

# **How Does Automatic Tipping Affect Racial Discrimination in Puget Sound Area Restaurants?**

An evidence-based interview study of waitstaff working in  
Seattle Metropolitan area restaurants.

A Capstone Project

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2019

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## Abstract

*Gratuity, or the act of tipping, has been a part of the restaurant industry in the U.S since the mid-1800's. In this length of time there has never been a policy to regulate the tipping of servers and bartenders, otherwise known as waitstaff, on a federal level. A few Individual states have tried to institute their own gratuity policies, but all have failed thus far. Due to this gap in policy, restaurants across the country are beginning to impose gratuity minimums of their own. Studies have shown that not having tipping policies in the restaurant complex opens the door for institutional racism by way of waitstaff, directed towards the consumer. Scholars call this phenomenon Consumer Racial Profiling, or CRP. The purpose of this study was to find out how Puget Sound area waitstaff feel about automatic gratuity policies and if they believe that these policies would affect the inherent racism engrained in the restaurant industry, whether positively or negatively. Interviews were given to two bartenders working at a restaurant located in an affluent city located in the greater Seattle Metropolitan area. Interviews were transcribed and then an in-depth analysis was conducted. The analysis produced 10 themes that were later broken down into two overall themes in regard to the study's research questions: Racism in Restaurants and Benefits of Automatic Tipping Policy.*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 History

According to Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC United), one of the leading organizations advocating for restaurant workers' rights, there were nearly 14 million people employed in the restaurant industry, 70% of which were women, in 2014. This same organization also reported three years later that the restaurant industry has 7 of the 10 lowest-paying jobs in America" (ROC United, 2017). With all that being said, our country's restaurant industry has never had universal policy in the arena of tipping servers and bartenders, otherwise known as waitstaff. This lack of policy allows for racial and sexual discrimination on both sides of the table; perpetrated by both the consumers and the people who serve them. Researchers have been interested in this lack of policy since the 1940's. Today, many restaurants across the country are starting to adopt an automatic tipping, or gratuity, policy that ensures that waitstaff get paid properly for the work they produce, essentially taking the guesswork out of tipping for all parties concerned.

Presently, without this automatic gratuity policy there is no guarantee that a restaurant's waitstaff will receive any form of tip for the service they provide and there is no governing entity to say otherwise. This situation perpetuates institutional racism through stereotypes that are deeply engrained in our nation's past. If nationwide mandatory gratuity minimums were imposed, the idea of not giving or receiving a good tip would be taken out of the restaurant experience on both sides of the table. Would this take undue stress off the consumer while at the same time allowing waitstaff to focus on delivering the best service possible without being preoccupied with thoughts that their tip may or may not reflect the actual service they performed? Would a mandatory tipping policy alleviate some of the institutional racism inherent in the restaurant context?

## 1.2 Purpose of Study

This study will look at the restaurant industry, specifically waitstaff, that have worked in the past under the present lack of National gratuity policy, and who now work with a mandatory minimum gratuity policy imposed by their employers. The purpose of this research is to see what differences, positive or negative, these new mandatory tipping policies mean for the waitstaff in these restaurants, specifically in regard to racism. This study will focus on Consumer Racial Profiling, or CRP, (Harris, et. al, 2005) in the greater Seattle Metropolitan area restaurant industry, in order to find out if individuals who belong to the sample population of waitstaff in the area believe that getting rid of voluntary tipping policies would also help rid the restaurant of racial discrimination directed towards prospective consumers.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 A History of Racism in Restaurants

The lack of tipping policy in our country has been a part of scholarly conversation for decades. Besides underpaid employees, there are many negative aspects of our country's ongoing tipping culture including sexual harassment and other varied forms of discrimination. For close to seventy years there have been studies conducted that show that our lack of a gratuity policy in regard to waitstaff opens the door for institutional racism in our country's restaurants. In 1950, the Committee on Civil Rights in East Manhattan, setting out to reduce the racism in New York City restaurants, conducted a study in which two couples, one white and the other black, visited the same restaurants under the guise of average restaurant goers. The study found that there are many ways that waitstaff can discriminate against would-be consumers (Selltiz, 1995). Actions such as seating people of color at undesirable tables, slow and/or bad service, saying that an item is unavailable when it really isn't, rudeness, and overcharging are but a few of the ways for the restaurant and its employees to exert institutional racism over their consumers (Selltiz, 1955).

