DISSERTATION

LOWER-WAGE WORKERS AND WORK-FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

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Compared to research on professional-level workers (e.g., those colloquially referred to as having “white collar” jobs), limited studies on lower-wage workers exist, with even fewer focusing specifically on fast-food workers. However, fast-food workers represent a large portion of lower-wage workers in the United States and often experience a range of stressors including nontraditional work hours and financial instability, coupled with significant family demands. The current study answers calls from the work-family literature within industrial-organizational psychology to better understand the unique needs and experiences of this working population. Specifically, this study uses a qualitative, exploratory approach to better understand specific work-family stressors, as well as supervisor and coworker behaviors that are interpreted as most supportive of work and family, particularly as the workforce faces new and unprecedented challenges associated with COVID-19. Individual interviews were conducted with a sample of fast-food employees who provide at least five hours of dependent care per week. Results indicate a need to re-conceptualize certain notions of supervisor and coworker support to be specific and appropriate for the fast-food industry. Theoretical and practical implications for employees, supervisors, organizations, and future intervention work are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Changing workplace dynamics, including a move toward a 24-hour economy, a rise in dual-earning families, and an increase in family-care responsibilities over the last few decades represent new and unique challenges associated with modern work (Hammer & Zimmerman, 2011; Kossek & Lambert, 2005). These challenges have only been intensified by the emergence of COVID-19, which has also ushered in new stressors for many workers (e.g., increased loneliness and fear; Kniffin et al., 2020). The "new normal" may be particularly taxing for those who have significant nonwork responsibilities. For example, essential employees may experience difficulty balancing the fear of contracting and spreading the virus to loved ones with the necessity of attending to family-care obligations (Kniffin et al., 2020).

As mentioned, even before the emergence of COVID-19, aspects of the modern workplace have been adding certain stressors for nearly all types of workers; however, the unique experiences and strains lower-wage workers face remains vastly understudied in the organizational sciences (e.g., Casper et al., 2007). Although different definitions of "lower-wage work" exist, this study defines lower-wage workers as those who earn less than a living wage, in other words, less than what is needed to meet the minimum standards of living in a given state (MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2021). Lower-wage workers represent nearly half of all U.S. workers, and are therefore a vital part of our workforce that we need to better understand (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2017). Furthermore, concentrated efforts to improve workplace experiences are critical in order to foster the well-being of this working population (Lambert, 1999).

Before continuing, a quick clarification of terminology is warranted. Although much of the literature that will be reviewed in the following sections uses the term "family" (e.g., *family*-supportive supervisor behaviors; work-*family*-supportive coworker behaviors), in reality these studies actually inquire about more general work-nonwork support that goes beyond just considerations of family-life. Therefore, in line with calls for more inclusive language around nonwork life (e.g., Fisher, Bulger, & Smith, 2009), as well as to most accurately represent this literature base, the term "nonwork" will be used to describe such prior research. Despite the prevalence of nonwork considerations in the workplace support literature thus far, the current study primarily focuses on *family*, including both biological and chosen family. This decision was intentionally made, as research on lower-wage individuals suggests that the centrality of family, including extended or chosen family, is particularly strong for lower-income individuals (e.g., Blank & Torrecilha, 1998; Gerstel, 2011). To remain inclusive, more general nonwork experiences will also be touched on, but not considered the central focus of this study. To be clear, throughout the remainder of this paper "nonwork" will purposefully be used when broadly describing life outside of work and "family" will be used when 1) referring to a specific scale or 2) referring specifically to family matters, as defined above.

In the context of the current study, we know that one's work and nonwork lives do not exist in isolation; rather, work experiences impact nonwork and vice versa (e.g., Carlson et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Research examining the relationship between these two domains has grown over the last few decades. For example, a substantial body of research in the work-nonwork literature investigates the ways in which work and nonwork come into conflict via both work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC) (i.e., conflict that arises when either time, behaviors, or strains that occur in one domain have a negative effect on

the other domain; Carlson et al., 2000). This research has given rise to a relatively new line of inquiry investigating the ways in which supervisors can informally help employees manage these conflicting demands, via what have been coined *family-supportive supervisor behaviors* (FSSB*;* Hammer et al., 2009). Supervisors enacting nonwork-supportive behaviors understand that employees have demands both at work and at home that may at times come in conflict with one another. Therefore, nonwork-supportive supervisors actively help employees accommodate both sets of responsibilities outside of formal organizational policies (e.g., maternity leave; Hammer et al., 2009).

Additionally, there is a smaller parallel literature that investigates the ways in which coworkers can similarly provide nonwork-supportive behaviors. Unlike the FSSB literature, the coworker work-nonwork support literature is fragmented, lacking consistent operationalization as to the scope of this support (e.g., McMullen et al., 2018; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010). For example, two scales have been developed with the intent of broadly assessing work-nonwork-supportive coworker behaviors, yet one specifically focuses on helpful coworker *behaviors* and purposefully excludes emotional support while the other includes both behaviors and emotional support.

Although both streams of literature argue for, and thus far have largely demonstrated, positive employee outcomes resulting from receiving these supportive behaviors (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018, Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2009) there is room to question whether these behaviors are universally and equally beneficial for all workers. Specifically, with the exception of a few studies (e.g., French & Agars, 2018; Hammer et al., 2009; Hammer et al., 2016; Hammer et al., 2011; to be described in more detail later), lower-wage workers have been largely excluded from this line of research and it remains unclear if the supervisor and coworker

behaviors identified as supportive of work and nonwork are in fact perceived as supportive by this population of workers. For example, French and Agars (2018) found that a measure of managerial support for work-family issues developed by Thompson, Beauvis, and Lyness, (1999) lacked measurement invariance, which they argue indicates limited generalizability of the scale to lower-income individuals.

Fast-food workers in particular are an important population to study, as they often work nontraditional hours (e.g., nights, rotating shifts), and receive low wages coupled with few benefits (e.g., more than 50% of the families of front-line fast-food workers are enrolled in at least one public assistance program, and an estimated 87% do not receive employee health benefits; Swanberg et al., 2008; UC Berkeley Labor Center, 2013). The potential financial stressors (e.g., from lower pay, unpredictable hours), job stressors (e.g., lack of job security), and limited formal family-friendly policies (e.g., childcare; Swanberg, 2005) create unique needs for these employees that have yet to be fully explored in the research.

Current Study

The current study uses a qualitative approach to better understand work-family conflicts experienced by a specific lower-wage working population (fast-food workers), as well as supervisor and coworker behaviors that are interpreted as helpful, particularly as we continue to navigate through the novel context of COVID-19. The state of the current research, as will be described in-depth shortly, begs the question of how these "supportive" behaviors might function differently for lower-wage workers in general, and during a pandemic in particular. For example, are there additional forms of support that are especially important in this population that have yet to be captured in research? This study answers the call to more closely examine the nuances of lower-wage workers' experiences (e.g., Griggs et al., 2013; Lambert, 1999) by drawing on the

theoretical basis of "resources" to qualitatively study work-family social support for these employees via individual interviews.

Several theories in occupational health psychology draw on the notion of "resources" as part of an explanatory mechanism describing the stress process. For example, the conservation of resources model suggests that individuals are driven towards resource accumulation (e.g., personal resources such as social support; conditions such as meaningful work; objects such as cars; or energies such as time), which can serve as a protective factor against stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). In the workplace, lost or threatened resources result in employee strain such as work-nonwork conflict and burnout (e.g., Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Halbesleben, 2006); however, accumulation of resources valued by the individual is expected to serve a buffering role (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Additionally, according to the job demands-resources model, work can impose both job demands, which are energy depleting, as well as resources, which are protective against depletion (Demerouti et al., 2001). Specifically, job demands include physical, organizational, and social factors that require sustained attention, and resources have been broadly described as anything that reduce those demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). Kniffin et al. (2020) argue that using this lens of demands and resources (e.g., JD-R; Demerouti et al., 2001) is helpful for understanding workers' experiences during COVID-19, as there have likely been changes in demands and resources for many as a result of the pandemic. For example, essential workers may be experiencing higher workloads coupled with less control over work right now (Sinclair et al., 2020).

As mentioned, supervisor and coworker support have been traditionally conceptualized as resources; however, some have begun to question whether at times this support can instead

function as a demand. For example, using social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), Griggs and colleagues (2013) argue that coworker support may also function as a demand, since receiving support implies an expectation of reciprocity, which can be particularly challenging for lower-wage workers who may already be limited in resources. Therefore, this study investigates this issue further thereby expanding our knowledge of resources, as well as our knowledge of work-family social support in general.

Contributions

The current study makes three important contributions to the literature. First, this is the only truly qualitative study exploring FSSB, as the four dimensions of FSSB (i.e., emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling, and creative work-family management) were developed and conceptualized based on a review of the literature (Hammer et al., 2007; Hammer et al., 2009). Therefore, it is unclear if this scale captures the most important aspects of work-nonwork support for all types of employees. Although deductive research is important, it does tend to restrict the variables that are investigated, as well as the subsequent analyses and conclusions; therefore, good scientific research needs a balance of inductive (exploratory) as well as deductive (confirmatory) inquiries (Woo et al., 2017). This study aims to uncover any potential misalignments between the FSSB scale and lower-wage workers' experiences.

Second, this study bridges the supervisor and coworker work-nonwork support literatures, which to this point have been fairly siloed. Although each type of support is important in its own right, understanding how the two come together and interact to help shape an employee's work-nonwork, and more specifically work-family, social support spheres is arguably more important as it will paint a more complete picture of these workers' experiences.

An understanding the nuances of these relationships can help create more effective and targeted trainings in the future (e.g., training coworkers and supervisors on certain, crucial behaviors).

Third, this study enhances our knowledge of lower-wage workers and their specific work-family support needs, particularly in this time of crisis. According to a 2017 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office, lower-wage workers represent approximately 40% of U.S. workers age 25 to 64, yet as mentioned, are considerably understudied in organizational sciences research (e.g., Casper, et al., 2007; GAO, 2017).[1] Therefore, it is critical that we research and expend efforts to understand these workers to the same degree we study higher-earning workers (e.g., Casper et al., 2007). The APA ethical principle of Justice specifically notes that, "all persons [have] access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology," (p. 3) which includes all types of workers regardless of salary or skill-level (APA, 2003). Related to the principle of Justice, Prime and colleagues (2020) argue that scientists and practitioners should be focusing on helping individuals and families who are traditionally underrepresented, yet particularly vulnerable during this time of extreme anxiety and stress related to COVID-19. Thus far, the FSSB literature has demonstrated that supportive behaviors lead to positive employee (e.g., health), as well as workplace (e.g., lower turnover intentions) outcomes for professional-level workers (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Therefore, we could imagine that through identifying the most effective supervisor and coworker behaviors for lower-wage workers, during times of normalcy as well as during times of crises, we might observe similar positive outcomes.

