between violence from customers and participants' demographic variables and workplace characteristics. The survey also included space for participants to write-in their own answers, adding some lived experience to the quantitative data. These answers were also analyzed to introduce a qualitative component and centre the worker in the statistics.

Sample

The survey—which was available to LGBTQ2S+ workers in Windsor and Sudbury regardless of sector—received 673 responses. Of these responses, 208 were from low-wage service sector workers. Unless otherwise mentioned, the data analysis in this project will focus on the service worker subset, as opposed to the total sample.

Measures

The variables used in this project are outlined in detail in Table 1. In order to measure rates of violence in the sample, I created a composite binary variable that coded all participants who reported one or more types of violence from customers *in their current primary job* as 1, and those who selected none as 0. Participants who selected the option 'prefer not to answer' were dropped. In so doing, I was able to circumvent issues of small sample size for the different

types of violence, creating one broad variable that could achieve statistical significance in chi-square tests. What is more, since the various types of violence do not exist along a linear continuum, this binary and categorical variable also allowed for the use of two-way chi-square tests, using violence as the dependent variable.

Independent variables were selected based on the research question as well as previous findings in the service work literature, and can be divided into two categories: demographic variables and workplace characteristics. For demographic variables, *sexual orientation* and *gender identity* were important variables to include to gauge rates of violence against the LGBTQ2S+ community, and the literature on customer violence also demonstrates how *racialization* can be a factor (Filby, 1992; Gurrier et al., 2000; Grandey et al., 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009; David, 2015). For workplace characteristics, questions revolved around participants' current and primary job. *Union membership* was important to analyze given unions' role in protecting workers, as well as research that suggests that unions have not always attended to LGBTQ2S+ workers' issues in service environments (Ryan-Flood, 2004). *Work situation* (which describes whether workers are permanently employed, on contract, etc.) was used as a proxy for precarious work—a feature of Hollibaugh and Weiss' (2015) notion of 'queer precarity' they say compounds LGBTQ2S+ workers' marginalization and vulnerability. In order to gauge workers' comfort reporting customer violence to management, *comfort raising concerns with management* was also included as a workplace variable. Finally, *alcohol in the workplace* was included due to the multiple studies that identified intoxication as a contributing factor in customer violence (Filby, 1992; Boyd, 2002; Fleming & Harvey, 2002), and *'out' to customers* was included to see whether concealment altered participants' experiences.

For the key *independent* variables, recodes were necessary to achieve an adequate number of observations for each category. To capture how participants identified their sexual orientation, bisexual and pansexual respondents were grouped together—as were those who selected 'not sure' or 'questioning'—narrowing the sexual orientation variable down from 11 categories to 9. Gender identity was also recoded to reduce the number of categories: transwomen, transmen, non-binary, and genderqueer participants were combined into a single 'trans/non-binary' category, and those who selected intersex, Two-Spirit, or elected to write-in their own gender identity were classified under 'other gender identity'[4]. Operationalizing race required more drastic changes. First, I used ethnicity as a proxy for racialization in order to create a category for Indigeneity. I then created a new variable that coded respondents into three categories: racialized as white, racialized as non-white, and Indigenous. While undoubtedly reducing granularity, this method allowed for a reading of the effects of racialization and Indigeneity on participants' experiences while also preserving statistical significance with enough observations in each category.

Other independent variables were also coded from the dataset for use in the chi-square analysis. As a proxy for precarity, the *types* of jobs participants worked were compiled into five categories: contract, part-time seeking full-time, permanent, self-employed, temporary, and unemployed. Union membership, region, 'out' to customers, and the presence of alcohol in the workplace were all coded into binary variables, with alcohol coded manually by assigning a 0 or 1 to participants based on whether their stated primary occupation was in a licensed environment. A complete list of these variables and their recoded categories can be found in the table below (Table 1).

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[4] Intersex and Two-Spirit were included in 'other gender identity' due to few observations for each (n=5 and n=9 respectively).

Table 1 Variable Descriptions

Dependent Variable	Description
Violence from customers	- Binary variable for rates of violence - Source question: In your current job, have you experienced any of these from customers or clients due to your sexual orientation, the way you express your gender, or both? - Recoded categories: *yes* (yes to one or more of: subtle forms of exclusion, not respecting gender pronouns, verbal harassment and bullying, physical harassment or violence, sexual harassment, being denied access to bathrooms, or other), *no* (yes to none of the above)
Demographic Independent Variables	**Description**
Gender identity	- Indicates participants' gender identity - Source question: Which of the following best describes your present gender identity? - Recoded categories: *cisgender man*, *cisgender woman*, *trans/non-binary* (transman + transwoman + non-binary + genderqueer), *other* (intersex + Two-Spirit + other)
Sexual orientation	- Indicates participants' sexual orientation - Source question: How do you identify your sexual orientation? - Recoded categories: *heterosexual*, *bisexual/pansexual* (bisexual + pansexual), *lesbian*, *gay*, *queer*, *Two-Spirit*, *asexual*, *questioning/not sure* (questioning + not sure), *other*
Race	- Indicates participants' racialized identity - Source question: which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group? - Recoded categories: *racialized as white* (white), *racialized as non-white* (Arab + bi-racial/multi-ethnic + Black + Chinese + Filipino + Japanese + Korean + Latin American/Hispanic + South Asian + Southeast Asian + West Asian + other), *Indigenous* (Métis + Inuit + First Nations)
Region	- Indicates the region in which participants go to work - Source question: Which region do you work in? - Recoded categories: *Windsor*, *Sudbury*
Workplace Independent Variables	**Description**
Union membership	- Indicates whether participants are in a union - Source question: In the job where you work the most hours, are you in a union? - Recoded categories: *union*, *non-union*
Work situation	- Indicates participants' work situation as a proxy for

	precarity - Source question: Over the past year, which of the following best describes your paid work situation for the job where you currently work the most hours? - Recoded categories: *contract* (contract full-time + contract part-time), *permanent* (permanent part-time, permanent full-time, permanent full-time with variable hours, part-time seeking full-time), *self-employed* (self-employed, self-employed part-time), *temporary* (temporary long-term contract, temporary short-term contract), *Unemployed*
Comfort raising concerns with management	- Indicates how comfortable participants feel raising concerns about discrimination with management - Source question: How comfortable would you feel raising a concern with your current employer about unfairness or discrimination based on your sexual orientation or how you express your gender? - Recoded categories: *not comfortable* (not comfortable at all + not very comfortable), *unsure*, *comfortable* (somewhat comfortable + very comfortable)
Alcohol in the workplace	- Indicates whether alcohol is present and consumed in participants' workplaces - Manually recoded based on the question: What is your current job? - Recoded categories: *alcohol*, *no alcohol* (participants manually recoded into categories based on job title, i.e. servers coded into *alcohol*, fast food cashiers coded into *no alcohol*)
'Out' to customers	- Indicates whether participants are 'out' about their gender identity or sexual orientation to customers - Source question: Who are you 'out' to at your current workplace? [Clients/customers] - Recoded categories: *yes*, *no*

Descriptive Analysis – Frequencies

Frequency tables served two important functions in preparing and analyzing the quantitative data for this project. Prior to recoding variables, I used frequency tables to assess the distribution of observations for each variable, identifying categories that could be consolidated in order to increase the explanatory value of cross-tabulations and chi-square analysis—see previous discussion. In the first stage of data *analysis*, I generated frequency tables to ascertain

broad findings about the rates of violence in the sample, tabulating the binary 'violence' variable as well as the violence sub-variables that represented each type of violence participants could choose in the survey (i.e. the constituent parts of the violence variable representing sexual harassment, disrespecting pronouns, etc.).

Chi-Square Analysis

Variables were also cross-tabulated with one another to examine their interrelationships. To distinguish between statistically significant and insignificant results, chi-square tests were conducted on all cross-tabulations, and p-values higher than 0.05 (or less than 95% confidence) were interpreted as insignificant results. Tests were conducted between the dependent violence variable and gender identity, sexual orientation, race, region, union membership, work situation, comfort raising concerns to management, 'out' at work, and alcohol in the workplace, using chi-square analysis to see if participants' demographics or workplace characteristics led to significant differences in rates of violence from customers. Additional tests were run on each of the violence sub-variables (microaggressions, disrespecting gender pronouns, verbal harassment, physical violence, sexual harassment, being denied access to bathrooms, other) and the demographic variables (gender identity, race, sexual orientation) to see if other variations were significant.