In 1981, a new group of researchers set out to replicate this study. Their findings showed that while the occurrences happened slightly less often, there was still a substantial amount of discrimination towards consumers of color (Schuman, Singer, et al., 1983). The study goes on to say that “. . . the discovery of any significant amount of clear discrimination in restaurants has implications beyond its own limited proportion: from the standpoint of black customers . . . it renders suspect all instances of differential treatment by race” (Schuman, Singer, *et. al.*, 1983). Many times it is hard to know exactly why one consumer gets better service than another in any given restaurant experience because there are so many moving parts in the industry and infinite opportunity for human error. This study states that while this fact may be true, mistakes happen so frequently to patrons of color that one can only assume that bad service received is racially motivated.

In 2004, a survey was administered to a community sample size of 200 servers and/or bartenders. The participants were asked a variety of questions pertaining to the racial climate of their restaurant of employment. The researchers in this study sought “to further understand the pervasiveness of anti-black attitudes and actions within the restaurant context” (Brewster & Rusche, 2012). The results of the study found that only 10.5% of all those surveyed reported that they never indulge in, or witness, racist activities or talk at work (Brewster and Rusche, 2012). The fact that over nine out of every ten servers/bartenders admit to seeing and/or participating in racist activity at work suggests that racism in U.S. restaurants should be considered institutionalized.

In 2005, a study was conducted in a small city in a rural area of the Southeastern United States by researchers from North Carolina State University. Seven female and eight male servers, all of whom were white, participated in face-to-face interviews with researchers. This sample of servers worked at one of two separate popular restaurant chains, both located in the same small city. The purpose of this research was to find out how these 15 servers referred to their patrons in casual talk in relation to racial stereotypes. Out of the sample population, all but two had finished at least one year of college and

their mean level of education was 15 years (Mallinson & Brewer, 2005). In the researchers' own words, the purpose of this study was to ". . . investigate how they [servers] categorize customers by drawing on racial stereotypes and stereotypes based on class . . . which we interpret with regard to the larger context of racism and classism in contemporary U.S. society" (Mallinson & Brewster, 2005). The results of this study show that it doesn't matter to these servers what a colored consumer looks, acts, or talks like. The fact that they are simply dark skinned leads the waitstaff to assume that they are cheap and bad tippers (Mallinson & Brewster, 2005). Due to preconceived stereotypes of race and ethnicity, waitstaff in this study only have to see the color of their prospective consumers' skin to start making judgements as to how they are going to tip and if they are going to tip at all. As one of the interviewees, Nate, was quoted as saying, "Honestly, black people don't tip for the most part. I get stiffed more often than I get tipped when I serve black people . . ." (Mallinson & Brewster, 2005).

More recently, a study was conducted that involved an anonymous online survey of 872 individuals who were either servers at the time or had been within the preceding year. The survey asked a variety of questions about the participant's thoughts, attitudes, actions, and experiences as a server. Through the data, researchers found that this sample population perceive dark skin as a powerful characteristic denoting poor tipping at the end of the service encounter. This opens the door for servers to be prejudiced and discriminatory towards colored consumers (Brewster et al., 2016).

Prejudging potential customers based on their skin color in a retail environment, such as a restaurant setting, has been coined by scholars as Consumer Racial Profiling, or CRP. Gabbidon (2003) states that while racial profiling began in the arena of law enforcement, the practice has found its way into retail environments, where it is referred to as CRP. CRP is considered an effective way to discriminate against, bully, and even provoke individuals of color, forcing some consumers to retaliate. As a study from 2009 states, "When the noxious stimulus is evaluated as a threat or harm, then the

individual develops negative forms of emotions that may energize the individual to seek some form of corrective action to relieve the noxious stimulus” (Higgins & Gabbidon, 2009).

There are many ways that waitstaff can discriminate against consumers of color and use CRP against these customers. Examples of overt CRP include seating at less desirable tables, rudeness from the waitstaff, long wait times, cold food, etc. In the subtlest, least aggressive sense, CRP is committed when servers interact with consumers on a similar level of hospitality, but do so with less sincerity and niceties, across racial groups (Brewster et. al., 2014).