[1] GAO (2017) defines lower-wage workers as those earning less than $16 per hour. They found that approximately 3% of workers from 1995-2016 earned less than minimum wage, 17% earned above minimum wage but less than $12 per hour (adjusted for 2016-dollar amounts), and 18% earned between $12 and $16 per hour.

Informal Supervisor Work-Nonwork Support

As mentioned, FSSB is conceptualized as informal supervisor support that helps employees manage their work and nonwork demands and is one of the most popular measures of such support (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Hammer et al., 2009). The measure of FSSB includes four dimensions: emotional support (i.e., displaying sensitivity towards employees' nonwork-related issues), instrumental support (i.e., working to solve work and nonwork conflicts that arise on a daily basis), role modeling (i.e., exhibiting behaviors that show effective management of work and nonwork day-to-day), and creative work-family management (i.e., taking initiative to restructure work in ways that simultaneously support employee nonwork needs and the organization's productivity goals; Hammer et al., 2009). Some examples of FSSB include listening to employees' difficulties balancing work and nonwork, offering the option of telework, or providing flexible scheduling.

A theoretical framework put forward by Straub (2012) outlines proposed antecedents and outcomes of FSSB. For example, individual-level (e.g., positive and negative work-family experiences), contextual-level (e.g., family-supportive organizational culture), and leader-member exchange quality have been identified as potential antecedents. More relevant to this study, proposed employee-level outcomes of FSSB include well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance, and team-level outcomes include team cohesion and team performance (Straub, 2012).

Indeed, FSSB has been shown to relate to a host of positive employee outcomes primarily falling within three categories: work, work-family, and health (Crain & Stevens, 2018). For example, FSSB has been found to positively relate to organizational commitment, turnover intentions (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012), prosocial motivation at work (Bosch et al., 2018), job

control (Huffman & Olson, 2017), engagement (Matthews et al., 2014), and job satisfaction (Yragui et al., 2016). Other research indicates that FSSB is positively related to perceptions of work-family balance (Greenhaus et al., 2012), as well as work-to-family enrichment and family-to-work enrichment (i.e., the positive influence of experiences in one domain on the other; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012). In terms of health-related outcomes, FSSB is negatively related to perceived stress (Hammer et al., 2013) and burnout-exhaustion (Koch & Binnewies, 2015), and positively related to subjective well-being (Matthews et al., 2014) and life satisfaction (Yucel & Minnotte, 2018). Intervention research indicates that these supportive behaviors are trainable (Kelly et al., 2014) and may lead to positive outcomes including safety compliance, organizational citizenship behaviors (Hammer et al., 2016), parent-child time and relationships (Davis et al., 2015; McHale et al., 2016), burnout, perceived stress, psychological distress, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Moen, Kelly, Fan, et al., 2016; Moen, Kelly, Lee, et al., 2016).

Interestingly, the intervention research has not yielded unequivocally positive outcomes. For example, an intervention aimed at increasing FSSB for military veterans in the civilian workforce found that the training only improved work (i.e., job performance and turnover intentions) and health (i.e., perceived health and functional impairment) outcomes for veterans who reported higher levels of supervisor and coworker social support at baseline, not for those initially reporting low levels of social support (Hammer et al., 2019). A similar FSSB intervention examining grocery store employees found that the training only yielded positive effects (job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and physical health) for employees with high baseline family-to-work conflict (FTWC), and negative effects for employees with low family-to-work conflict (Hammer et al., 2011). The authors offer two possible explanations for these

findings: backlash against the training (i.e., those with low FTWC resent the resources expended on this intervention, as they do not directly benefit from it) and differential supervisor behavior following training (i.e., supervisors focus family-supportive behaviors towards those high in FTWC, thus treating employees differently based on their needs). Of note, these results were found within a sample of lower-wage grocery store workers.

Findings from yet another intervention study further highlight the need to qualitatively investigate work-family support at work. Using a lower-wage sample of healthcare workers Hammer and colleagues (2016) combined FSSB computer-based training with participatory workshops aimed at teaching participants to focus on the results of their work despite the surrounding environment, hypothesizing that the intervention would lead to improved safety compliance and organizational citizenship behaviors via several primary mediators: FSSB, control over work time, work-to-family conflict, and family-to-work conflict. Although the intervention did have significant effects on safety compliance and organizational citizenship behaviors, the mediators were not significantly changed by the intervention (Hammer et al., 2016). These findings are noteworthy, as previous applications of the same intervention with a professional-level IT sample found that it led to reduced work-family conflict and increased perceptions of FSSB (Kelly et al., 2014). Although Hammer et al. (2016) made efforts to adapt the training specifically for this sample (e.g., lower-wage healthcare workers), they note that there are likely ways to further target aspects of the intervention for hourly workers and call for more industry-specific research on FSSB (Hammer et al., 2016).

Taken as a whole, these discrepant intervention findings beg the question of whether the behaviors outlined in FSSB are equally beneficial in all industries, particularly lower-wage industries. For example, as Swanberg, McKechnie, Ojha, and James (2011) note, many examples

of FSSB such as the option of telework or flexible scheduling are not available to all employees, as lower-wage workers typically have less access to these benefits. Other benefits lower-wage workers either commonly lack access to or can infrequently take advantage of include: schedule predictability, unpaid time off via FMLA, and workplace-sponsored childcare (Boushey, 2005; Kossek, 2006).

However, more benefits do not guarantee more positive employee outcomes. Work by Perrigino, Dunford, and Wilson (2018) highlights the complicated nature of work-family accommodations. Despite these benefits being largely viewed as positive, Perrigino et al. (2018) note that these can be subject to "backlash", an idea we saw raised by Hammer and colleagues (2011). Backlash includes negative attitudes, behaviors, and emotions, both at the individual and collective level, that can result from organizational work-life balance policies (Perrigino et al., 2018). Their review of the literature reveals that on-site provisions (e.g., childcare), leave policies (e.g., maternity leave), and flexible work arrangements (e.g., telework) – all benefits typically afforded to professional-level workers – are susceptible to backlash (Perrigino et al., 2018). Given this added layer of complexity, the role of supervisor work-nonwork support and potential subsequent backlash in different industries remains unclear and necessitates the use of qualitative methods in order to better understand this phenomenon.

Informal Coworker Work-Nonwork Support

A smaller literature has examined the role coworkers can play in providing work-nonwork social support. This literature is more fragmented than that of FSSB, with several different conceptualizations and scales measuring this type of support. In their review of the topic, Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2009) note that extant research has yielded inconsistent findings with respect to coworker support and WFC. For example, although several

studies have reported significant negative relationships between coworker support and work-family conflict (e.g., Bernard & Phillips, 2007; Carlson & Perrewe, 1999; Van Daalen et al., 2006), other studies have found weak or non-significant correlations (e.g., Beehr et al., 2000; Frone et al., 1997; Greenberger et al., 1989; Reifman et al., 1991). Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2009) therefore argue these inconsistent findings likely indicate the presence of moderators in the coworker support-WFC relationship. The proposed list of potential moderators of this relationship include: the operationalization of coworker support, the type of coworker support, job interdependence, and the operationalization of WFC. Noticeably absent from this list is industry or a consideration of low-wage work; however, as will be described in the next section, this may be an important contextual factor to consider.

Following the identification of inconsistencies within the coworker support literature, Mesmer-Magnus and colleagues (2010) used a mixed-method approach to create a scale measuring coworker-enacted informal work accommodations to family (C-IWAF) – the operationalization of which largely mirrors FSSB. Specifically, C-IWAF is defined as informal coworker support that is specifically aimed at helping coworkers manage work and nonwork (including family and personal) demands (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010). One notable difference however is that unlike FSSB, C-IWAF explicitly excludes emotional support from the construct definition. Via open ended questions on a survey, Mesmer-Magnus and colleagues (2010) identified six dimensions of C-IWAF: child care assistance (e.g., looking after a coworker's child), facilitating telework (e.g., emailing items to coworkers so they can work from home), continuing work modification (permanently changing work hours to help a coworker meet family demands), short-term work modification (e.g., temporarily covering for a coworker who is on vacation), helping behavior (e.g., helping a coworker catch up after being absent for a family-

related reason), and deviating behavior (e.g., covering up a coworker's absence for a personal reason).

Embarking upon a similar line of inquiry, McMullen and colleagues (2018) recently conceptualized work-family-supportive coworker behavior (WFSCB) using essentially the same operationalization as Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2010) with the inclusion of emotional support. Their work, based on 22 qualitative interviews, yielded five dimensions of coworker support: demonstrating an understanding of the value of nonwork life (e.g., encouraging a coworker to attend to personal needs), emotional support (e.g., providing comfort and reassurance), sharing resources and knowledge (e.g., providing work resources while a coworker is away from the workplace), facilitating work adjustments (e.g., being flexible regarding work schedules), and proactively developing solutions (e.g., making scheduling suggestions to management to better manage workload; McMullen et al., 2018).

Some overlap between these two scales is evident; however, most relevant to this study, neither one specifically examines lower-wage workers. For example, McMullen et al. (2018) studied professional-level full-time workers from industries including finance, government, and technology, including supervisors and upper management (other inclusion criteria included: being married or cohabitating with at least one child living at home). In their two-study approach Mesmer-Magnus and colleagues (2010) give no demographic information on participants of the first study (i.e., the open-ended survey questions from which they generated scale items) beyond the fact that they were employed adults (n = 57). The second scale-validation study used a sample of adults (n = 420), the majority of whom had caregiving responsibilities, and who came from a variety of industries, with 23% reporting an income of more than $100,000 per year (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010).

Similar to FSSB, these scales may have limited relevance to lower-wage work. For example, many lower-wage jobs, particularly those that are customer-facing, do not extend the option of telework (one of the six dimensions in Mesmer-Magnus et al.'s (2010) scale). The necessity of studying lower-wage workers will be further described in the next section. A final limitation of this and the FSSB literature is that no study to date examines the interaction between supervisor and coworker support nor accounts for potential compensatory effects. For example, can coworker work-nonwork support compensate for lack of supervisor work-nonwork support? This idea of compensation has been examined in relation to work-family conflict and work-family enrichment. Gareis, Barnett, Ertel, and Berkman (2009) found that family-to-work enrichment buffered, or compensated for, the negative effects of family-to-work conflict within a large national sample. Therefore, this study aims to more holistically examine lower-wage workers' work-nonwork lives in order to better understand their experiences and social support needs.