Interview Data

Data Collection

Adding lived experience to the survey data, the qualitative portion of this project draws from in-depth interviews with LGBTQ2S+ workers in Windsor and Sudbury, conducted by myself and other members of the Work and Inclusion project in the summer and fall of 2019. In total, 43 interviews were conducted (22 in Windsor and 21 in Sudbury), and all of the

participants who had recent and relevant work experience in the low-wage service sector (i.e.

food service and accommodation, retail, arts and entertainment, and other low-wage services)

were analyzed for this thesis—seven from Sudbury and four from Windsor. Participants ranged

in age from 21 to 68, and a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations were captured by

this sample. One participant identified as racialized non-white and another two participants

identified as Indigenous (see Table 2 for complete list of participant demographics).

Table 2 Participant Demographics

Name	Pronouns	Demographic information	Industry
Brenda (P1)	She/her	Bisexual cisgender woman	Receptionist
Jeffrey (P2)	He/him	Transman	Food service
Lori (P3)	She/her	Bisexual cisgender woman, Indigenous	Food service
George (P4)	He/him	Bisexual cisgender man	Other service
Katherine (P5)	She/her	Pansexual cisgender woman	Retail
Harry (P6)	He/him	Transman	Retail
Kyle (P7)	He/him	Transman, Indigenous	Food service
Avery (P8)	They/them	Non-binary, racialized	Food service
Parker (P9)	They/them	Non-binary	Retail
Rachel (P10)	She/her	Transwoman	Arts
Riley (P11)	They/them	Non-binary	Retail

Recruitment for interviews used contact information collected during the survey phase of

the project, where participants were given the opportunity to submit their contact information if

they were interested in a follow-up interview. Of the 673 participants who took part in the survey,

278 indicated a willingness to be interviewed and each was contacted using their preferred

method of communication to book interviews. While this strategy did not yield the number of

participants in each city we were looking for, additional community outreach at Pride and other

events—as well as referrals and outreach from community partners—helped us to compile a

sample that was both large enough to achieve saturation, and was also composed of diverse

gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnic backgrounds, and occupations, among other salient

demographics. Interviews took approximately one hour to conduct and were done in-person,

asking questions on a range of topics and following a semi-structured format that allowed for the

interview to follow the narrative and experiences of each individual participant.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were coded both *deductively* and *inductively* using qualitative

analysis software NVivo12 to identify themes and trends in the experiences of LGBTQ2S+

service sector workers. By coding *deductively*, I connected themes in the data to those

established by the literature and theoretical frameworks that served as the basis for my research,

answering the main research questions outlined at the outset of this paper. I also allowed new

themes to emerge using an inductive approach, parsing the interviews line by line for themes that

I may not have expected but were nonetheless present in the data. In practice, this involved

formulating a list of codes *prior* to analyzing the transcripts (*microaggressions*, *discrimination*,

harassment, *assault*, *resistance*, *managerial intervention*, *fear*, *concealment*, and *racism*) as well

as creating new codes *throughout* the coding process to capture unanticipated findings (these

were *positive experiences*, *mental health*, *selective concealment*, and *job leaving*). Once

transcripts were coded, prominent themes emerged and important quotations and stories could be

selected to signify these findings.

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Ethics

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Considering the ways in which they have a direct bearing on the discussion of results—in

particular for my qualitative analysis—it is additionally important to discuss the ethical

considerations of this research project. As relatively small cities with populations under 250,000,

Windsor and Sudbury also have concomitantly small LGBTQ2S+ communities, characterized by

fewer community hubs and a smaller population when compared to larger metropolitan regions. Given the sensitive nature of this research—where participants shared sensitive experiences at work and with other members of the community—it is of paramount importance that the identities of participants are protected, and that extra care is taken to obscure *stories* and *demographic information* that could render participants identifiable to their employers, community members, and even *each other*.

When presenting the qualitative results, participants' demographic information will be presented selectively, and quotes may be redacted using brackets to indicate any alterations. Instead of referring to participants using various identifiers, such as region and age, participants will be given a pseudonym, and only the most important demographic information, such as gender identity, will be given. Specific job titles will also be obscured, emphasizing *sector* over *position* (i.e. Jeffrey, a transman in food service). While an unfortunate consequence of obscuring these characteristics is reduced granularity when considering regional and age-related differences, the interview data did not yield significant regional disparities, nor did region or age form the basis for any story that was used. These desires for specificity in qualitative analysis are also undoubtedly outweighed by the duty to protect participants who could face job loss, marginalization, or even violence should their identities become known.

Positionality

As a white, cis-gendered male, who is able-bodied, straight, and from a middle-class socioeconomic background, I derive a great deal of privilege and power from my identity. While my youth as a 23-year-old—who is frequently mistaken for a teenager—may impact how some read me as a researcher, I am nonetheless a graduate student at a post-secondary institution, conferring a degree of authority that not all individuals have access to. But what are the social

qualities of my research participants, and how is my identity implicated in this research? For the LGBTQ2S+ workers who responded to the survey and engaged in interviews, the community is by definition heterogeneous. While common experiences of systemic marginalization in a heteronormative society exist, members of this community range in their sexuality, gender identity, and sex, as well as racial, ethnic, and class background and ability (Willis, 2009). While bound together by their position in the labour process as service workers, they nonetheless approached the research from a variety of backgrounds and social qualities.

When exploring my positionality *vis-à-vis* my participants, the liminality between insider and outsider status—deemed 'the space between' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and 'outsider within' (Watts, 2006)—is the space I occupied in the majority of my research. Indeed, I maintained a partial-insider status due to both my *research* and my *lived experience* working in the service sector, the latter allowing me insight into the language and culture that surrounds service sector employment (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Importantly, though, this insider-status as a service worker did not grant me a common understanding with all of my participants, since service work is a broad designation, and the identities of my participants shaped their experiences of work in ways that mine did not (Finlay, 2002).

With these insider commonalities addressed, I was also an outsider in key ways. As someone who does not identify as a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, this represents a salient point of difference between me and my participants that had implications for my ability to understand and interpret their experiences (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). What is more, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community have been systemically marginalized as a group, potentially putting me in a position of unbalanced power (England, 1994). Thus, a variety of strategies were employed to overcome these concerns. In particular, I was fortunate to be a member of a larger research

team that organized community-advisory committees in both Windsor and Sudbury, comprised of members of the community. These partnerships, as well as the team of researchers who are a part of this project, allowed for opportunities for dialogue in the research process, creating multiple inputs and accountability to help ensure proper representation (England, 1994).

Chapter 4: Quantitative Results

Participant Characteristics

The largest category of service sector workers came from food service and accommodation (37.02%), followed by arts and entertainment (28.85%), retail (24.04%), and other services (10.10%). 21.03% of the sample were union members, and 60.19% of participants were in permanent employment. Respondents were also disproportionately young *and* low-income, with 64.00% under the age of 30 and a third (33.33%) in the lowest income bracket (under $10,000/year). Geographically, 57.69% of participants worked in Sudbury and 42.31% in Windsor—a trend that mirrored response rates to the survey overall.

With regards to the social identities of participants, the majority of respondents were racialized as white (64.43% in Sudbury, and 79.78% in Windsor), and a significant percentage of respondents were racialized non-white (16.17% in Sudbury, 16.10% in Windsor) and Indigenous (19.40% in Sudbury, 4.12% in Windsor)—numbers moderately higher than population proportions for each (except the racialized non-white population in Windsor)[5]. Demographic characteristics related to the LGBTQ2S+ community, including gender identity and sexual orientation, were also diverse; the majority of participants identified as cisgender women (43.96%), followed by cisgender men (26.57%), trans/non-binary (19.81%), and other (9.66%).

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[5] According to 2016 census data, the population of Sudbury is 6% racialized non-white and 9.8% Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2017b). In Windsor, those statistics are 22.9% and 2.5% respectively (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

For sexual orientation, bisexual and pansexual respondents were a combined 29.33% of the

sample, and gay, lesbian, and queer respondents were also significantly represented (see Table 3).

Table 3 Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender Identity		
Cisgender man	55	26.57
Cisgender woman	91	43.96
Trans/non-binary	41	19.81
Other	20	9.66
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	8	3.85
Bisexual/pansexual	61	29.33
Lesbian	35	16.83
Gay	47	22.60
Queer	30	14.42
Two-Spirit	8	3.85
Asexual	7	3.37
Questioning/not sure	5	2.40
Other	7	3.37
Race		
Racialized as white	143	68.75
Racialized as non-white	35	16.83
Indigenous	30	14.42
Region		
Windsor	88	42.31
Sudbury	120	57.69

Descriptive Analysis – Frequency Tables

Of the 208 service workers who completed the survey, 52.24% reported that they had

experienced *some form* of violence from customers at work (Table 4). In terms of the *types* of

violence reported, microaggressions were most common, with 25.00% of the sample reporting

this in their current job. Verbal abuse emerged as the second most common at 20.19%, trailed by

disrespecting pronouns (13.94%), sexual harassment (6.73%), physical harassment (4.81%),

other forms of violence (4.32), and being denied access to bathrooms (1.92%).