Why is this happening? What is it about being a server and/or bartender that produces discrimination and racist thoughts? In 2016, Restaurants Opportunities Centers United, or ROC United, partnered with the National Employment Law Project (NELP) to produce a report on the status of the waitstaff community in Washington D.C. entitled “The Case for Eliminating the Tipped Minimum Wage in Washington, D.C.” This report states that in 2016, 18.9% of waitstaff in the Washington D.C. area lived in poverty, as opposed to 8.2% of the rest of the district’s workforce who did not live on tips for their livelihood (ROC United & NELP, 2016). The percentage of waitstaff in Washington D.C. that were living under the poverty line were over double that of other nontipped workers.

Nationally, in 2016, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), a branch of the United States Department of Labor, reported that the 2,584,220 individuals who were considered servers in the U.S. made a mean income of \$25,280, while the 613,350 bartenders employed in the U.S. had a slightly higher mean income of \$26,260 (BLS, 2017). Of course, this data is based on national trends and the cost of living can vary greatly from state to state. What do these figures mean for servers and bartenders working in Washington State? Where do the servers and bartenders of the greater Puget Sound area stand in regard to Washington state’s poverty line?

## 2.2 Waitstaff Income Levels for Washington State

The Office of Policy Development and Research, an entity located within the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports on yearly poverty levels both on the national and state level. HUD calls these Income Limits, or ILs. The reason this report is generated is so that Section 8, another branch of HUD, can determine who is eligible for assisted housing programs. The individuals whose income is at the IL or lower are considered to have a low-income. HUD (2017) reported that the IL for the state of Washington was \$41,050 in Fiscal Year 2016. This figure is obviously far above the mean for waitstaff in the U.S. for the same year. Furthermore, HUD considered any Washington citizen who had an income of \$25,650 or lower to be in the very low-income designation. (HUD, 2017) This data suggests that there is a very good possibility that most servers and bartenders employed in Washington state restaurants in Fiscal Year 2016 were living well below the poverty line.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Research Questions

Taking cues from Mallinson and Brewster's (2005) research and interview methodology, this study seeks to better understand the thoughts and feelings of servers and/or bartenders who live in the Puget Sound area, in regard to racism and a lack of gratuity policy in the restaurant industry. Many restaurants across the country have started adopting their own tipping policies since there are presently none on the federal or state level in the U.S. It is these policies, such as a mandatory 20% tip on the customer's bill, that this study will focus on.

1. Have waitstaff in the Puget Sound area seen examples of racism in the restaurants that they have been employed by?
2. In the interviewees opinion, would imposing tipping policy help alleviate any racism present in the restaurant industry?

### 3.2 Participants

The participants for this study were two bartenders employed at a high-end restaurant/bar located in the downtown area of an affluent city in the greater Puget Sound area. This specific restaurant adopted a minimum tipping policy of 20% in 2018. The first interviewee, which we will give the pseudonym John, is a white male, 32 years of age. The second interviewee, whom we will call Vince, is also a white male, aged 31. This sample was part of a bigger sample community of bartenders within the restaurant, which numbers around 30. This population consisted of individuals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, with a range of 21-45 years of age. Both individuals involved in the study are transplants from other states and have lived in Washington, specifically the Seattle Metropolitan area, for less than ten years. While other individuals in the population were approached and agreed to do interviews, only the sample of two took part in the study.

An interview was written for this specific population of 30 servers/bartenders. Due to the fast pace and high stress level that comes with high-end waitstaff positions, all employees employed at this specific restaurant must have prior serving and/or bartending experience to be considered for a position. This means that this population consists of individuals who have more than likely worked at more than one restaurant. Again, since most restaurants across the country have yet to adopt any form of gratuity policy, this also suggests that this population has experience working both with and without a minimum tipping policy in place.

### 3.3 Interview Questions

The interview had five questions with room for the participants to expand and explain their answers. The first three were designed to get a quick history of the interviewee's career in the restaurant context. Once this was established, the interview transitions into the focus of the study, namely racism in restaurants and the lack of tipping policies in the U.S.

1. How long have you worked in the restaurant industry?

2. How many different restaurants have you worked for in that time?
3. Out of these restaurants, how many had an automatic tipping policy?
4. Have you witnessed racial discrimination, by way of the waitstaff/management, within the restaurants that you have worked for?

Please explain...

5. Do you think automatic tipping policies would affect racial discrimination in Puget Sound Area restaurants?

Why or why not?