Lower-Wage Workers

As mentioned, lower-wage workers account for a large percentage of the U.S. working population, and it is therefore important to understand the unique challenges these workers face. In addition to potentially different challenges, the resources lower-wage workers draw on to handle conflicts between work and nonwork may differ from higher-wage workers. For example, Griggs, Casper, and Eby (2013) propose that lower-wage workers, likely already limited on personal resources themselves (e.g., time, energy), may perceive coworker support as an additional burden they must reciprocate (e.g., via social exchange theory). As another example, some research indicates that lower-wage workers prefer child-care support from their community rather than at their workplace (Goff et al., 1990; Kossek, 1991; Lambert, 1999). Therefore,

understanding how lower-wage workers' experiences differ from those of professional-level workers is important in order to provide the best support to this population.

From a leadership perspective, Leana, Mittal, and Stiehl (2012) note that although much research exists on leadership, research on the power dynamics between the working poor and their supervisors is an important, yet understudied area. In particular, extreme power differentials may impact the social relationship between workers and supervisors. These differing power dynamics coupled with the nature of lower-wage customer-facing work (e.g., the lack of ability to telecommute) may make certain elements of FSSB more or less applicable to this working population. For example, the creative work-family management dimension of FSSB has been shown to be largely responsible for the positive intervention effects (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016); however, within a low-wage sample, it is unclear if this dimension would again emerge as most important.

Fast-Food Industry

Clearly, there is a need to better understand this critical working population. In particular, this study samples lower-wage fast-food workers. As of 2017, approximately three-fifths of all workers paid at or below the federal minimum wage in the United States were employed in the food service industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). According to a more recent 2019 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, there are nearly four million workers classified as "fast-food and counter workers", earning a mean wage of $11.18/hour, with another half a million workers classified as "fast-food cooks", earning an average of $11.31/hour (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Although those wages are higher than the federal minimum wage of $7.25/hour (Department of Labor, 2020b), it is important to note that there are marked variations by state. For example, Mississippi does not have a state minimum wage and thus follows the federal

standard of $7.25/hour, but other states like Colorado and Washington have passed higher state minimum wage laws at $12.00/hour and $13.50/hour, respectively (Department of Labor, 2020b). In total there are 29 states plus Washington DC with higher minimum wages than the federal mandate (Department of Labor, 2020a).

Given the state-level differences, it is useful to examine fast-food workers on a state-by-state basis in order to get a more accurate understanding of these jobs. For example, within the state of Colorado, the Colorado Fiscal Institute estimates that there are over 630,000 low-wage workers (nearly a quarter of all jobs) in Colorado, a number which has been steadily increasing since 2010 (Colorado Fiscal Institute, 2017). Among low-wage jobs, those within the food and beverage industry (e.g., dishwashers, fast-food cooks, waiters/waitresses) represent 11 of the top 20 low-wage jobs in Colorado in terms of employees (i.e., these jobs have the highest number of employees), with most of these jobs experiencing significant growth since 2001 (Colorado Fiscal Institute, 2017).

Many fast-food employees work nontraditional work hours, which has been shown to relate to greater work-family conflict, higher levels of stress and more frequent physical symptoms (Galinsky et al.,1987; Swanberg, 2005). One common myth about fast-food is that most employees are teenagers, when in reality approximately 70% are over the age of 20 and raising at least one child (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2013). Therefore, I chose fast-food workers to conduct this study with because they are a vital part of the workforce, considered essential during the pandemic, and often experience family obligations, yet have not been duly studied in the work-family research within industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology (Casper et al., 2007; Taylor, 2020c).

COVID-19

Although the first occupations that may come to mind when hearing the phrase "essential worker" in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic might be healthcare or grocery store workers, fast-food workers also fall into this category. In March 2020 Business Insider published a series of articles about fast-food workers during the pandemic, including one on why fast-food workers are considered essential during this time (Taylor, 2020c). As the article explains, many healthcare workers along with many of the 1.8 million truck drivers in the U.S. rely on fast-food, particularly as rest stops and sit-down restaurants abruptly began to close at the start of the pandemic (Taylor, 2020b; Taylor, 2020c). McDonald's Senior Vice President of Operations in the U.S. wrote an open letter on March 23, 2020 to American truckdrivers indicating their commitment to try and remain open to continue providing meals for them (Garrett, 2020). Executives from large fast-food chains, including McDonald's and Burger King, also met with President Trump in March to discuss how the chains could assist in feeding Americans during the pandemic (Taylor, 2020a; White House, 2020).

Despite executives' enthusiasm for remaining open, Business Insider reported that they were contacted by dozens of fast-food workers who were fearful of going to work and were confused as to why their place of work was considered an essential business (Taylor, 2020c). In a news commentary the American Civil Liberties Union reported in May 2020, well after the start of the pandemic, that 78% of McDonald's workers reported having no access to paid sick leave (Regalado, 2020). In the absence of peer-reviewed research studies on this critical population, media coverage suggests that fast-food workers may be experiencing increased strain related to their jobs since the start of the pandemic.

Indeed, Sinclair et al. (2020) argue that the pandemic has likely had consequences for nearly all workers, as many are experiencing more work and nonwork demands, and more work-family conflict as a result. Kniffin et al. (2020) point to the loss of social connections as a particularly salient stressor during COVID-19 and highlight workplace support as a key psychological resource organizations should prioritize during this period of uncertainty (Kniffin et al., 2020). Although Kniffin and colleagues (2020) were primarily discussing employees who are now required to work from home, we do not know how new workplace policies aimed at maintaining social distancing may impact informal conversations and relationships with coworkers and supervisors for workers who are able to physically go to work. Sinclair et al. (2020) likewise argues that supervisor support is critical during this period of heightened uncertainty and fear. They argue that FSSB is more critical than ever, particularly for roles that have remained in-person, and recommend that supervisors should try to enable more schedule flexibility, shift trading, and provide more compassion and support for employees. Therefore, part of this study aims to better understand how relationship dynamics with supervisors and coworkers may have shifted during this pandemic for fast-food workers.

Although the full-effect of COVID-19 on workers is yet unknown, Kniffin et al. (2020) reflects on prior research and world events (e.g., economic downturns) and cites the negative spillover effects experienced historically for those who remain employed during those periods (e.g., increased stress among those who are not laid off; decreased organizational commitment; Trevor & Nyberg, 2008). They also speculate that COVID-19 will result in increased burnout, absenteeism, deviant behaviors, and bullying, as well as increased inequality (Kniffin et al., 2020). Specifically, racial and ethnic minority groups are less likely to have the option of working remotely and therefore face greater risks of exposure to the virus (Kniffin et al., 2020).

Potential racial inequalities are particularly salient in the fast-food industry, as 44.8% of fast-food workers self-identify as part of a minority racial group (Data USA, 2020). Finally, both Kniffin et al. (2020) and Prime et al. (2020) argue that caregivers are likely to be disparately affected by COVID-19 due to the increase in daily stressors, even for those who are not confronted with unemployment or illness. The potential impact on caregivers in particular highlights the importance of examining lower-wage workers who also provide care to others.[2]

In recognition of the uncertainty posed by COVID-19, Kniffin et al. (2020) charge I-O psychologists with applying knowledge from the field and scientific rigor, "for the purpose of sensemaking to help individuals and organizations manage risks while simultaneously developing and applying solutions" (p. 4). Other scholars anticipate that there will be substantial variation with regards to how COVID-19 will affect families, therefore making a qualitative study all the more important and timely right now (Prime et al., 2020). The current study thus aims to understand the evolving nature of coworker and supervisor relationships in the fast-food industry within the context of the pandemic.

Research Questions

As an exploratory study seeking to better understand factors that may have been neglected in prior studies, it is important to take a broad perspective and first understand the challenges this working population encounters. Understanding the specific challenges this population faces in juggling or attending to family issues will help place their support needs in context. Although McMullen et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study, they only asked three fairly narrow questions (e.g., "In the past, how have you engaged in behaviors directed at making it easier for your coworker(s) to balance their work and family demands?"), thereby potentially

[2] One of the inclusion criteria for the study is that participants must provide at least five hours of care to others per week.

missing the rich contextual factors surrounding their participants' work experiences. Therefore, the first research question is:

Research Q1: What are the most significant work-family stressors lower-wage workers face?

Next, the heart of this study is to backtrack on the work of past FSSB and coworker support studies and start at the foundation. The goal of this study is to understand from these workers' perspectives what type of support they value; therefore, the second research question is:

Research Q2: What supervisory and coworker behaviors do lower-wage workers interpret as supportive of their work-family lives?

As mentioned, there are a lack of studies simultaneously investigating both supervisor and coworker work-family support. Therefore, in an effort to better understand and continue to build theory, I seek to understand how supervisor and coworker support function together. For example, are there instances when one source of support can make up for a lack of support from another (e.g., can coworker support make up for a lack of support from a supervisor)? If so, under what circumstances do these compensatory mechanisms occur? Similarly, it is also unclear if work-family support from multiple sources around the same issue can be additive. Therefore, the third research question is:

Research Q3: How do supervisor and coworker behaviors jointly shape work-family social support for lower-wage workers?

Lastly, this study seeks to understand how the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted fast-food workers and their experiences of social support at work. Although academic articles are beginning to emerge focusing on various aspects of COVID-19, no such studies have yet examined fast-food workers and their relationships at work. Since much

remains unknown about the impact of the virus on essential workers, and researchers speculate that experiences will vary broadly (Prime et al., 2020), this study seeks to better understand the unique experiences of fast-food workers. Therefore, the fourth research question is:

> ***Research Q4*:** How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected supervisory and coworker relationships and support for work-family issues among lower-wage workers?

METHOD

Participants

The current study sampled lower-wage fast-food workers. To meet inclusion criteria, participants had to be at least 18 years of age, currently employed in the fast-food industry for at least six months, and not enrolled as a full-time student (non-students and part-time students were eligible). Criteria for "lower-wage" was calculated on a state-by-state basis (e.g., below $16.35 in Colorado, $18.62 in New York, $13.77 in Alabama; MIT Living Wage, 2021). Additionally, in order to best understand those workers who are likely to encounter work-family challenges, participants must have provided at least five hours of family-care per week (e.g., childcare, eldercare, or some other family-related care responsibilities).