Table 4 Frequency Table Results for Violence at Work

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Violence from customers at work (any) (n=201)		
Yes	105	52.24
No	96	47.76
Subtle forms of exclusion (n=208)		
Yes	52	25.00
No	156	75.00
Verbal harassment (n=208)		
Yes	42	20.19
No	166	79.81
Disrespecting pronouns (n=208)		
Yes	29	13.94
No	179	86.06
Sexual harassment (n=208)		
Yes	14	6.73
No	194	93.27
Physical harassment (n=208)		
Yes	10	4.81
No	198	95.19
Other forms of violence (n=208)		
Yes	9	4.32
No	199	95.67
Denied access to bathrooms (n=208)		
Yes	4	1.92
No	204	98.08

Chi-Square Analysis

The results of the chi-square analysis are partitioned into two sections: demographic variables, and workplace characteristics. The former analyzed how facets of participants' identities interacted with violence from customers, and the latter explored this interaction for aspects of participants' workplaces. Significant results emerged for both types of variable, with a greater number of workplace characteristics showing a statistically significant relationship with the binary violence variable.

Demographic Variables

Two-way analyses of demographic variables and the binary violence variable demonstrated how rates of violence did not apply to all segments of the sample evenly (see Table 5). Participants who identified as racialized non-white reported higher rates of violence than their white counterparts, with 71.88% reporting these experiences compared to 50.00% of those racialized as white ($p = 0.037$). When asked whether they suspected that their race or ethnicity played a role in motivating the incident(s), 34.86% of racialized non-white workers who reported violence from customers answered in the affirmative, and another 12.57% were unsure about the customers' motivations. Workers who were racialized non-white and Indigenous were also more likely to experience sexual harassment in the workplace when compared to those who were racialized as white; whereas only 3.50% of white workers reported experiencing sexual harassment from customers at work, 11.43% of workers racialized as non-white—and 16.67% of those were Indigenous—reported such an incident ($p = 0.016$) (Table 6). No other *types* of violence experienced by workers from customers varied significantly by race.

Table 5 Chi-Square Tests of Rates of Violence from Customers – Demographic Variables

| | Response | | | |
Independent Variable	Yes	No	χ^2	p-value
Gender Identity (n=200)				
Cisgender man	30 (54.55%)	25 (45.45%)	4.2669	0.234
Cisgender woman	39 (44.32%)	49 (55.68%)		
Trans/non-binary	23 (62.16%)	14 (37.84%)		
Other	8 (40.00%)	12 (60.00%)		
Sexual Orientation (n=201)				
Heterosexual	4 (50.00%)	4 (50.00%)	5.370	0.717
Bisexual/pansexual	24 (42.11%)	33 (57.89%)		
Lesbian	19 (57.58%)	14 (42.42%)		
Gay	24 (51.06%)	23 (48.94%)		
Queer	19 (63.33%)	11 (36.67%)		
Two-Spirit	4 (50.00%)	4 (50.00%)		
Asexual	4 (57.14%)	3 (42.86%)		
Questioning/not sure	2 (50.00%)	2 (50.00%)		

Other	5 (71.43%)	2 (28.57%)		
Race (n=201)				
Racialized as white	70 (50.00%)	70 (50.00%)	6.597*	0.037
Racialized as non-white	23 (71.88%)	9 (28.12%)		
Indigenous	12 (41.38%)	17 (58.62%)		
Region (n=201)				
Windsor	49 (56.98%)	37 (43.02%)	1.352	0.245
Sudbury	56 (48.70%)	59 (51.30%)		

*Chi-square is significant at 0.05 level

Table 6 Chi-Square Test of Rates of Sexual Harassment by Race

	Response			
Independent Variable	Yes	No	χ^2	p-value
Race (n=208)				
Racialized as white	5 (3.50%)	138 (96.50%)	8.331*	0.016
Racialized as non-white	4 (11.43%)	31 (88.57%)		
Indigenous	5 (16.67%)	25 (83.33%)		

*Chi-square is significant at 0.05 level

While no significant findings emerged for sexual orientation, participants who identified as lesbian, queer, or asexual reported higher rates of violence than those with other sexual orientations. For gender identity, workers who did not identify as cisgender—particularly those identified as trans/non-binary or other—reported the *highest* rates of violence from customers and, although this was a statistically insignificant finding ($p = 0.234$), these trends reflect those of the broader sample (Table 7, $p = 0.000$). Significance also emerged in the *types* of violence experienced by service workers, with trans/non-binary participants at the highest risk for experiencing 'disrespecting pronouns', reporting rates of 34.15% ($p = 0.000$)—much higher than the 8.22% of cisgender workers who reported the same (Table 8). No significant regional differences emerged in the analysis.

Table 7 Chi-Square Test of Violence by Gender Identity (entire sample)

Independent Variable	Response		χ^2	p-value
	Yes	No		
Gender Identity (n=628)				
Cisgender man	106 (50.96%)	102 (49.04%)	28.209*	0.000
Cisgender woman	95 (35.06%)	176 (64.94%)		
Trans/non-binary	61 (62.89%)	36 (37.11%)		
Other	29 (55.77%)	23 (44.23%)		

*Chi-square is significant at 0.05 level

Table 8 Chi-Square Test of Disrespecting Pronouns by Gender Identity

Independent Variable	Response		χ^2	p-value
	Yes	No		
Gender Identity (n=207)				
Cisgender man	2 (3.64%)	53 (96.36%)	19.418*	0.000
Cisgender woman	10 (10.99%)	81 (89.01%)		
Trans/non-binary	14 (34.15%)	27 (65.85%)		
Other	3 (15.00%)	17 (85.00%)		

*Chi-square is significant at 0.05 level

Workplace Characteristics

Tests were also conducted between the dependent violence variable and workplace characteristic variables, illuminating additional relationships shaping rates of violence from customers (Table 9). While only 21.03% of workers in low-wage services were members of a union, unionized workers reported violence and discrimination from customers at a rate of 68.29%, 17.96% higher than their non-union counterparts ($p = 0.041$). This finding prompted an investigation into other aspects of the relationship between workers and their union, uncovering that less than half (41.46%) would consider going to their union if they faced discrimination at work, and only 26.83% were out to stewards and staff (Table 10).

The type of jobs participants worked also affected rates of violence from customers. Self-employed and contract workers reported the highest rates of violence, at 76.19% and 69.23% respectively, compared to lower rates for permanent, unemployed, and temporary workers ($p = 0.007$). Findings regarding alcohol in the workplace showed slightly higher rates of violence for

those in industries *without* alcohol, but this finding was insignificant ($p = 0.350$). Participants

who were more comfortable raising concerns with management reported significantly lower rates

of violence than those who were less comfortable (50.51% compared to 65.08%, $p = 0.019$), and

no significant differences emerged with regards to being 'out' to customers.

Table 9 Chi-Square Tests of Rates of Violence – Workplace Characteristics

Independent Variable	Response		χ^2	p-value
	Yes	No		
Union Membership (n=192)				
Union	28 (68.29%)	13 (31.71%)	4.190*	0.041
Non-union	76 (50.33%)	75 (49.67%)		
Work situation (n=195)				
Contract	27 (69.23%)	12 (30.77%)	14.229*	0.007
Permanent	57 (45.97%)	67 (54.03%)		
Self-employed	16 (76.19%)	5 (23.81%)		
Temporary	1 (20.00%)	4 (80.00%)		
Unemployed	2 (33.33%)	4 (66.67%)		
Alcohol in the Workplace (n=142)				
Yes	13 (40.62%)	19 (59.38%)	0.873	0.350
No	55 (50.00%)	55 (50.00%)		
Comfort Raising Concerns with Management (n=200)				
Comfortable	50 (50.51%)	49 (49.49%)	7.892*	0.019
Unsure	14 (36.84%)	24 (63.16%)		
Not comfortable	41 (65.08%)	22 (34.92%)		
'Out' to Customers (n=201)				
Yes	19 (55.88%)	15 (44.12%)	0.218	0.641
No	86 (51.50%)	81 (48.50%)		

*Chi-square is significant at 0.05 level

Table 10 Frequency Table for 'Out' to Union and Going to Union for Help

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Are you 'out' to people in your union? (n=41)		
Yes	11	26.83
No	30	73.17
Would you go to your union for help if you faced discrimination? (n=41)		
Yes	17	41.46
No	24	58.54

Qualitative Component: Centering the Worker

In addition to capturing the numerical data pertaining to violence from customers, the survey also provided participants space to share their experiences behind these statistics in the question on customer violence. Drawing from the qualitative data provided by participants who opted to share their experiences in writing, this section will, in brief, attempt to highlight the lived realities of violence at work for survey participants, with additional qualitative data from the interviews discussed in the next chapter. Experiences of *discrimination* were alluded to in a number of responses by participants. As one trans woman reported: "Some male customers don't think I know how to do my job because I'm a woman. They'll ask male coworkers before asking me". This sentiment was echoed by another participant—a lesbian who identified as genderqueer—who indicated that they had experienced "a client requesting they be served by another person" at work.