### 3.3 Study Approval

With the sample population selected, interview questions had to be created that would elicit responses from the interviewees that would give insight into not only the restaurant industry, but as was established earlier, the inherent racism within. Once this process was finalized, an application was filled out and sent to the University of Washington Internal Review Board and Human Subjects Division. The study was given an exempt status, Category 2, and designated Internal Review Board, or IRB, Identification: STUDY00005953.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Upon approaching potential interviewees and asking them to be a part of this study, a consent form was distributed to be signed and dated by said interviewee. This consent form stated that all the individual's personal information will be confidential, and no one will know their identities except the head researcher. Furthermore, all data extracted from the interview will also be confidential and only used for the purpose of this study. The consent form also stated that all information and data collected through the interview will be filed and protected on the head researcher's laptop. This reaffirms what the head researcher had previously informed the individual as part of their introductions. The sample group was offered a copy of the consent form, as well.

Once the paperwork was filled out, the head researcher conducted one-on-one interviews at the sample group's place of work. There were two reasons that the interviews were administered at the restaurant the sample population was employed at. The first reason was to help make the interviewee as comfortable as possible. Due to the subject matter, the research team decided to administer the interview in a familiar place, making a potentially uncomfortable conversation as comfortable as possible. The second reason was so that the interviewees would be in the environment this study was focused on, hopefully inspiring more robust memories leading to deeper answers. Individuals were approached at their workplace as they finished a shift. The interviews were immediately conducted on-site, after consent was given and forms were filled out. Both interviews were quick and to the point, each lasting about ten minutes, keeping in mind that the interviewee just finished work and were probably tired and ready to leave the establishment. The participants were thanked for their participation at the conclusion of the interview. The interviews were later transcribed for further study.

### 3.5 Analysis

The transcribed interviews were then compiled and compared with one other in order for analysis. The purpose of comparing the interviews was to find out if there were any similarities in the answers the two participants gave. Similar answers were identified and broken down to find themes that were present in each interview. The analysis produced 10 themes. These ten themes were then grouped together to find two major themes that came through in both interviews.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Summary

A sample of two individuals were interviewed first about their history of working in the restaurant industry, then tipping policy, and finally institutional racism in the restaurant setting. Both interviewees had worked in the industry for well over ten years, and both had worked at multiple restaurants. The participants had also only worked for one restaurant that had a gratuity policy, their

present employer. This information suggests that both interviewees have worked without a policy in place for the majority of their waitstaff careers but were working with one at the time of the study.

As we can see in the previous section, the first three questions of the interview were meant to establish legitimacy of the participant's roll in this study. Both individuals interviewed had met the criteria of whom the study sought to engage, and both had very similar histories in regard to their restaurant careers. Question 4 is where the interview turns to the focus of the study and also where narrative of each person interviewed begins to delineate. While Vince did say that he had witnessed racism in restaurants that he has been employed by, John said that he has not. The fact that John has not witnessed racism in his places of employment is interesting since Vince said that he had witnessed racism firsthand in restaurants that he had been employed by, not to mention the studies discussed earlier that affirm that discrimination and CRP are engrained in the restaurant complex.

Vince also went on to elaborate on his answer to Question 4. He explains that the less desirable positions in the restaurant industry tend to be in the "back of the house," or out of site of the consumers, for the most part. Vince went on to say that "These positions tend to have a lower rate of pay but are readily available" and admitted that "... this may not be blatant racism, it does force those with foreign backgrounds, language barriers, or hardships into working for lesser pay in a less favorable position." This was an unexpected result of the interview since the focus of the study was on the consumer/waitstaff relations, not restaurant/employee relations. "Hierarchy employment in restaurants . . . ignorance, bias, and intolerance . . ." all play a part in any given restaurant's racism toward their employees, in Vince's opinion, but he does also admit that these factors "... can vary depending on staff and hiring practices."

While John said that he has not seen racism in his workplaces, he went on to explain in his answer to Question 5 that he knows "... a great deal of servers that have had negative experiences serving people of different ethnicity" and that he does think that tipping policies could help counteract

this dynamic. Even though John has not seen acts of racism or CRP in the restaurant industry, this final answer tells us that he understands that racism is a legitimate problem throughout the restaurant industry. Vince agreed with John and said that he thinks “. . . automatic tipping would help diffuse discrimination.”