The final sample size was 21, with participants ranging in age from 18 to 43 years old (M = 26.9, SD = 6.31). Eleven participants identified as female and 10 identified as male, with no other gender identities mentioned. There was little overlap in terms of the fast-food chains participants work for, with 14 different franchises represented (e.g., Domino's, Papa Murphy's, Jersey Mike's, McDonald's, Popeyes, KFC, Chipotle). Participants' tenure in their current position ranged from seven months to nine years. Four participants were currently taking classes as part-time students and six others were shift managers (not upper management). Participants came from different geographical regions, including Nevada, Texas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Illinois, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, New Jersey, and New York. Nine identified as White, seven identified as Black American, two identified as Mixed/Multi-Racial, one identified as Asian, one identified as Hispanic, and one identified as Native American.

Procedure

Question Development

Prior to conducting interviews, IRB approval was obtained. Following that, the initial set of interview questions was pilot tested with two subject-matter experts (SMEs), identified as those with characteristics matching the target population. The pilot test consisted of a cognitive interview, in which the SME verbalized out loud their thought process as they listened to each question and then gave their answer. This process served multiple purposes. First, this helped identify poorly worded or confusing questions. Second, this process led to the inclusion of additional questions based on the feedback and experiences of the SMEs (de Souza et al., 2016).

For example, it became clear after the first pilot interview that the term "support" was too general and warranted additional questions to better triangulate the various types of support supervisors and coworkers may provide. Therefore, I added the following questions to the interview protocol: *What are some nice things your supervisor has done for you? How has your supervisor shown they care for you? Has your supervisor ever gone above and beyond for you? Describe the situation and what did they do?*

Interview questions were semi-structured meaning that a series of questions were created, however, I as the interviewer, had the discretion to ask follow-up probing questions depending on participant answers (King, 2004a). This flexible approach was necessary for the particular research questions, as the goal was to understand work-family social support from the perspective of the participants, as well as to understand how they have arrived at their perspective (King, 2004a). The process was also iterative, meaning that lessons learned or knowledge gained during each interview was used to inform and adapt the next session (Levitt et al., 2017).

In line with best practices for question generation, the questions aimed to sound conversational, used language that is comfortable and familiar to participants, were straightforward, simple, and open-ended. The order of the questions was such that they moved from general to specific and made logical sense (de Souza et al., 2016). The interview began with "warm-up" questions that aided in building rapport and making participants feel comfortable. The majority of the questions however were "key questions" that focused on the four research questions. By asking about issues in multiple ways I sought to triangulate the research questions (Lee et al., 2011). Following key questions, probing questions allowed me to dig deeper into certain issues depending on the answer given. Transition statements and questions were used to ease between key areas of focus. Lastly, ending questions that asked participants to reflect on the experience and share any last thoughts wrapped up the interview and provided a sense of closure as opposed to an abrupt ending (de Souza et al., 2016).

In recognition that the researcher's own past experiences and biases can influence the qualitative process (e.g., from question development, to steering the conversation in a certain direction, to coding and analysis) I worked with a research team of four additional undergraduate research assistants with different backgrounds and familiarity with work-family support who assisted at each stage (de Souza et al., 2016; King, 2004a). See Appendix A for the final interview protocol.

Recruitment

Recruitment of study participants occurred from February through early April 2021. Despite using a variety of methods, recruitment proved to be very challenging. As Shaghaghi, Bhopal, and Sheikh (2011) note, lower-wage workers can be a particularly difficult population to reach. Given the challenging nature of recruitment, I maintained detailed records of which

strategies proved to be the most effective in order to contribute to the relatively limited research on virtually recruiting lower-wage participants.

At the start of recruitment, I created social media posts on Instagram and Facebook and asked those in my network to share the posts. Several instructors at two universities in Colorado and Oregon advertised the study in their classes, and I also printed out flyers with the study information and handed them out in fast-food locations throughout Northern California and Nevada. However, neither of these methods yielded any contact from interested individuals. In mid-February, I began posting on Reddit, within specific fast-food subreddits (e.g., Wendy's subreddit). However, several of these posts were removed by moderators, as recruiting study participants fell outside of the community guidelines on some subreddits. After I stopped receiving inquiries from Reddit, I paid for four Craigslist posts in Houston, Chicago, San Antonio, and Las Vegas ($5 – $7 each), as these cities have some of the largest number of fast-food chains per capita (Datafiniti, 2018). Another three participants signed up via the Craigslist ads. Interestingly, during this same period I began hearing from potential participants who indicated that they heard about the study on Reddit. However, several of these individuals did not meet the inclusion criteria, so after investigating the matter, I found that someone had re-posted the Las Vegas Craigslist ad on a subreddit for Paid Studies. In total, Reddit yielded 17 eligible participants who completed interviews. Only one participant was referred by a friend who also completed the interview. In total recruitment efforts totaled $22.

All recruitment materials (i.e., posts, flyers) contained a website link (website developed by research team) with more information, as well as a phone number and email address for the lead researcher, should potential participants have additional questions or wish to sign up. A Google Voice account was set up with a new dedicated phone number for this study. To ensure

participant eligibility a short screening survey was developed using Qualtrics. However, I found this to be an ineffective means of gauging eligibility, as potentially interested individuals stopped responding once I sent out the survey. Therefore, I began asking the eligibility questions either via email or over the phone (depending on which way they contacted me), and I double checked eligibility at the start of the interview. IRB approval was obtained for these pre-interview questions (see Appendix B for a full list of questions).

All but two interviews were conducted via Zoom, a video chat software, which has been recommended for qualitative research as it allows sessions to be securely recorded without additional third-party software (e.g., Archibald et al., 2019). As the interviewer, I was in a private room without distractions and encouraged participants to likewise participate in a location that afforded privacy and limited distractions in order to promote safety and confidentiality (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). The remaining two interviews were conducted over the phone, as participants indicated that they could not easily access a computer or smartphone to use Zoom. Participants were compensated $20 for participating in the approximately hour-long interview.

Interviews

Individual interviews were used to gather data for this study. As explained below, changes related to COVID-19 shifted dynamics such that individual interviews were the safest and best course of action. First, safety concerns precluded the possibility of in-person focus groups or interviews and instead necessitated the use of a virtual platform. Unlike an in-person setting where participants can read body language and subtle cues which encourages dialogue and conversation among a group, the separation introduced in virtual meeting rooms via screens can limit natural conversations (Archibald et al., 2019). For example, participants might not feel

comfortable interjecting or knowing when it is appropriate to speak up in a virtual focus group setting. Additionally, if participants need to call in from a phone they would not be able to easily see the rest of the group. Therefore, it is likely that many of the benefits of a focus group might be eliminated in a virtual setting. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, individual interviews were more appropriate given the consequences and sensitive nature of COVID-19 (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Preliminary literature suggests that COVID-19 has likely increased work and family role demands, and thus a virtual interview was not only the safer option, but also allowed for more flexibility so individuals could schedule an interview at a time that was convenient for them (Archibald et al., 2019; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Sinclair et al., 2020). We also know that individual experiences during the pandemic are highly variable given an individual's health, work, family, and broader nonwork lives, with some of these experiences being potentially very sensitive (Prime et al., 2020). Some research has suggested that virtual interviews may be particularly useful when asking personal questions, as was the case in the current study (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Given the likely unique and sensitive nature of these conversations, I determined that individual interviews were the best option in order to protect confidentiality and encourage participants to share their honest thoughts and experiences without fear of judgment from others.

Prior to the interview, each participant received detailed information about the session and what to expect. This information was emailed to all participants. Additionally, at the start of the interview, I read the consent form and answered any questions participants may have had. Verbal consent to participate in the interview and for the session to be video recorded (for the purposes of transcribing the conversation and verifying participants only complete the study once) was obtained in order for the interview to proceed.

Morgan and Symon (2004) note the importance of clearly communicating the purpose and voluntary nature of interviews, as well as how confidentiality will be maintained prior to beginning virtual interviews, as this format may lead to more misunderstandings than a face-to-face interview. Therefore, before beginning the interview I took time to describe how the research team would maintain confidentiality (e.g., only a select number of individuals with IRB approval would have access to the recordings, and the transcripts would be kept in a locked folder on a secured drive) and clearly communicated that I have no association with any fast-food franchise, nor would I be informing any supervisors of employee participation.

During the interview I facilitated the conversation by introducing the session, asking key and probing questions, and giving the interviewee enough time to think about and respond to questions (de Souza et al., 2016; King, 2004a). Additionally, I attempted to limit leading facial expressions or comments (e.g., smiling too much; Ehigie & Ehigie, 2005), although I did closely watch participants' behaviors in order to detect any discomfort and adjust accordingly (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). At the end of the interview, I asked if there was anything else not covered that the participant would like to share. Since conversations about COVID-related experiences had the potential to bring up difficult or sensitive issues for participants, resources (e.g., mental health resources) were also provided at the end of the interview. Interviews lasted roughly 30 to 70 minutes, with most lastly approximately 50 minutes.

The number of interviews was not pre-determined, but rather went until saturation, or no new themes, emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A total of 21 interviews were completed, which is in line with the literature around the expected number of interviews needed until saturation is reached. For example, Bertaux (1981) argues that at least 15 interviews are needed to conduct a qualitative study. Other findings from an empirical study using thematic analysis indicate that

94% of the final themes found were identified within the first six interviews, with that number rising to 97% after 12 interviews (Guest et al., 2006). Guest et al. (2006) argue that more homogenous samples usually require fewer interviews to reach saturation. Given the population of interest is relatively specific (i.e., lower-wage adult fast-food workers), I anticipated saturation would be found within 20 – 30 interviews. Findings from this study aligned with prior recommendations. Specifically, all themes pertinent to the research questions (e.g., all themes related to supervisor and coworker work-family support) were found within the first 13 interviews. All themes, including more tangential themes (e.g., interesting findings related to safety, but not work-family or COVID-19 specific) were found within the first 17 interviews. To ensure I had reached saturation I conducted another four interviews, with no new themes emerging.