Several participants also shared experiences that would qualify as *microaggressions*. Most common were statements about 'generalized' homophobia from customers that poisoned the work environment; as one queer woman put it, her workplace featured customers "making jokes but not about me per se", as well as a sense of "implicit bias". According to an arts and entertainment worker, "harassment towards the LGBTQ2S+ community" was common, and one cashier commented on the prevalence of "jokes about other gay people" at work. Another described the ways in which uniforms were used to reify normative gender performance in the workplace, with customers making "requests to conform to [the] male dress code".

Chapter 5: Qualitative Results

In order to better understand the relationships uncovered in the previous chapter, I analyzed all 11 interviews with service workers conducted by myself and other researchers with

the Work and Inclusion project—seven from Sudbury and four from Windsor (see Table 11).

Over the course of this section, I present participants' experiences of customer violence, first

outlining the experiences of microaggressions, discrimination, harassment, and assault shared by

participants. I then discuss how these experiences generated fear, encouraged concealment, and

affected participants' choices around where to work and when to leave, followed by participants'

methods of resisting violence and perceptions of the managerial response to violence. Finally, I

turn to discuss the positive interactions participants had with customers that emerged in the data.

Table 11 Interview Participant Information

Name	Pronouns	Demographic information	Industry
Brenda (P1)	She/her	Bisexual cisgender woman	Receptionist
Jeffrey (P2)	He/him	Transman	Food service
Lori (P3)	She/her	Bisexual cisgender woman, Indigenous	Food service
George (P4)	He/him	Bisexual cisgender man	Other service
Katherine (P5)	She/her	Pansexual cisgender woman	Retail
Harry (P6)	He/him	Transman	Retail
Kyle (P7)	He/him	Transman, Indigenous	Food service
Avery (P8)	They/them	Non-binary, racialized	Food service
Parker (P9)	They/them	Non-binary	Retail
Rachel (P10)	She/her	Transwoman	Arts
Riley (P11)	They/them	Non-binary	Retail

Experiences of Violence

Discrimination and Microaggressions

Three participants shared experiences of *discrimination* from customers, with negative

interactions ranging from differential treatment to the sharing of hateful views. Most overt were

customers who tried to control participants' actions, treating them as if their identities precluded

them from accessing certain spaces or performing duties; indeed, Jeffrey, a transman in food

service, experienced the former when customers complained about him using the men's

bathroom. Capitulating to these transphobic concerns, management sanctioned the spaces Jeffrey

did and did not have access to, exemplifying how the will of customers can have a

discriminatory influence on work conditions for LGBTQ2S+ people, as well as the 'daily

struggle' bathrooms pose for trans people (Griffin, 2009, p. 608). When Harry, a retail worker,

revealed his gender identity as a transman to a customer, his ability to perform his work with her

was similarly constrained:

> **Harry:** "she threw a fit … she just didn't want me touching her anymore. She had been
> totally fine with the [job] before. She loved how it was going or whatever. And then yeah
> she did not want me touching her. She said 'this is why people like you should not be
> allowed to…,' like you should be locked up essentially." (P6)

Similar to the discrimination documented by Humphrey (1999), where a different service

provider was requested based on prejudicial beliefs, Harry's experience left him shaken and

changed his relationship to his work: "after that some days are more sensitive than others" (P6).

In most cases discrimination was expressed through the voicing of prejudicial beliefs, and

while participants indicated that these experiences were still *negative*, they also tended to

downplay their impact relative to other instances of violence. During Brenda's work as a

receptionist, she recounted how customers' homophobic attitudes, while not director at her,

nonetheless affected her personally:

> **Brenda:** "I was really shocked to hear some people talking in the waiting room, [clients]
> talking in the waiting room, who I thought would have been proactive, supportive, an ally,
> who said 'marriage is between a man and a woman, not two men and not two women, and
> don't put kids into it,' and stuff like this … 'marriage is between a man and a woman and
> don't bring kids into it because you don't know if they're going to touch the kids,'" (P1)

Although these remarks were not verbally abusive, they were still *discriminatory*, and reinforced

Brenda's discomfort with her sexual orientation around customers.

Also prevalent in the sample were experiences of microaggressions, faced by seven of the

participants. For trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming participants, these subtle

mistreatments frequently revolved around misgendering and the use of pronouns. While often

framed as interactions that were not *malicious*, participants nonetheless expressed feeling shaken

by these experiences, separating the customer's intention from the impact it had on them. Rachel,

a transwoman, and Kyle, a transman, recounted two such encounters:

> **Rachel:** "I know it wasn't intentional because the interaction before that was fine, [but]
> just as the person was leaving and not even looking at me when I kind of gave him that
> greeting, he said 'ok thank you Sir' and I'm sure I just went pure white for a couple
> seconds and then you know there's another customer coming up and I'm like, I shook it
> off for them" (P10)

> **Kyle:** Every once in a while, they did [misgender me] and like it would affect me but it
> wasn't… like I was going to see them once and they're buying their coffee and leaving so
> it wasn't worth correcting them at the time. (P7)

Termed 'gender policing' by Payne and Smith (2016, p. 129), microaggressions are but one

manner through which "cultural expectations for 'normal' masculine and feminine expression"

are enforced, and trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people are often the targets of

these actions. Indeed, others faced customers whose motivations were thought to be more

dubious, presenting a more explicit illustration of policing; for Jeffrey, this occurred when a

customer directly challenged his identity by questioning the validity of his name:

> **Jeffrey:** "I've had people that comment at work because I have 'Mr.' in front of my name
> because I'm not very passing, even in my binder and packer, I'm not very passing, so I've
> had people make comments at work. I've had people say 'that's not your name.'" (P2)

Katherine, a cisgender woman, also faced instances of misgendering that she found confounding,

entertaining the notion that these mistakes were intentional:

> **Katherine: "**I got called sir a couple times which was funny because I mean think about it;
> I have my hat on, all you can see is the shaved sides, you can't see any of my hair at all,
> big baggy [uniform], and if I'm not wearing makeup… like I'm not wearing makeup right
> now and I don't think I look like a man but like people literally called me 'Sir'. And I'm
> like 'I don't sound like a Sir either.' What are you looking at to determine [this]?" (P5)

What is more, these subtle mistreatments extended to avoidance and non-verbal indicators of disrespect from customers that she believed might have transpired due to prejudice:

> **Katherine:** "I don't know if it's because I was annoying or if it's because of how I presented myself but they would definitely try to ignore me the best that they could … Yeah or like scoff a little bit." (P5)

While potentially inadvertent or the result of some other factor, Katherine's experience of this avoidance was intimately connected to her own awareness of her gender presentation at work; these small acts carrying symbolic weight that affected her comfort with customers and in the workplace at large. As Willis (2009) explains, the act of 'ignoring' can communicate to LGBTQ2S+ workers that they are unwelcome, adding to a sense of exclusion that already pervades heteronormative environments. Katherine's experiences as a cisgender woman are also supported by the literature on gender non-conformity and violence, which have found higher rates of violence for non-conforming women (Gordon & Meyer, 2007), and suggest that individuals who "refuse to be sexually objectified" and downplay femininity may be at a greater risk for mistreatment (Dennison & Saguy, 2014, p. 383).