#### 4.2 Themes

The participant’s answers, as well as the themes of the interviews were then put into a table so that the research team could see the interview answers side by side in order to compare and contrast the two. See Table 1:

	Interviewee #1 (John)	Interviewee #2 (Vince)
Question #1:		
Length of restaurant employment	14 years	13 years
Question #2:		
Number of restaurants employed by	10	8
Question #3		
How many restaurants with tipping policy	1	1
Question #4		
Personally witnessed racism in restaurants	Not personally	Yes, personally
Question #5		
Tipping policy alleviate racism	Yes	Yes
Themes:	Waitstaff have negative experiences due to consumer's ethnicity.	Racial discrimination in most restaurants.
	Automatic tipping policy removes stigma.	Automatic tipping helps diffuse racism.
	Consumers get better service.	"Back of the house" employees get paid less, tend to be immigrants.
	Waitstaff less stressed about tips.	
	Not tipping correctly can actually take money from the server.	Tipping policy creates equality and transparency
	Waitstaff tips out other employees.	in regards to employee pay rates.

The themes in this table were all taken from the interviewees’ explanation as to why they believe that gratuity policies do decrease racism, based on Question 5. Both interviews shared similar themes but also had a different narrative on racism. The themes of each interview were set side by side, and then grouped again into two major themes based on the research questions.

### Theme 1: Racism in Restaurants

As Table 1 shows, both interviewees share the opinion that there is inherent racism in the restaurant industry. John explained that when some waitstaff have “negative experiences” with people from other ethnicities, “. . . a sort of stigma for all people from that culture in the future” is created. Obviously, John was thinking about racism directed toward the consumer. Vince on the other hand, while he did admit that there is racism in U.S. restaurants, spoke about how other employees from other countries and ethnicities were treated within the restaurant, presumably by the management.

### Theme 2: Benefits of Tipping Policy

According to Vince, “. . . an automatic tipping policy helps reduce racial discrimination by creating equality and transparency in hourly pay and tipping distribution.” Having a minimum tipping policy allows restaurant management to regulate how much waitstaff is tipping out to the back of the house in a much more efficient way. Also, without a tipping policy, there is no way for someone in the back of the house to know for certain that what they are getting tipped out is the amount that they legitimately should have earned since there is no standard in place for consumers leaving gratuities. For example, if a table pays their bill with cash, there is no way to prove or disprove that the server/bartender received any tip at all from the consumer, let alone the amount of the tip. While the waitstaff still must tip out the back of the house employees, waitstaff still has the ability to muddy the waters as to how much they themselves actually made from tips. With a minimum tipping policy, it is much easier to measure how much someone in the back of the house should be getting tipped out simply by looking at the server/bartender’s sales and knowing that even when tables are paying with cash, they are still tipping at least the minimum amount.

John agrees with Vince that a tipping policy does indeed improve racial equality in a restaurant setting by improving the consumer/waitstaff interactions. “Automatic tipping policy removes that stigma, and in my mind levels the playing field. I feel that every guest gets treated better, and the

servers are no longer stressing out whether or not this table is going to cost them money.” John sees benefits not only for the consumer, but for the waitstaff, as well. “In the days before the automatic gratuity, if you had a large table consume a great deal of food and not tip, then it would actually cost the server money to serve the table, based on what they had to tip out to back of house . . . with the auto gratuity model, once again, all of that is removed.” We see that John reiterates the fact that tipping policies are indeed beneficial for waitstaff personnel and not just the consumer.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

### 5.1 Overview

Tippling has been a part of the restaurant experience in our country for well over a century. While most consumers expect to tip waitstaff based on the quality of service they receive, this is not always the case. Since the inclusion of gratuities in the restaurant industry, there has never been a policy in place federally, or on any state level, regarding how a patron should tip their waitstaff and no organization in place to regulate this policy even if there was one. Since waitstaff depend on their tips as their major source of income, it can become commonplace for waitstaff to discriminate and prejudge their prospective consumers, based strictly on how they look, in order to minimize the chance of getting a bad tip.

Many studies performed over the last century have found that this lack of gratuity policing sets the foundation for institutional racism in our nation’s restaurant context. This lack of policy allows for discrimination and institutional racism towards consumers perpetrated by the individuals that make up the waitstaff, more commonly known as servers and bartenders. This form of discrimination is called Consumer Racial Profiling, or CRP (Higgins & Gabbidon, 2009). Studies discussed earlier in chapter 2 can attest to these facts.