Transcription

Following each interview, the video recording was saved and transcribed using an online transcription application called Otter (www.otter.ai.com). Transcriptions via Otter were promptly done following each interview in order to minimize the chances of lost data. An undergraduate research assistant then closely checked the transcription against the recording, correcting any errors. In accordance with Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, and King's (2015) recommendation, each utterance (e.g., including "um", "uh-huh") was included in the transcription for two reasons. First, this practice is recommended for all researchers who are relatively new at qualitative research (as is the case in this study), and second, those utterances may yield useful information during the coding process. Next, I did a final check of the transcripts to ensure accuracy. Quick transcription allowed the research team to read over and reflect on the content of the session before the next interview.

Positionality Statement

As the principal investigator in this qualitative study, it is important that I acknowledge and transparently share my experiences and motivation for conducting this study. My identity and background have undoubtedly shaped my approach to this research, and readers should take this into account when reading this study. I am a 29-year-old white female graduate student in an industrial-organizational psychology doctoral program and do not self-identify with the target population. Specifically, I do not have children or provide significant care for another person, and although I have experience working in lower-wage jobs, I do not have experience working in the fast-food industry. Given that I do not share the identity of the participants, I cannot fully understand their unique experiences and understand my own experiences have influenced the questions I chose to ask and the interpretations I have drawn.

Although I do not self-identify with this population and this work would benefit from the perspective of someone who does, this research is still valuable as one piece of research adding to the existing body of literature. The totality of this research, from multiple perspectives, will allow us greater insights into the experiences of these workers. Due to the intersectionality of the multiple identities each person holds, any researcher will have certain biases that may influence their work. In my case, I am particularly interested in customer-facing roles and jobs with potentially limited schedule flexibility (e.g., no option to telework). My own personal experience of schedule flexibility has aided my ability to attend to nonwork matters (e.g., health issues), which I acknowledge may present a potential bias. Although I cannot change my identity and past experiences, in an effort to most accurately reflect participants' experiences, I provide ample direct quotes in the results section for readers to interpret themselves without my lens of analysis.

I must also acknowledge my research training and expertise at this point. My research experience includes a focus on occupational health psychology and worker wellbeing, with a particular emphasis on supervisor support for work-nonwork issues. Despite previous research experience, this is my first time leading a qualitative study. However, I have completed coursework covering qualitative methods and have spent significant additional time learning proper methods. In acknowledgement of my limitations and potential biases, the study protocol has been reviewed by multiple researchers from different disciplines and I recruited undergraduate research assistants with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Coding

A bottom-up, hybrid approach of template analysis and grounded theory was used to code and analyze the data. Template analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data that thematically organizes text data (in this case interview transcripts) into a hierarchical set of codes and can be useful when comparing groups (Brooks et al., 2015; King, 2004b). Whereas template analysis may start out with a set of ideas or initial codes that guide interpretation, grounded theory on the other hand seeks to discover or construct theory from the data, and as such, data is analyzed as it is collected and that analysis informs future data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Tie et al., 2019). The current study borrowed elements from both approaches, specifically the hierarchical coding template found in template analysis and the bottom-up approach characteristic of grounded theory. Given that the focus of the current study is not to directly compare groups (e.g., higher-wage and lower-wage workers), but rather to dive deeply into the experiences of one specific group, this hybrid, bottom-up approach with no *a priori* coding template was most appropriate.

Once interviews were conducted, a coding scheme, commonly used in template analysis, was developed based on transcripts in order to organize and parse out different themes. Although this method can be fairly structured, it still allows for flexibility and adaptation throughout the coding process (Brooks et al., 2015). Template analysis uses hierarchical coding, such that certain codes are sub-categories of a higher-order code (King, 2004b). This approach allowed the interview conversations to be analyzed at varying levels of specificity. For example, the highest-order codes (e.g., organizational-level supports) were helpful for getting a very broad overview

of the conversation, while lower-order codes revealed more of the nuanced detail (e.g., organizational policies specific to scheduling) (King, 2004b). Although many qualitative techniques for coding and interpreting data exist, this study primarily drew on recommendations from King (2004b).

In an effort to limit researcher bias, a research team comprised of individuals with varying levels of familiarity with the work-nonwork literature coded all transcripts. For example, I am familiar with this literature; however, other members of the research team purposefully have had no prior exposure to this literature. This deliberate team composition was intended to encourage team members to share themes I, as the lead researcher, may not have initially picked out potentially due to my familiarity with the work-nonwork social support literature.

Before beginning the coding process, I taught the research assistants how to generally code transcripts (however, not giving them any themes). The research assistants then listened to the recorded interviews and re-read over the transcripts in order to become familiar with each conversation. Following this step, the team independently coded a segment of transcripts, with each person developing their own codes. I then synthesized all codes, talked through discrepancies with the research assistants, and created the first version of the codebook. This method takes a very unstructured approach; however, given that the goal of this research is to limit assumptions about these workers, refraining from using *a priori* codes was important.

After the initial coding template was developed and reviewed by the team, each team member independently coded two additional transcripts. These two transcripts were used to calculate Cohen's Kappa, an indicator of interrater reliability. A Cohen's Kappa value of 0.61 – 0.80 is considered substantial, while a value of 0.81 – 1 is considered almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Multiple methods of calculating interrater agreement exist, with one

method simply examining the percentage of agreement. However, Cohen's Kappa has been considered a superior approach to interrater reliability, as it takes into account agreement that may have been reached by random chance (MacPhail, Khoza, Abler, & Ranganathan, 2016; McHugh, 2012). Interrater reliability using this first codebook was insufficient, at .59 (Landis & Koch, 1977). Therefore, the research team met, discussed discrepancies, and the coding template was revised. King (2004b) notes the various types of revisions to the initial template as: insertion, deletion, changing scope, and changing higher-order classification. In our case, no codes were deleted (i.e., removed from the codebook), several codes were inserted (i.e., added additional codes) and several others changed scope (i.e., re-defining codes for better clarity and distinction between them). We did not change the higher-order classification of any codes in this second version of the codebook (i.e., re-organizing lower-order codes to fall under different higher-order codes; King, 2004b).

The entire team then coded a different transcript using the new codebook and interrater reliability was sufficient. Specifically, the overall Kappa value was .83 between myself and the three research assistants, which is considered a near perfect level of agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Given the high interrater reliability, I felt comfortable with the research team coding the rest of the transcripts. In line with best practices, each transcript was coded by multiple coders – myself plus two research assistants (Hruschka et al., 2004). Specifically, each research assistant coded one half of the transcripts, and I coded every transcript as well. In line with best practices, upon the completion of coding I calculated the overall average Cohen's Kappa statistic between myself and all research assistants (Warrens, 2014). This final overall interrater reliability value for all transcripts was .81. It should be noted that at the end of the coding process, the research team went back and re-coded the first transcripts that were used during the codebook

development stage to ensure codes were applied consistently throughout the process (i.e., all data was blindly coded at least twice; King, 2004b). See Table 1 for the final codebook.

Although all coding was done by the researchers, the software Dedoose was used to aid in organization. Dedoose is a cloud-based computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) and is a useful tool for maintaining, organizing, and applying codes to qualitative data (Dedoose, N.D.). Once a codebook is imported, this specific CAQDAS allows users to easily apply codes to transcripts, search for applications of specific codes, and creates a tally of the number of times each code has been used. Dedoose also provides additional flexibility that is useful for projects with multiple team members. The option of blindly coding (i.e., a setting which allows users to code the same transcripts without seeing the codes applied by others) is a particular benefit of this software. Although Dedoose has other capabilities, such as using key words to auto-generate a codebook, using these features is not recommended for qualitative analysis (Ritchie et al., 2014). Therefore, in line with best practices, CAQDAS was used as a supplemental organizational tool, rather than an analytic tool.

Interpretation

After all transcriptions were coded, the process of interpretation began. As a first step, the team reflected on the data and final coding template. Next, the frequency and distribution of codes between sessions was examined. This step was not intended to serve as a means of quantifying or quantitatively interpreting the data, but rather to give a sense or recurring codes and potential areas to examine more closely (King, 2004b). The frequency of codes was not used to make any inferences and was only used as one of several tools to indicate potentially meaningful areas to pay attention to. Aside from frequencies, discrepancies or disagreements in participant experiences were also used as an indicator of material to be carefully examined

(King, 2004b). Throughout the interpretation phase, the researchers attempted to balance selectivity (e.g., focusing on themes that are of relevant importance) with openness (e.g., still paying attention to themes that emerge as important to participants, yet may seem more tangential to the initial research questions; King, 2004b). Lastly, the research team focused on how codes and themes that emerged relate to one another (King, 2004b).

RESULTS

The following are the results based on 21 individual interviews. I focus first on themes relating to the four research questions of interest and conclude with additional unanticipated themes that emerged, yet are important experiences to consider going forward. Although the interviews focused primarily on work-family issues, participants were free to discuss anything about their work experiences, and as a result, some themes are not necessarily specific to the work-nonwork interface.

Work-Family Stressors

The first research question asks *What are the most significant work-family stressors lower-wage workers face?* In order to be included in the study, all participants indicated that they provide care for someone else for at least five hours per week. All but one participant reported caring for a direct family member (e.g., child, parent, sibling), with the last participant taking care of a god child. Additionally, two participants had children with disabilities, and several others have a chronic illness themselves (e.g., endometriosis, cancer). However, responses differed when asked about the most significant work-family stressors. The most commonly reported stressor was related to time – specifically, difficulty making alternate arrangements for care (e.g., childcare) when the participant had to go to work, not having enough time to spend with family, and overall finding enough time to balance work with caregiving and household chores (e.g., cooking, cleaning). Financial concerns were the second most commonly reported stressor. When asked what else they would like to share at the end of an interview, one participant captured both of these themes by saying:

> "I miss my kids, they miss mom. I mean, the kids are used to me working. I've worked their entire lives so they know that, um, mom works and mom pays the bills and mom

> supports them, or they can't have the things that they want or need. So, they understand that I have to work but, um, they still say 'It's not fair Mom, it's not fair.' Like, you know, it's not, it's not fair to them that I can't be with them as much as I want to be. Because I have to pay bills, and I have to work and-- I love to work though and they know that." – (female participant, non-managerial supervisor)

Perhaps not surprisingly, when asked who individuals turn to for support when there is a conflict between work and family, most participants listed other family members or friends outside of work. However, some individuals explained that they have no one else they can rely on when conflicts between work and family happen, which makes those conflicts extremely challenging.