Harassment and Assault

Slightly less common in the sample, six participants shared experiences of harassment and assault from customers that included verbal harassment, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and/or physical assault. For Katherine, being verbally berated by customers was simply a *feature* of work and not necessarily the product of prejudicial beliefs. Despite this assertion, Katherine maintained that these interactions negatively affected her:

> **Katherine:** "They would just call you normal retail worker shit like 'you're stupid and useless and I'm never coming back here again. Your service is terrible.' It was the worst." (P5)

Echoing this normalization of verbal harassment, Kyle recapitulated what is essentially a

managerial sentiment, framing irate customers as 'just part of the job' while removing these

experiences from his identity as a transman:

> **Kyle:** "it's just part of the job so I don't really see it as any fault on anybody or anything to do with my gender or anything like that. It was just something that goes on with working anywhere really." (P7)

This finding is supported by previous research that suggests that these normalizing tendencies

are common among service workers, potentially worsened by "the perceived futility of reporting

such incidents" (Boyd, 2002, p. 166; Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995).

Straying from this impulse to normalize, others established direct links between their

identity and customer invective and problematized these interactions. Conjuring imagery

associated with bullying, Brenda identified these dynamics as 'teasing' in her workplace, with

repeat customers identifying her as a target due to her bisexuality and calling her 'little bi-girl':

"their idea was 'oh, so we got somebody to tease'" (P1). As Willis (2009) points out, verbal

harassment of LGBTQ2S+ workers often includes "sexually subordinate messages about their

sexual and gender identity" (p. 639), observed here in the sexualized connotations of the words

'little bi-girl'. Jeffrey's experiences were expressed in more violent terms: "I've been called

'tranny trash' twice now" (P2), adding that some customers repeatedly and aggressively refused

to use his pronouns despite being corrected multiple times:

> **Jeffrey:** "I've actually had a customer who told management that she would never be back unless I was fired because I stood firm whenever she would call me 'she.' I'm like 'he.' That was one of the ones that called me 'tranny trash.'"

Lori, who was selectively out to clients, faced similar attacks on her identity, but attributed

them to her racialization and Indigeneity rather than her sexual orientation:

> **Lori:** "I look a little bit more native now then I used to but I think I got a couple of casual comments here and there… but it's definitely been worse since going into the service industry because there's more time to talk to people."

One such racist interaction occurred after she had divulged her Indigeneity to an inquiring patron:

> **Lori:** "I'm like 'oh, I'm half Native.' And he's like 'oh Native, you must love drinking.' Later from across the bar he yells at me 'can I call you Native Girl?' I was like 'absolutely not, no you cannot.' So when people do know I get more flack for being Indigenous than I do for being queer."

In addition to these experiences of verbal harassment, five participants recounted sexual violence at the hands of customers—violence that ranged from harassment to assault. Before Jeffrey transitioned, advances came from customers who thought they could 'change' him, reflecting Giuffre et al.'s (2008, p. 265) finding that sexual harassment can stem from the notion of a sexual 'challenge':

> **Jeffrey:** "I think also some of the guys were even more harassing because … they thought they could change me. Yeah I think, at least personally I think, they were a little more insistent because of it." (P2)

Jeffrey also situated sexual violence in the atmosphere of the establishment he worked at, where intoxication was common and harassment was thought to be acceptable—by patrons *and* management. In this particular instance, Jeffrey also recounts an instance of sexual assault prior to his transition:

> **Jeffrey:** "there was no help from management or anyone … I still would get a lot of harassment by customers, especially once they started drinking. So like I have had my ass grabbed and told 'I can turn you back onto that old pogo stick.'" (P2)

Jeffrey was not the only participant for whom sexual advances occurred in front of their employer, illustrating the brazen manner in which customers felt entitled to workers' bodies. For Avery, management simply watched the event unfold before apologizing later: "There was one time a customer came in and started sexually harassing me in front of my employer" (P8).

Harry's experience was marginally better insofar as management intervened and ejected the customer from the store after he was sexually assaulted:

> **Harry:** "I had a group of teenage boys come in and start harassing me one time and one of them slapped me on the butt, [management was] like 'get out. We're calling security.'"

While management was rarely found to be helpful in situations like this—something I will discuss in greater detail later—workplaces without supervision or co-worker support added an additional level of danger and isolation. Katherine, who often worked alone in, was approached and intimidated by a customer at a time when she had little recourse but the baseball bat behind the counter:

> **Katherine:** "he was just this gigantic man … much older than me, much older than me … and he was just like trying to get really close to me while I was talking to him about product and he asked me like if I wanted to go for a drink or if I wanted to re-enact [pornographic material] with him or if I wanted to… yeah it was nasty and I was just trying to inch my way back to my counter where my bat is." (P5)

At other times, Katherine described her place of work as being a sex-positive and inclusive space for the LGBTQ2S+ community. As Giuffre et al. (2008) explain, while important, safe spaces do not preclude the presence of violence in the workplace, with some customers mistaking this atmosphere of inclusion for one in which sexual advances are acceptable. These findings on sexual harassment and assault also complicate the existing literature on sexual violence against service workers—which has typically highlighted the greater risk for women (Filby, 1992; Gurrier et al., 2000; Fleming & Harvey, 2002)—showing the ways trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming workers are also vulnerable to this form of violence (Harry, Avery, and Katherine respectively).

Finally, physical assault was the least common form of violence experienced by participants from customers. Recounted only by Harry, this violence nonetheless represented a real occupational health and safety issue that resulted in serious injury:

Harry: "I did get punched in the face by a customer. That sucked … It was not due to any sort of discrimination other than they were mad about their [product] and a little bit unhinged. I sassed them a little bit I guess. It broke my two front teeth and now these are fake."

While ostensibly not related to his gender identity and thought to be an aberrant event with an 'unhinged' customer, this situation nevertheless illustrates the physical threat customers can pose to service workers, a possibility that contributes to feelings of fear and unsafety at work.

Fear, Concealment, and Job (In)Decision

Fear on the 'Shop Floor'

In addition to lived experience of violence from customers, fear permeated participants' workdays and followed them home in the form of exhaustion and stress. Lori conjured high school imagery to describe the environment in which she worked, as well as how it impacted her comfort levels: "It's basically like working in a locker room. It's a lot of old guys who … they make a lot of weird comments … most of them make me incredibly uncomfortable about it" (P3). Here, Lori's discomfort and fear is in part situated in the *masculinity* and *sexuality* that imbued her workplace, colouring her interactions with customers in much the same way as Filby (1992) described in his research on betting shops. As Filby explains, sexuality in these settings is expressed *verbally*, through *gaze*, and by *touch*, and can be "discomforting and hurtful" to the workers on the receiving end of this behaviour (1992, p. 29).

For Brenda, an older bisexual woman who at one point in her career in services worked alone for most of the day, this fear revolved around homophobic violence, and even her friends worried for her safety. While taking place over 15 years ago, she recounted this fear vividly: "What if someone was waiting, lurking behind … ready to pounce on me?" (P1) she asked rhetorically during the interview. "People were concerned … even some lesbians were saying 'just be careful, it's not going to be easy'" (P1). As a precaution against this violence—and

perhaps an antidote to her fears—she ultimately agreed to bring a friend's dog with her to work, in hopes that this companion would confer a degree of safety while on the job: "sometimes when people see her with a dog they are less likely to mess around" (P1).

Concealment

As a corollary of this fear, many participants regulated their performance and carefully selected who they would be 'out' to in order to reduce the risk of violence from customers, but, as Willis (2009) argues, 'the closet' "provided limited shelter from the direct effects of symbolically violent expressions" (p. 638). For Jeffrey, a transman in food service, concealing his gender identity initially took the form of 'hyper-feminizing' his gender performance, wearing heels, makeup and corsets to fit the expectations of the establishment he worked at—a process he described as 'exhausting'. After transitioning, concealment no longer became an option, something that alleviated some of this stress: "it just let me finally just *be* and not have to fake it till I make it anymore" (P2).

For Lori, a bisexual woman who began to present as queer after coming out, this decision was fraught with ambivalence when it came to her work in food service. "Where's the line between safety, personal safety versus, like, being a part of something bigger?" (P3) she asked, unsure of how to reconcile her desire to be active in the LGBTQ2S+ community with protecting herself. Indeed, what started as an act of self-expression became intricately connected to fears of fewer tips and an inability to pass in front of patrons, something that caused her stress when going into work and thinking about the future: "I'm worrying I'm not going to get the job, that I'd get less tips, and that people would be able to clock me as being queer" (P3). Ultimately, concealment for Lori became a matter of selective disclosure:

Lori: "I'm not out to most customers because most of them make me incredibly uncomfortable about it … I'm selective but in general my strategy is like assume it or don't assume it but I'm not going to out myself for no reason" (P3)

Others felt like they needed to conceal their identity entirely. As a non-binary person working in fast food, Parker felt like they were 'playing a part' at work—something they also described as 'exhausting'. When asked whether they would find being out at work liberating, fear of potential violence seemed to outweigh this goal: "I'd be too scared because I feel like certain people would follow me into the parking lot". (P9) With these fears acknowledged, Parker also recounted how symbolic acts that contravened this concealment—such as wearing a trans rights pin—opened the door to affirming customer interactions: "I was wearing my pin … and you know I got a couple good comments" (P9).