Presently, a few restaurants across the country are beginning to adopt their own, self-imposed gratuity policies. This allows their waitstaff to focus on the service they provide to tables without having to worry about whether the gratuity received will reflect their level of effort. While this seems like a good policy for protecting the waitstaff financially, are there other extrinsic benefits for others as well? Who benefits from these policies beside the restaurant servers and bartenders? Would a tipping policy also help to relieve some of the racism that is inherent in the restaurant industry? The purpose of this study was to find out if this could be the case.

This study was performed to see if waitstaff within the greater Puget Sound area believed that automatic tipping policies could possibly alleviate some of the CRP present in the restaurant industry. The research team hypothesized that the answer to this question would be “yes,” that gratuity policies in Puget Sound restaurants do in fact pacify institutional racism. This study relies on the data extracted from two face-to-face interviews with bartenders presently employed in a fairly wealthy city in the Puget Sound area. This chapter will first discuss the findings of the two interviews and what, if any, implications these findings may have on the restaurant industry as a whole, and then make recommendations for further study.

## 5.2 Discussion

An interview was written for a population of waitstaff presently working in a restaurant that has imposed an automatic gratuity policy within the last year. Questions began with the individual’s age, how long they have worked in the restaurant industry, and the number of establishments that they have been employed by throughout their restaurant career. The interviewees were then asked about institutional racism in the restaurant industry and whether they believed automatic gratuity policies would change this dynamic.

Both interviewees agreed with the study's hypothesis that tipping policy could alleviate institutional racism in the restaurant industry, which was the last question of the interview. This data is specifically important to this study because it comes from individuals that a gratuity policy would affect the most; waitstaff. Servers and bartenders make a living off their tips, more so than their hourly rate, which tends to be not much more than minimum wage in most states, and even lower in other states, depending on that states laws. Chances are that one or two bad tips in any given shift would not make that much of a difference in an individual's income but multiply those one or two tips by every shift worked in a given month and this could have a detrimental effect on a server/bartender's monthly take-home pay. A few shifts of bad tips every month could mean the difference between making rent and getting evicted in some instances. This suggests that to waitstaff personnel, every table and every tip is important. In theory, this would give waitstaff the incentive to give their best service to every single table no matter who the consumer is.

Unfortunately, though, servers do in fact discriminate against darker skinned patrons due to the stereotype that this specific group of people do not tip very well, if at all (Mallinson & Brewster, 2005). There is no way for waitstaff to predict how any given table is going to tip, so servers should have the mindset to give their best possible service to every table in order to maximize their tip potential. Unfortunately, research proves otherwise. Studies have shown that some servers/bartenders give subpar service to tables of color because they assume that their hard work will not be reflected by the gratuity left, presumably creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. These decisions are strictly based on the color of the potential consumers' skin and nothing else. While a server could see this prejudice as a practice that saves them from losing money, it also means that they are potentially missing out on a big tip every time they choose to give service that is below a patron's expectations. This seems counterproductive and an effective way to work against one's best interests, but studies have proven that this phenomenon does in fact saturate the waitstaff population.

### 5.3 Recommendations

An unexpected outcome of this study came about when Vince, one of our interviewees, spoke about racial discrimination in relation to restaurant employees, as opposed to the consumer which was the predicted outcome. In regard to the focus of this study, this was an unforeseen result and should inspire future research. According to Vince, restaurants function in a hierarchical manner. In a restaurant business model, management sits on the top tier, followed by waitstaff, with the “back of the house” employees at the bottom. Back of the house employees include bussers, cooks, dishwashers, etc. These positions tend to be less desirable than management and front of the house positions, but since there is not much, if any, interaction with the consumer, many times these positions are filled by immigrants who are not fluent in the English language, as Vince illustrated during his interview. This is a population of individuals that is historically known for being both taken advantage of and marginalized since the inception of our country. Further study should look at this population and get their perspective on these issues in order to get a more rounded picture of the issue.

While the data of collected supported the hypothesis, there are obvious limitations to the study itself. A sample size of two, while enough to generate data, is not big enough to make generalizations about the restaurant industry in and of itself. Also, while both interviewees met the criteria for the sample population, there was not much variety in demographics between them. Both participants were white males in their early 30’s, have been in the restaurant industry for over ten years, are out-of-state transplants to the Puget Sound area, and presently work at the same establishment. A similar interview given to a bigger, more diverse sample population would generate richer data and give a much fuller look at the bigger picture of racism in our nation’s restaurant industry.

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