Supervisor Support

Part of the second research question asks, *What supervisory behaviors do lower-wage workers interpret as supportive of their work-family lives?* Participants reported a variety of support mechanisms throughout the interviews (e.g., help with scheduling, providing advice), with many behaviors largely mapping onto the four dimensions of FSSB (particularly instrumental support and emotional support, with less emphasis on role modeling and creative work-family management; Hammer et al., 2009). However, additional supportive behaviors focusing on finances were also identified. Therefore, a total of five dimensions of supervisor support were discussed throughout the interviews (i.e., instrumental support, emotional support, creative work-family management, role modeling, and financial support). The following sections are arranged such that the dimensions most commonly discussed and conveyed as most important during the interviews are examined first. For example, instrumental support was the most frequently used code for supervisor support and tended to be discussed by participants as the most important form of support, and thus this section appears first. Lastly, although *not* a dimension of support, participants also emphasized that the effort supervisors put into supporting

their employees is critical in determining their level of satisfaction with supervisory support. Therefore, this concept of "effort" applies to all five dimensions of supervisor support and refers to the quality of support received and will be discussed last.

Instrumental Support

Instrumental supervisor support, which I largely conceptualized in the same manner as Hammer et al. (2009) (i.e., providing reactive, day-to-day support that helps employees attend to both their work and nonwork lives) emerged as the most pervasive theme throughout the interviews. This type of support includes accommodating schedule requests, helping an employee respond to work-nonwork conflicts that arise unexpectedly (e.g., being accommodating when a child is brought into work due to caregiving difficulties), and other day-to-day behaviors that assist an employee in handling their work and family needs (e.g., helping an employee get set up with benefits). Although instrumental support can take various forms, scheduling support was by far the most talked about behavior during the interviews. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, I will first discuss instrumental support specific to scheduling followed by other forms of instrumental support identified by fast-food workers in this study.

Scheduling Support. As mentioned, scheduling support emerged as the most common type of instrumental support offered by supervisors. This type of support includes schedule flexibility to accommodate work-family issues that arise either on the day-to-day level or are more permanent in one's life. Managers are often the gatekeepers of scheduling, holding the power to approve time off or allow shift changes, and participants expressed a range of perspectives and satisfaction with the scheduling support they receive from supervisors. On the positive end of the spectrum, supervisors who offered flexibility with regards to switching shifts or approving time off were perceived as being the most supportive. Some participants reported

that their supervisors would even offer to come in and personally cover a shift. For example, this participant described how her supervisor occasionally will volunteer to work a shift without her even having to ask: “Sometimes she will take my days for me if I need to be there for my son.”

Although several participants indicated that their supervisors were always flexible with scheduling requests, others found their supervisor responses to be unpredictable. This other end of the spectrum, notably instances when supervisors did *not* provide scheduling support were just as informative. For example, an overnight baker-in-training at a fast-food chain found the nightshift extremely difficult to maintain with her child, but her supervisor continually diverted her requests:

> “Yeah, I've asked her plenty of times. And honestly, her reasoning was always, 'Just keep hanging on, just give us two more weeks.' And like, she'll see me struggling, she'll see me going through it, but the scheduling won't change. And that's the only– that's my only gripe with the training because I know it can be spaced out. But I think for her, you know, for her numbers – she wants to get it done at any – at any cost.” – (female participant, non-manager, student)

In addition to failing to accommodate scheduling requests, other participants noted the unpredictability of their supervisor’s response. In these situations participants described how sometimes their supervisor would try to do their best with scheduling and other times they felt on their own. For example, one participant said:

> “They can be kind of hit or miss. Uh, there’s time where he’s willing to help out and he’ll come in here for 10 hours with me. But there’s other times where, you know, someone called out and he’s made me work open to close because he didn’t want to come in that day.” – (female participant, non-managerial supervisor)

This type of inconsistency can be stressful, as employees do not know if they will be granted the time off and whether or not they need to arrange for childcare. Some participants even explained how they are apprehensive and avoid asking for time off, even when it would be helpful, because of their supervisor’s potentially negative response.

Another common experience is that of supervisors refusing to take an active role in helping employees find coverage for a shift. Many reported that they are required come to work if they cannot find coverage, even if they have an important issue to attend to. Scheduling difficulties became such a large issue for one participant that she left employment at that fast-food chain and moved to a different one. As another example, a participant shared that management would not let him leave work to attend his friends' funerals because he could not find a substitute for his shift: "I've just had like, four of my friends die in the span of two weeks. Wow, and I can't get off work."

Much of what participants discussed revolved around schedule flexibility and time off; however, some also commented on the need for more advanced notice of shifts. To be clear, some participants reported working a consistent schedule and others were given their schedule well in advance. However, a few participants whose work hours change and are not consistent said that their supervisors sometimes change their shifts without notifying them. They also mentioned that it would be helpful to know their schedule more than a week in advance so they can plan appointments and better arrange their nonwork life. It is important to note that these participants were unsure if this schedule planning fell within the supervisor's discretion or was organizational policy.

Other Instrumental Support. Although the bulk of comments around instrumental support fell into the category of scheduling accommodations, there were a few other behaviors that are classified as "other instrumental support" that are worth noting. These behaviors vary, but all involve a supervisor reacting to work-family conflicts. Participants who reported feeling very supported in this area described situations such as being told to leave work and go be with a family member at the hospital, in addition to an overall level of understanding and willingness to

help on the part of supervisors. Other participants described support that did not necessarily involve them leaving work. For example, one participant's sister was unexpectedly dropped off at work:

> "I was in the middle of a delivery, and then all of sudden I'm getting a call from my manager saying, 'Hey, your mom just stopped by and dropped [your sister] off.' And – like I'm rushing back as fast as I could. So, we ended up – she ended up just staying in the back office until my shift was over. Um. And they were very understanding about that." – (male participant, non-manager)

Although some participants noted that their supervisors were consistently very accommodating of their work-nonwork conflicts, a more common experience among participants involved managers being *fairly* accommodating for nonwork conflicts. The majority of participants reported that their supervisors were willing to help, so long as the situation was a serious family emergency and was not a frequent occurrence. In these situations, participants tend to describe their supervisors as *generally* supportive. Conversely, several participants described relatively poor support from supervisors. For example, one participant who has a chronic illness became sick at work, yet her manager did not let her leave to get medical attention until she had found someone to cover her shift:

> "Like a manager will sit there and straight tell you that it's not their problem... There was a time where I had to go to the hospital while I was in the store and they told me that I couldn't go until I had found cover. At that point, that's an issue about health for sure. Even though it didn't include anybody else, like I needed medical care, I needed medical help, and I wasn't allowed to go until I could find somebody to replace me. And that's definitely a problem that you'll see come up a lot in fast-food." – (female participant, non-managerial supervisor)

This does not appear to be an isolated experience, as other participants told similar stories. A different participant said she was not allowed to leave work when her partner broke his leg and was in the hospital needing surgery because they would have to close the store without her. Yet another individual described not leaving work for an emergency because she was

concerned that her supervisor would be angry, and she might lose her job. Several participants also described a lack of support for other non-emergency, but unexpected work-family challenges. For example, one worker with a child who had to transition to online learning at the start of the pandemic felt his supervisor was not willing to work with him to find a creative solution that would allow him to both take care of his child and perform his tasks at work.

Emotional Support

The second important type of support discussed throughout the interviews revolved around emotional support from supervisors. Again, emotional support is conceptualized in a similar manner as Hammer and colleagues' (2009) FSSB scale (i.e., supervisors making their employees feel cared for and comfortable discussing challenges between work and nonwork).

Participants who reported receiving emotional support said that their supervisors took time to check in on them, ask about family, and had a general awareness about their nonwork lives and demands. Other supervisors pulled participants aside when they were having a particularly difficult day at work, and instead of reprimanding them, gently inquired about what was going on and gave them space to vent and talk through the challenges they were experiencing, which participants indicated was helpful and appreciated.

It is important to note that some fast-food workers have multiple supervisors (e.g., shift supervisor and general manager) and their relationships with each may differ. Several participants commented on differences between supervisors' styles and approachability. Specifically, some felt more comfortable with and received more emotional support for work-family issues from one supervisor compared to the other, and therefore would only talk to that individual about work-family issues.

Although it is encouraging that many participants reported feeling comfortable talking about work-family conflicts with at least one of their supervisors, that was not the case for all participants. For example, some participants described a complete lack of emotional support from supervisors by saying things like, "I'm kind of all I've got. Management isn't' really gonna care...My district manager makes it difficult."

However, it is important to note that although most participants, whether they received the support or not, reported that emotional support from their supervisor is important, some participants preferred stricter boundaries between work and nonwork. For example, one participant shared: "Really, to be honest, whatever is going on at home should be separated from the job." These participants did note that occasionally they would have to disclose personal matters if they needed time off, but in general, they preferred not to discuss their family or nonwork life with supervisors.

One other point is important to note in regard to fostering emotional support. Some participants only see their supervisors once every week or so, which seems to pose a challenge to developing a close relationship. However, interacting with supervisors everyday does not appear to guarantee a supportive relationship, but rather removes a potential barrier.

Role Modeling

Although role modeling is a dimension of FSSB, participants did not readily identify these behaviors as support mechanisms on their own. Rather, only once probed about whether supervisors role model effective strategies for balancing work and family did participants offer their thoughts. Some participants believed that their supervisors were good role models, yet struggled to provide specific actions or reasoning behind that conclusion. The only specific behavior participants pointed to was advice-giving. Although Hammer and colleagues (2009)

conceptualize the dimension of role modeling predominantly as *demonstrating* strategies or behaviors for how to integrate work and family, they do note that sharing ideas or advice may also be helpful. Therefore, although participants did not recall observing effective behaviors, some did talk about going to their supervisor, who they perceived to have wisdom from life experience, and asking for advice on how to handle work-family issues (e.g., how to balance work with childcare).

However, most participants could not make a judgement one way or another about whether their supervisor was a good role model. For example, one participant simply said, "As far as like the general manager and some of the higher ups, I really can't say on that, because they don't really discuss their personal life as much."

Several other participants claimed that their supervisors were poor role models, primarily due to the long hours spent at work. One participant noticed that managerial responsibilities conflicted with their boss's ability to finish school:

> "The managers all pushed like 50 hours a week, 50-60 hours a week almost, probably. They were always there. The other managers are all trying to go to school and stuff, like, work gets in the way. And they're always having to come in to cover shifts or like, help out or whatever because of how busy the store is. And it's just like, if your life is revolving that much about around work, and kind of doesn't seem like much of a balance, you know. It kind of rubbed off on me where I would go in and cover shifts that I really shouldn't have been covering, or like, because it would have taken a toll on me and told my family." – (female participant, non-manager, student)

This is perhaps the most stark example of negative role modeling behaviors directly impacting a participant's own behaviors and decisions when it came to balancing work and family. However, several others reiterated the perception that their supervisors are not good role models because they spend a lot of time at work and appear to have strained family relations.