While most common in the sample, fear of customers' reactions was not the sole reason participants concealed their identity. During Brenda's work as a receptionist, concealment was at the behest of her employer: "I was out to my boss but he told me not to come out to the [clients] … he says 'don't come out to [clients], because I don't want to lose [clients] because of this" (P1). In this particular case, fear of customer reaction stemmed from the *employer*, who then enforced concealment and made her fear termination should she share her identity with patients. While likely influenced by homophobic attitudes, Brenda phrased her employer's decisions in economic terms, highlighting a desire for profit maximization that had negative implications for her relationships with customers. According to Brenda, this attitude theoretically extended to other aspects of her working conditions as well, suggesting that her employer would take advantage of any cost-saving measure he could, regardless of how discriminatory it may be: "I mean this guy was like a cheapskate. He was. If they had a pay scale for gays I never would have gotten that" (P1).

For Lori and Avery, management's regulation was more tacit and focused on gender presentation. When Lori cut her hair short, her employer inquired if she planned to let it grow back in a manner suggesting that he would prefer longer hair: "he was like 'I'm your boss I'm allowed to ask,' but he wasn't being serious but he would have liked me to grow it out" (P3). Avery was told more explicitly that certain elements of their performance—which they identified as gender non-conforming—were unacceptable for work as a receptionist: "I had to change my hair. I had to hide my tattoos. I had to dress in feminine clothes essentially" (P8). Uniform requirements were similarly restrictive on the gender expression for Katherine, a pansexual woman working in a retail environment. While the ways in which she presented as queer were officially condoned by management, she nonetheless experienced "harsher" treatment on the basis of this presentation: "Like they liked you less if you did [present differently]. You know you weren't seen as the same level of professionalism as the other people if you were different like that" (P5).

As Filby (1992) argues, management's regulation of heterosexuality—and, by extension, normative gender performance—is rooted in a desire to mobilize sexuality "as a resource for commercial purposes" (p. 30), a unique feature of service work. As was the case for Lori, Avery, and Katherine, this regulation is often conveyed through tacit conversation or strategic policies, reflecting the amorphousness of sexuality and lack of "audit mechanisms" (p. 30) to ensure workers comport themselves in light of such requirements. For Brenda, this economic relationship to heterosexuality was more explicitly articulated, less related to the mobilization of sexuality *per se*, and more the stigma her employer believed was attached to her sexual orientation.

Safety and (Im)Mobility

When it came to deciding where to work and when to leave, acceptance and safety in service work played an influential role for participants. In job searches, even subtle indicators of social conservatism foreclosed certain job prospects; for Jeffrey, a sticker he spotted on the hiring manager's phone suggested a degree of religiosity that he decided did not bode well for his employment there:

> **Jeffrey:** "There was a sticker on the manager's cell phone that [said] 'support god's choices for you' and it was like yeah this would not be a place where I can be out. I was like 'yeah that's not going to happen.' I did one interview. They called me back for a second and I said 'I'm sorry I'm not interested anymore.'" (S4)

Others left jobs when dealing with customers became too much to handle. Particularly evident among workers in food service, Parker alluded to leaving because customers were "exceptionally bad", a problem compounded by poor management that was negatively impacting their mental health (P9). Jeffrey recounted his experience of job-leaving as being imbued with anger, directed in part at discriminatory customers but also at management for stymying his efforts to stand up for himself. After his manager dismissed his concerns about customers as "part of the job", he left his position, saying "I couldn't take it anymore, and I was about to smack a customer" (P2). As Ryan-Flood (2004) points out, this willingness to leave reflects the relative mobility of service sector workers, as well a lack of faith in, or absence of, 'formal channels' through which to confront workplace issues, which leads to "a strategy of 'exit rather than voice'" (p. 30).

Remediation: Management and Resistance

Management

Clearly violence from customers shaped the work experiences of participants, but how did participants perceive management in these situations? For the majority of participants,

management's support for LGBTQ2S+ workers appeared to be contingent upon economic

concerns and, at times, further shaped by discriminatory attitudes. In the experience of Harry,

who worked in retail, this was particularly clear; using explicitly economic terms, Harry

described the ways in which management assessed negative customer interactions:

> **Harry:** "It really depends on how much money they're spending which is sad. If it's like some person that they think is, you know, on drugs or just here to get samples or whatever or they've never seen them before or if it's like a teenage boy they'll just kick them out … When I was doing that [work] they told the customer 'you still have to pay for your [work] and then you're going to go.' … and if it's somebody who say is a big name in the community or like they come in and they blow a thousand dollars every month … they'll just tell me to go to the back and distract myself through other work." (P6)

For Jeffrey, this relationship with management was more nuanced. As a transman

working in food service who experienced considerable discrimination from customers, his

managers provided support in some instances and upheld the sovereignty of customers in others,

protecting his safety only when doing so had a limited effect on business. Indeed, when

management overheard Jeffrey being verbally abused and repeatedly misgendered by an

individual customer, their response was swift and favoured ejection over accommodation:

> **Jeffrey:** "Yesterday I had a customer yelling at me because her husband made a mistake when ordering … my manager is just looking over. [My manager said] 'What are you fucking talking about? My employee is a he'. [And then the customer said] 'Tranny trash.' [And my manager said] 'I'll happily refund your ticket now.' (P2)

While admirable insofar as management unequivocally supported Jeffrey and intervened when

his safety was at risk, the manager did *not* respond this way on occasions when it would

jeopardize the patronage of *multiple* customers—even when siding with the customers involved

explicit discrimination.

> **Jeffrey:** "I've had people complain to my boss about me using the men's bathroom to the point where I'm only allowed to use the official staff bathroom, because there's been too many complaints" (P2)

In cases like these, management instead encouraged Jeffrey to defer to customers and continue to

do his work, downplaying the discomfort and unsafety these interactions and complaints fostered.

A stark contrast to their intervention with the individual customer, suddenly discriminatory

behaviour was tolerated, and the ephemerality of customer interaction emphasized:

> **Jeffrey:** "Management is just like, all they could tell me was 'they only see you for a couple of minutes out of their lives. We can't turn this into a political debate when they're just here to see a movie.' (P2)

For Avery—who experienced sexual harassment from a customer in front of their boss—

management apologized for their inaction *after* the incident, recognizing that the customer's

behaviour was wrong and that they did not respond adequately:

> **Avery:** "There was one time a customer came in and started sexually harassing me in front of my employer and he didn't say or do anything about it and then after the guy was done and I was in the back washing dishes he came in the back and apologized" (P8)

Despite this post-hoc acknowledgement, management nonetheless failed to confront the

customer directly while the harassment occurred, upholding the actions as acceptable in the

eyes of the customer and preserving their economic relationship. These findings also support

those of Boyd (2002), who explains that the persistence of customer violence represents

management's prioritization of "profits before people" (p. 164), adding that customer violence

is compounded by a lack of anti-violence training for service staff.

In the event management was not present to witness violence towards participants, some

expressed that they did not feel safe going to management for support, often due to perceived

discriminatory attitudes. Speaking about her relationship with her boss, Lori remarked: "Some of

my supervisors were also kind of misogynistic and creepy so I just avoided it when I could" (P3).

Riley, a non-binary person, felt this way at the two independently owned shops they had worked

at. The first, like in Lori's experience, felt unsafe because of management's hateful beliefs:

> **Riley:** "I was never out there. It was just kind of like a part-time job. Like there is nothing… there is never any like homophobia or transphobia that I experienced there but yeah… they were incredibly racist and ignorant so they are probably not cool." (P11)

In Sam's other position, this distrust of management stemmed from the specter of their previous employer, suggesting that negative relationships with management can follow workers from job to job and impact their ability to raise grievances and be 'out' at work: "the boss reminded me of the boss at the old one and like I was kind of scared of him. I didn't realize that I had been scared of the previous one so…" (P11). As Galupo and Resnick (2016, p. 279) show, this perceived unsafety of management affects the entire 'organizational structure', in this case interfering in participants' ability to report discrimination through institutional channels.

Not everyone was wary of management, however, and relationships with employers did have the capacity to positively shape work experiences for two participants in the study. Harry, who previously described the economic calculus by which his employer would decide whether to intervene, explained that, following corporate-wide sensitivity training, management became some of his "biggest allies" when on the floor with customers:

> **Harry:** "I feel like the company is headed in a place where I feel comfortable working for them now. There's always [a] one off within a store but I feel like now … my bosses are some of my biggest allies because if a new person comes into the store and they mess up my pronouns like everybody's on them so everybody's pretty protective of me at least." (P6)

Echoing these sentiments, Parker suggested that management's support for them was one of the only redeeming aspects of the job: "the one good thing is I feel like management kind of has your back" (P9). This finding is not alone in the literature, also documented by Willis (2009) who shows how supportive management "can be fundamental to the experience of inclusive work cultures" (p. 641).

Worker Resistance

Given that managerial intervention was not a viable source of redress for every participant, other strategies were necessary to resist and cope with customer violence. Most common were individualized methods of resistance; indeed, the majority of participants indicated that they tried to stay in role and downplay negative experiences, minimizing their impact while also inadvertently working in the interests of management and performing a great deal of emotional labour. Kyle exhibited this tendency when he discussed the routine misgendering he experienced from customers: "like I was going to see them once and they're buying their coffee and leaving so it wasn't worth correcting them at the time" (P7). Rachel echoed these remarks in a similar situation, explaining how she "shook it off for them" and mentioned nothing to management for over a month. When Jeffrey had customers complaining about his use of the men's bathroom, he also felt compelled to acquiesce, this despite knowing that he was legally entitled to use the bathroom that fit his gender identity: "Yeah and I want to just say outright 'Toby's Law', but at the same time I just don't wanna cause a bunch of bull around it" (P2). As Hughes and Tadic (1998, p. 216) suggest, this tendency to minimize is common, likely perceived as a path of least resistance that prevents escalation from customers and potential discipline from management.

Instances of individual resistance were not limited to restraint, however, with examples of more direct resistance arising in interviews with two of the participants. For Brenda, individual resistance meant speaking up when a client was making homophobic comments at her workplace:

> **Brenda:** "I says 'that's like comparing a fish to a bicycle'. And she went 'well then why are people are so adamant that they don't want their gay sons and daughters to have children?' And I say because they don't have the proper information. A person who molests and hurts children has a sickness. A homosexual is not.'" (P1)

Instead of resigning herself to listening to this client's hateful remarks, Brenda broke with the

notion of the 'customer as sovereign' and asserted herself, ultimately stopping the incident.

Jeffrey, sharing a similar story of dealing with a prejudicial customer, had a more personal

experience where he was intentionally misgendered and repeatedly had to correct the customer:

"I stood firm whenever she would call me 'she.' I'm like 'he.'" (P2). Later adding that: "I have

to pick my battles" (P2), Jeffrey displayed not only the *agency* he exerted in this situation, but

also the *difficulty* associated with resisting customers' actions, demonstrating the emotional cost

of resisting without the support of fellow workers.

　　Not evident in the data, however, were examples of collective resistance, despite four

participants being unionized and nearly all working with co-workers on a regular basis. Indeed,

not *one* of the participants discussed using their union to combat customer harassment and,

beyond one participant who shared stories of co-workers providing support in the *aftermath*, co-

workers were not considered to be a source of support in *resisting* violence from customers

either. While collective resistance is likely necessary for enacting change, eight participants

shared stories about negative relationships with their co-workers, potentially diminishing trust

and precluding the formation of concerted resistance to violent and discriminatory customers.

　　As Willis (2009) documents in his study, the actions of co-workers—even when not

directly aimed at LGBTQ2S+ workers—can signal that they are *not* allies. For Parker, this was

learned when co-workers began sharing political views on break:

> **Parker:** "And then you go up in the break room and … a bunch of the other guys are
> sitting there talking about Donald Trump and they love Donald Trump and it's like
> sometimes you do feel kind of unsafe with certain colleagues." (P9)

An example of more direct mistreatment, Avery experienced isolation from their co-workers

when *every one of them* refused to use their pronouns: "there's feelings of rejection around my

identity, them not acknowledging it in any capacity or acknowledging how damaging their rejection of my identity was" (P8). Finally, for Rachel, isolation from co-workers was a matter of general mental health and comfort, and not necessarily because of specific beliefs or interactions: "I never really associated much with people at work anyway so it really didn't change that much" (P10).

As these stories show, a discussion of the ways in which LGBTQ2S+ workers resist customer violence is incomplete without an understanding of their dynamics with co-workers. While certainly, in an ideal situation, co-workers would provide an invaluable network of support and expand individual resistance into a collective enterprise, the experiences of Parker, Avery, Rachel, and the five others who reported negative relationships with co-workers help to illustrate how this is not always possible; how LGBTQ2S+ workers may not feel safe sharing experiences of harassment with co-workers *particularly* if the harassment concerned aspects of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Thus, while the finding that workers relied primarily upon individual methods of resistance and coping may be troubling, it is best understood in the context of workplace dynamics and relationships that, at times, precluded collective forms of resistance.

The Brighter Side: Customer Support

While customer service proved to be a trying aspect of the job, many participants also shared moments of connection and affirmation when interacting with the public, adding a positive dimension to the uniformly negative experiences with customers explored thus far. For some, these positive relationships had nothing to do with their sexuality or gender identity, but rather reflected an overall affinity for the customers they serve. Sharing these experiences with a hint of incredulity, Avery remarked that: "most [customers] are actually pretty good" (P8), with

Rachel saying: "even the customers … are really good" (P10), suggesting that, on aggregate, customer relations were positive for these participants. To be sure, Rachel did not share any negative experiences with customers during her interview.

Positive connections were particularly felt when dealing with LGBTQ2S+ customers, potentially overcoming feelings of isolation—however momentarily—in a heteronormative workplace. Be it through knowing looks or extended conversations, participants recalled these experiences fondly, and clearly distinguished them from other exchanges with customers. For Jeffrey, who wore a trans pin to work, this connective moment transpired non-verbally:

> **Jeffrey:** "I can see in their eyes; it just lights up like 'one of us.' Where it's like I can tell some kids that come in, teenagers, kids, same thing, they come in and they see [my trans pin] and I can tell they're not out yet by their eyes light up." (P2)

Lori took care to identify LGBTQ2S+ customers as a distinct group, one around whom she feels safe relative to other customers. Conjuring a binary that showcased the extremes in customer disposition, she said: "there are some queer people who are open and come around and there are also some very aggressively misogynistic, homophobic, racist people who are around" (P3). Harry went so far as to call interactions with LGBTQ2S+ customers "the best part of my job" (P6), situating this affinity in his ability to be a role model and mentor as someone who is 'out' at work:

> **Harry: "**I can kind of see that and they look at me … they're like, they beeline right to me, and they're like 'can you help me?' and that feels really awesome because there's that quote saying 'be the person that you needed when you were younger' and I feel like I am doing that right now so that makes me feel really awesome." (P6)

An extreme form of customer support, some customers even rose to the *defense* of participants, intervening to stop the discriminatory behaviours of others. In the case of Brenda, who experienced routine teasing from clients on the job, such interventions stood out as

moments of solidarity, with allied customers directly confronting harassers and reaching out

privately to express support.

> **Brenda:** "Like one person came along one time and said 'oh there's our little bi-girl' and stuff like this and the guy looks at me and is like 'what's she talking about?' And I say 'it's because I'm bisexual' and he goes 'oh come on guys get more fiber in your diet.'" (P1)

> **Brenda:** "One guy comes over and says to me one time, he says … 'I'll tell you something, anybody gives you a hard time, send em' to me'" (P1)

For Lori, this protective relationship was more complicated; despite her claims that "all of the

guys in that [establishment] would protect me at the end of the day" (P3), she also acknowledged

the extent to which these 'regulars' were implicated in her discomfort at work, responsible for

many of the 'weird comments' and unwanted sexual advances that she characterized as issues in

the workplace. Thus, solidarity and protection from customers was not always as unambiguous

as it was for Brenda, and power imbalances between customers and service providers were

reflected in these situations just as they disrupted them.