Creative Work-Family Management

Creative work-family management is a type of supervisor support that involves proactively taking the initiative to restructure work in such a way that helps an employee attend to nonwork demands while still being successful at work. As opposed to instrumental support, which is at the individual level, creative work-family management tends to be at the group or organizational level (Hammer et al., 2009). It is important to note that discussion of this type of support was not prevalent throughout the interviews. One of the few examples of this type of support came from a fast-food worker in Minnesota who explained how his manager was strongly advocating for corporate to provide hazard pay to employees during COVID-19, which would help him pay bills and continue to take care of his family during the pandemic.

Although examples of this type of proactive supervisor support were very infrequently discussed throughout the interviews, several participants did discuss ways in which their supervisors *could* provide this type of support but had failed to do so. Specifically, there was a general consensus among interviewees that they would like to receive cross training in order to perform multiple roles at their franchise. Participants described how the fast-food industry suffers from high turnover, meaning that new hires are constantly being trained, yet that training is often very quick and not comprehensive. This limited training means that many employees are barely trained in their own function and have no expertise in other roles, which creates subsequent consequences for scheduling time off. Employees who have to find coworkers to swap shifts with them can only turn to qualified individuals, and that pool becomes very small when no one is cross trained in different areas. Take the following excerpt:

> "I literally had the choice between two people – the person who trained me and one other person who only worked mornings. And I had to, you know, try to convince them to cover the shift. And sometimes that even ended up with me having to spend money out of my own pocket to get them to cover the shift – to give them 20 bucks to cover the

> shift...because that's the only way that I was going to be able to get it off without consequence." – (male participant, non-manager)

The idea of cross training coworkers to be competent in multiple roles was repeated in several interviews:

> "Like, they should really try to get everyone to learn every station because a lot of people, they want to help me but they can't because they don't know how to do what I do. And I want to help them, but I can't because I don't know how to do what they do." – (female participant, non-manager)

The overall findings related to the dimension of creative work-family management were very interesting because participants tended to highlight what *was not* being done by supervisors, as opposed to helpful examples of this type of support. As described above, only very few participants could recall their supervisors making an effort to permanently re-arrange work for the whole store in a way that jointly benefitted the franchise and employees dealing with family demands. One action participants indicated would be helpful in this regard, and was repeated in several interviews, is the idea of cross training employees on multiple functions so it is easier to change shifts with their coworkers when family or nonwork conflicts arise.

Financial Support

Although not addressed in the current work-family supervisor support literature, financial support from a supervisor surprisingly emerged as another type of support. This type of support was least commonly mentioned out of the five dimensions. Furthermore, it is important to note that this financial assistance can be tied to the organization (e.g., advances on paychecks), but more commonly comes from the supervisor's personal funds. One example of financial support tied to the organization came from a participant who had hospital bills and was paid by her supervisor before her normal pay period ended:

> "So, like, if you're having an emergency, like mostly for hospital bills, you can talk to her, and she will help you - like she will pay you. Like you don't have to wait till the end

> of month... The manager will pay you before the time warrants, having a very valid reason. She finds it okay to pay you at that point." – (female participant, non-manager)

Financial support directly from the supervisor typically takes the form of either gifts or personal contributions to bills. Participants described gifts as holiday presents, gift baskets, and even buying participants food or drinks when they are low on energy at work. Only a few participants mentioned that their supervisors directly helped pay their bills when they ran into financial difficulty. For example, one participant had just had a baby and her supervisor paid her bills for a month as a nice gesture.

Although most participants described the helpful ways in which supervisors provide financial support, a few noted supervisor-caused stressors relating to money. Specifically, a few participants said they had to ask their supervisor for their paycheck because they often forgot, which became particularly stressful for participants who had financial dependents (e.g., children). Others had to be proactive in making sure they received promised bonuses or overtime pay, particularly since the pandemic began.

Effort

The final theme that emerged in terms of supervisor support centered around the idea of effort – either that participants expressed surprise by their supervisor going out of their way to help, or disappointment that a supervisor was unwilling to put in what they considered to be the bare minimum. As a reminder, this theme is *not* a dimension of supervisor support but rather the quality of support and is applicable to the five dimensions identified above. Below are a few examples of supervisors exerting significant effort, followed by situations in which participants felt their supervisors could have put in more effort.

As described in earlier sections, a few participants noted that their supervisors would do whatever was in their power to help them at work (e.g., flexible scheduling, coming in to cover

shifts), with one participant noting, “I feel like they do go above and beyond with helping.” Another participant who had recently lost his mother explained how his supervisor made him a special Valentine’s Day gift because she had also lost her mother, which he felt was very thoughtful and kind of her.

Although it is encouraging that many participants shared these positive perspectives, this was not universal across everyone interviewed. For example, several participants explained feeling like their supervisors are unwilling to exert any extra effort because they either don’t want to or don’t have to in order to keep their job. Participants noted that this lack of effort applies to helping out with tasks, explaining benefits, paying employees on time, making schedules, and allowing for time off.

The overall perception participants have of their supervisor seems to depend on how much effort they exert given the limitations within which they have to work. For example, several individuals shared similar sentiments to this participant: “I think they’re, they’re trying their best...the best they can do at the moment.” It appears that it is not solely the actions themselves that matter most, but rather the actions coupled with how much latitude employees believe a supervisor has.

In summary, five dimensions of supervisor support were discussed during the interviews: instrumental support, emotional support, role modeling, creative work-family management, and financial support. Instrumental support, particularly flexibility with scheduling, emerged as the most important and most commonly reported form of support. Emotional support was also a key form of support, although some participants noted a preference for keeping work and family separate, and therefore not wanting to talk to their managers about family-related issues. In terms of role modeling, participants did not report observing helpful behaviors for balancing work and

family, rather some did note getting advice on how to balance work and family from a supervisor was valuable. Interestingly, the most helpful form of creative work-family management was actually a type of support participants reported wishing they received, but were not currently receiving: cross training so they had the knowledge and skills to work different roles when needed. The fifth dimension, financial support, was the least frequently discussed dimension, and includes supervisors raising pay, giving gifts, and personally helping employees pay their bills. Lastly, the idea of effort has not yet been explored in the supervisor support literature; however, given both the examples of supportive and unsupportive behaviors for all five dimensions coupled with the above-mentioned evaluative comments (e.g., my supervisor is doing the best they can), effort appears to be a key indicator of the quality of support. The next section details results specific to coworker support uncovered in the interviews.

Coworker Support

The other half of the second research question focused on which coworker behaviors are most supportive or helpful in accommodating work and family lives. Participants reported a variety of support mechanisms they receive from coworkers. Interestingly, most of these supportive behaviors align with the supportive supervisor behaviors discussed previously. Specifically, instrumental support, emotional support, role modeling, and financial support again emerged in discussions of coworker support. One notable difference between supervisor and coworker support is the absence of creative work-family management. However, creative work-family management is proactive and often group-level support, which coworkers would likely not have the authority to provide. Similar to the last section, these four dimensions of support are presented in order of most important and most commonly discussed to least. Once again, the

concept of effort (i.e., a quality of the four dimensions, but not a dimension itself) was discussed in regard to coworker support and will conclude this section.

Instrumental Support

This code overlaps with McMullen et al.'s (2018) dimension of facilitating work adjustments and is analogous to Hammer et al.'s (2009) dimension of instrumental support (substituting coworkers for supervisors), as both describe a coworker helping an individual deal with competing work and family demands that arise on a daily, or unexpected basis. As with supervisor instrumental support, much of this support from coworkers comes in the form of schedule support (e.g., covering or trading shifts), along with a few different behaviors more generally aimed at supporting work-family life. Therefore, coworker instrumental support will again be further separated into scheduling support and other types of instrumental support.

Scheduling Support. One of the most commonly discussed themes centered on scheduling support received from coworkers. Much of this scheduling support was mentioned in relation to unexpected situations (e.g., needing to call off of work for a family emergency), and emerged as a key way, if not the only way, participants felt coworkers are able to support one another. As one participant put it, "I mean, other than covering shifts, there's really not much my coworkers can do [to support me]."

However, the autonomy for employees to trade shifts among themselves seems to vary widely between fast-food organizations. For example, some participants said they had complete freedom to trade shifts as needed, while others had to go through management rather than directly to coworkers. Resolving scheduling conflicts, particularly last-minute conflicts, directly with coworkers seemed to offer greater flexibility and was appreciated by most interviewees. Consider the following two participants' experiences: "I'm very sure if I'm having an

emergency, I don't even have to call up my boss and tell her I'm not coming because I usually have somebody I can call and tell them to like take my place for few hours."

However, this experience starkly differs from another participant who is unable to rely directly on coworkers for scheduling support:

> "Having it approved was not so easy. Because you would have people willing to work and you would have crew members or line workers willing to switch out with you, but management wouldn't approve. So, it's – it's just one of those things like, if they can say no, and they want too, they will." – (female participant, non-manager)

One potential hurdle to providing scheduling support in the form of trading or covering shifts stems from a lack of employees who are properly trained to cover an individual's role, as discussed earlier. For example, although one participant described how there are three other cashiers and she "can call any one of them" if she needs to have her shift covered, several other participants described the difficulty of finding someone with their same job title to cover for them.

Other Instrumental Support. Instrumental support from coworkers can go beyond scheduling support. For example, being able to depend on coworkers to do their tasks and be flexible, especially as unexpected work-family issues arise are important supportive behaviors. Specifically, help getting one's work done, as well as the confidence that coworkers would get their own tasks completed emerged as an important form of coworker instrumental support. This type of support has not yet been identified in prior literature but was a pervasive theme throughout the interviews.

The first component of this theme includes coworker behaviors that aid in completing tasks. One participant described situations in which, "coworkers really were able to help step in when we needed – take over if you need a break, stuff like that." However, more often than receiving help with their tasks, participants relayed that coworkers doing *their own* work

efficiently and effectively is one of the most helpful things a coworker can do, and their job becomes harder when they cannot rely on their coworkers to consistently show up on time or do their job well. Interestingly, several participants noted that coworkers who do not do their job well cause stress that carries over into their nonwork lives:

> "I worry that they're not going to do their job, like the next day or something. Or the next time I work with them. And like that stress like kind of just carries over. Even though I like really try to like stop caring after work. When I'm not at work I try not to care about work but doesn't really work out. I take working seriously." – (female participant, non-manager, student)

Another participant repeated a similar reaction: "Yeah, by not doing their job and making me stress and making me – I don't hold grudges, but I stay upset about stuff because I'm just stressed out." Only a few participants occupied supervisory roles, but among them the sentiment was the same – employees who do their work well lessen the stress that they take home with them at the end of the day.