<u>Chapter 6: Discussion</u>

The findings from the survey and interviews provide additional empirical evidence to

many of the claims already forwarded in the literature, as well as new insights into the factors

influencing violence from customers. Indeed, violence from customers was widespread in the

survey and interviews, with microaggressions emerging as both personally impactful *and* the

most common form of violence. This finding supports those of Galupo and Resnick (2016), who

show how microaggressions against LGBTQ2S+ workers negatively affect their experiences of

work, and can contribute to a 'hostile workplace climate' (p. 285). Additionally, no significant

variation emerged for microaggressions by race, also supporting the work of Kern and Grandey

(2009) who suggest this is due to the ways "that social status of service employees may 'trump'

race" (p. 54), as well as methodological issues in self-reporting. While I am skeptical of the

former explanation given the significant relationship between racialization and other forms of violence found in this study, the latter could be tested through further research using alternative research methods.

In contrast to microaggressions, assault was the *least* common form of violence reported by participants, something that contradicts previous research on customer violence. In Boyd's (2002) quantitative study on airline and railway workers, assault was documented at a rate of 60%, much higher than the 4.81% of survey respondents and two interview participants who reported such an encounter in this study. While this disparity is significant, it can in part be explained by industry, since airline and railway workers spend extended periods of time in close proximity to customers (Boyd, 2002)—something food service and retail workers rarely, if ever, have to experience. Also potentially implicated in this inconsistency is differing historical and cultural contexts, given data collection for Boyd's study was conducted in the United Kingdom in 1998, 20 years before the survey for this research was disseminated.

Reinforcing Hollibaugh and Weiss's (2015) calls for intersectionality when studying LGBTQ2S+ workers—which drew attention to race and class in addition to gender identity and sexual orientation—the results also highlight the importance of considering the ways multiple identities shape workplace experiences. In the survey, violence was most pronounced for participants who were racialized non-white, gender non-conforming, and precariously employed (contract and self-employed), showing how different facets of workers' identities and situations contributed to their vulnerability at work. Indeed, racialization proved to be the most significant determinant of violence from customers—with over a third of those who were racialized non-white suspecting that their race was a motivating factor in the incident(s)—emphasizing the need to consider the pervasiveness of racism in efforts to address discrimination from customers.

Class too, represented here by the significant findings related to work situation, further influenced rates and vulnerability, and highlights the urgent need for increased workplace protections for those who face employment insecurity.

The findings also suggest that performance and non-conformity influence participants' interactions with customers, potentially because "[non-conformity] is typically a visible stigma, and thus a readily identifiable target for discrimination" (Gordon & Meyer, 2007, p. 56). In the quantitative analysis, this was evidenced by the higher rates of violence for participants whose gender identity deviated from normative expectations—such as trans and non-binary—as well as how being 'out' to customers did not appear to alter participants' experiences with customers. In the interviews these experiences were more explicit, with three participants describing instances of violence that were intimately connected to their presentation, and others regulating their performance for fear of how customers would react. In addition to the possibility of deeply engrained transphobia (Rudin et al., 2016), these findings suggest that, in ephemeral service interactions where customers do not always have time to get to know service workers, the visibility of difference and (in)ability to 'pass' may shape who is most vulnerable.

Finally, the finding that unionization *increased* the likelihood that participants would experience violence from customers was both unexpected and initially confounding. As organizations dedicated to the protection of workers, one would expect that the minority of service workers who had access to union representation would have *better* outcomes than their unorganized counterparts, but, with that said, other forces may be implicated in this relationship that are important to explore. Indeed, two of the theorized benefits of unions are that they a)

foster a critical consciousness[6], and b) empower their members to report injustice at work (Hirsh & Lyons, 2010). If these two theories hold true for participants in the survey, the higher rates of violence may have been shaped by a) union members' ability to recognize certain customer behaviours as violent or discriminatory, and b) a greater willingness to report these incidents without fear of retaliation.

While these two dynamics might explain the disparity observed, other findings from the survey also suggest that participants are isolated from their unions, potentially reducing unions' protective power. As discussed in the results from chi-square analysis, less than half (41.46%) of unionized workers said they would consider going to their union if they faced discrimination at work, contradicting the narrative that belonging to a union emboldened participants to report workplace injustice. In addition, only 26.83% of participants were out to stewards and staff, a figure that implies poor relationships between workers and their union. In the interviews as well, none of the participants mentioned unions as a source of recourse for customer violence, instead relying on primarily individual means of resistance. This supports findings by Ryan-Flood (2004, p. 30) who documented how service sector unions "did not seem to loom largely in [participants'] work environments or in relation to LGBT equality issues", decreasing the likelihood that workers would contact their union for help. Overall, the findings strongly suggest that unions need to do more to connect with LGBTQ2S+ members and the community in order to build worker power and resistance to combat violence from customers in the service sector, something that could be done in tandem with LGBTQ2S+ organizations to reach more people (Ryan-Flood, 2004).

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[6] Through both union education and participation in union structures and struggle, etc. (Cooper, 2007, p. 2)

Chapter 7: Conclusion

At the outset of this research, I sought to uncover both the *rates* and *experiences* of violence from customers towards LGBTQ2S+ workers, as well as understand the ways workers resisted these incidents and perceived management's response. What I found confirmed my suspicions; indeed, LGBTQ2S+ service workers, in Windsor and Sudbury, *are* at risk for violence from customers during the course of their work, a reality often overlooked as an occupational health and safety concern that nonetheless causes injury (both material and emotional), fear, and concealment. Evident in data from 208 workers and brought to life by 11 more who shared their stories, these experiences were widespread and adversely shaped participants' experiences of work, affecting 52.24% of survey participants and nine of the 11 participants in the interviews.

But the results of this research do not end here. Bringing identity into the picture, survey data illustrated the extent to which racialized non-white workers experienced violence at overwhelming rates, with 71.88% of workers racialized as non-white reporting these incidents. Participants who identified as gender identities that were not cisgender, such as non-binary and trans workers, were also at greater risk, and precarious work further compounded this vulnerability to customer mistreatment. During the interviews, additional themes arose concerning managerial intervention and resistance; indeed, while occasionally supportive, management's decisions around whether or not to intervene were largely structured by an economic rationale, oftentimes forcing workers to face violent customers without support. With this intervention so often absent, workers frequently relied on individualized forms of resistance—such as staying in role or addressing customers by themselves—as opposed to collective action, a finding that was likely the result of poor relationships with co-workers.

Building on Hollibaugh and Weiss's (2015) notion of queer precarity, this research

provides additional empirical weight to their calls for an intersectional analysis of LGBTQ2S+

workplace experiences, highlighting the ways in which race and class—in addition to gender

identity and sexual orientation—contribute to workplace experiences. Findings around fear and

concealment as the result of workplace discrimination also buttress their claims, with participants

overwhelmingly not 'out' in the survey, and interviews demonstrating the importance of

selectively disclosing identities and the fear that results from these relationships. Overall, this

developing framework guided my research to focus on the realities of precarity and racialization

in addition to LGBTQ2S+ identities, and hopefully this contribution will encourage others to do

the same.

Despite allowing for a fairly comprehensive examination of the dynamics between

customers and LGBTQ2S+ service workers through the use of mixed methods, there remain

limitations to this study. By focusing exclusively on LGBTQ2S+ workers, I was unable to parse

disparities between LGBTQ2S+ workers and cisgender/heterosexual workers in this research.

While stories from the interviews demonstrated the ways in which violence often revolved

around aspects of participants' sexual orientation or gender identity, a site of future research

could be to see if overall rates of violence are higher for LGBTQ2S+ workers, and whether or

not the *types* of violence experienced are different. Furthermore, whereas the survey data

illuminated substantive effects of racialization on rates of violence, racialized non-white workers

were underrepresented in the interview sample, leaving a gap in the qualitative research on

LGBTQ2S+ workers of colour. Finally, the small communities in Windsor and Sudbury limited

my ability to delve into the ways various aspects of interview participants' identities shaped their

experiences. Potentially making way for more in-depth discourse analysis of LGBTQ2S+ service

workers experiences with customers, research of this sort would likely need to focus on larger metropolitan areas in order to balance research interests with the safety and anonymity of participants.

In sum, despite certain limitations, this research nonetheless shows the rates and experiences of violence from customers for LGBTQ2S+ workers in Windsor and Sudbury, as well as the myriad consequences of this phenomenon for their work lives. If managers and unions are to remedy this, both need to make concerted efforts towards the inclusion and protection of marginalized workers. But the call for solidarity must also go out to the fellow workers who labour alongside LGBTQ2S+ workers; by being complicit in, or actively fostering, a work environment in which LGBTQ2S+ workers do not feel comfortable or safe, collective resistance to violence from customers cannot be mobilized. By being aware of the ways in which heteronormativity and the gender binary is upheld, and being an ally by standing in solidarity when injustice rears its head, relationships can be formed that can make the workplace safer for everyone.

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