Besides doing their job well, coworkers can also demonstrate instrumental support by being flexible and accommodating when work-family conflicts arise. For example, one participant described his sister being unexpectedly dropped off at work and how his coworkers' responses made the situation easier:

> "My coworkers...they, uh, knew what was going on with [my sister] and they tried to keep her entertained – entertained as much as they could. And if it wasn't for that, oh, Lord that sure would have been a disaster. So, for them, I– I owe them my undying thanks for that." – (male participant, non-manager)

A few participants also explained how coworkers will take note of when they perceive the participant is feeling tired or overwhelmed and will do something nice to make their day a bit better. "My coworkers will say 'Hey, you look really tired. Go sit down.' I mean...they'll make food for each other. They reach out to see what they can do to help others out whenever it's going rough." Although this might not appear directly related to work-family issues, several

participants expressed what we commonly refer to as spillover between home and work (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Hanson et al., 2006). For example, they described how stress at work or home carries over and affects them in the other domain and how supportive coworker behaviors can lessen that strain. Therefore, a coworker telling an individual to take a break or cook some food can be an important mechanism to lessen that stress that is carried between work and home.

Interestingly, a few participants also described the importance of coworkers helping manage work tasks while the participant was pregnant. For example, one participant in a supervisory (but not managerial) position described how towards the end of her pregnancy she had a hard time standing and doing work, so her coworkers told her to stop working as much, and they would make sure everything got done. She explained that, "I would stay at home for like two days, and I would only come at work, uh, between four and five, just check on how the day was. And everything would run smoothly." This extra help and confidence that the chain would not suffer allowed her to take the time she needed during her pregnancy without the added stress of worrying about work.

A final example of instrumental support that several participants discussed involved getting rides to or from work when they did not have transportation, which allowed them more time to be home with family, as opposed to spending a much longer time commuting via public transportation. As we see from these examples, instrumental support can take various forms, but is centered around coworkers taking specific actions in order to help ease the conflict between work and family for the employee.

Emotional Support

Emotional support has been identified as dimensions in both FSSB and WFSCB, and we see this theme also emerge from the interviews (Hammer et al., 2009; McMullen et al., 2018). As described previously, the term emotional support has been used to refer to the perception that one is cared for and can include behaviors such as listening sympathetically, providing reassurance, and acknowledging the difficulties of balancing work and family demands. We heard these same sentiments repeated throughout the interviews.

The most common example of coworker emotional support conveyed by participants included informal conversations about work and family that boosted morale and made them feel better. One participant said that these informal conversations with coworkers "make the workday less stressful, which makes me less stressed when I come home, or less stressed before I have to go into a shift", again echoing the notion of spillover between work and family described above (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Hanson et al., 2006). A few participants explained how the unique nature of fast-food work (e.g., working in close proximity to each other with many interdependent tasks) elevated the importance of emotional support and feeling connected to coworkers. For example, one participant said:

> "I feel like working with people [in fast-food], you know, puts you on a team and makes you feel like you're not in this alone, because you have to work together through things. And because [of] that, there's a lot of informal conversation. A lot of just talking about home life, work life, etcetera." – (male participant, non-manager)

Although the majority of participants reported receiving emotional support from coworkers, that was not the experience of all workers. One participant explained that there is high turnover at their particular fast-food location, which makes getting to know coworkers on a personal level more challenging. This person also described how power dynamics can emerge between those who have been there longer and newer hires, in which the more tenured

employees are less friendly and less willing to help out new hires. A different participant offered another example: “I had a coworker who was very not understanding of the situation and was telling – essentially told me that I need to, uh, prioritize this– this job over my family, because I kept 'calling in too much' in his words.”

Although not a common theme, these examples of insufficient emotional support from coworkers highlight an important workplace experience for some. However, it is interesting to note that a few participants expressed a desire to keep work and family life separate, and as such, they do not feel comfortable nor want to discuss family matters while at work. This same sentiment was repeated by these participants in regards to sharing their personal life with both coworkers and supervisors.

Role Modeling

The concept of role modeling as a support mechanism emerges both in Hammer and colleagues (2009) and McMullen and colleagues (2018) scales, although it is referred to as demonstrating an understanding of the value of non-work life in the latter. Role modeling in the context of coworkers refers to strategies that peers use to effectively integrate work and family. These behaviors demonstrate, or reinforce, the importance of attending to both work *and* family. Perhaps not surprisingly, none of the participants identified role modeling when asked about coworker behaviors that help them manage work and family. However, when probed to specifically think about these behaviors, participants reported varied experiences.

A few participants indicated that their coworkers are good role models, but had a hard time identifying specific behaviors. For example, one individual said, “I feel like they're good at balancing and working family because I don't see them complaining most of the time. They’re always like, ‘Family's good and work is good.’ So, I just think they're actually getting it right.”

Another participant expressed that the best role modeling a coworker could do is to not work too many hours.

Similar to supervisor role modeling, the most specific behaviors participants could pinpoint revolved around coworkers sharing tips and advice. Some participants reported going to coworkers specifically to seek out guidance on how to manage work and family. For example, a few participants had recently had children and described how they asked coworkers to share strategies on how to deal with kids while working and, more generally, how to balance all of their work and family responsibilities.

However, many participants said they couldn't comment on whether coworkers were good role models for handling work-nonwork issues because they don't know enough about their nonwork or family lives. Two other participants explained that most of their coworkers are younger than them and do not have family responsibilities, so they cannot be role models due to their different life stages and circumstances. One of those participants had recently had a child, but all of her coworkers are in high school and they therefore cannot relate to her situation and family demands.

Although participant responses were quite varied to this question, the majority of participants actually expressed negative role modeling behaviors. Specifically, they describe coworkers working too many hours, which they perceived to be taking a negative toll on their personal lives. For example:

> "All the older people who I met working fast food, they really, as I said, they really don't balance their like, work-family life too well. They really are just all job all the time. And when they're off and, you know, they try to spend time with their kids and try to spend time with their family, but their relationships always seem a bit strained." – (male participant, non-manager)

Financial Support

Another form of coworker support that has yet to be captured in the work-family support literature includes various types of financial support. Financial support from coworkers primarily fell into two categories: gift-giving and help with bills. For example, gift-giving includes holiday gift exchanges and small birthday gifts. Although the gifts described by participants tended to be small, it was the gesture and thought that meant the most. For example, a participant with a new baby talked about how his coworkers sent them a whole basket of baby clothes and toys when the baby was born, which was unexpected, but much appreciated.

Help paying bills was less commonly discussed; however, multiple participants indicated that they received this type of financial assistance from coworkers. For example, one participant had a child who had to go to the hospital and as a result was struggling paying the medical bill. Her coworkers chipped in and contributed towards the bill, which "meant a lot to [her]."

It is important to note that financial support was the least commonly discussed form of coworker support and not all participants described receiving or wanting to receive this type of support. However, those who did discuss receiving financial assistance from coworkers described it as very meaningful and impactful.

Effort

Similar to supervisor support, the final theme that emerged in terms of coworker support was effort. Again, it is important to note that this theme is *not* a dimension of support, rather an evaluation of the support received and is applicable to the above four dimensions of coworker support. Interestingly, whereas participants discussed supervisory behaviors that both maximized and minimized effort, when it came to coworkers, participants only described situations in which coworkers went above and beyond for them. This was an unexpected finding, as participants

readily identified situations in which they perceived supervisors failed to exert what they considered to be bare minimum effort.

The specific behaviors comprising this theme for coworkers varied widely. For example, some participants described how coworkers went out of their way to help with their children. One participant recalled how coworkers came to see her and her new baby at her home after giving birth. After this effort on behalf of her coworkers she said, “And I saw for sure that they care about me.” Another participant discussed difficulties balancing childcare and work, particularly with her child who has autism. One of her coworkers also has a child with autism and has gone out of her way to connect the participant with resources provide any help she can:

> “She would even spend her time to take me to her kid’s therapist and she would take her time to come [to my] home if I was having a hard time with my kid and talk to him and try her tactics for her kid on my kid now... I could call her up and tell her ‘He is behaving like this' and she could come to my house, even at night – and she does not live like in our neighborhood – but she would spend her money to come or maybe take a car drive to my house, or maybe it is after work and she's very tired. She's also having a family, but she would sacrifice her time come see my kid.” – (female participant, non-manager)

Other examples participants gave had to do with coworkers going out of their way to assist with health issues. After one participant had surgery, she had to return to work fairly quickly, but her coworkers would not let her lift anything, told her to go sit in the office, and made sure the shift ran smoothly without her. This combined effort on the part of all of her coworkers made a strong impression on this individual. Another participant with a chronic illness was having a difficult day at work one day and her coworkers took it upon themselves to call in another coworker to take her place so she could leave her shift, which took her completely by surprise.

In summary, four dimensions of coworker support for work-family issues emerged from the interviews. Specifically, participants identified instrumental support, emotional support, role

modeling, and financial support as dimensions. Similar to supervisor support, instrumental support was the most commonly discussed form of support and primarily refers to schedule support (e.g., a coworker covering a shift) and workload support (i.e., coworkers coming to work on time and doing their job well). Emotional support was the second most discussed type of support and includes coworkers listening sympathetically to participants' talk about their work-family issues. Similar to supervisor support, participants had a difficult time identifying coworker role modeling behaviors beyond providing advice on how to navigate work and family conflicts. Financial support was the fourth and final dimension of coworker support identified throughout the interviews. Of note, no dimension analogous to creative work-family management (a dimension of supervisor support) was discussed regarding coworker support. Lastly, the amount of effort coworkers put forth was again indicative of the quality of support participants perceived, and participants generally reported that their coworkers put in a significant amount of effort, going above and beyond to support them.

Interactions Between Coworker and Supervisor Support

The third research question asks *How do supervisor and coworker behaviors jointly shape work-family social support for lower-wage workers?* Interestingly, this question generated a mix of answers with no single dominating viewpoint emerging. Specifically, there were four primary ways that participants responded to this question, that were split along two dimensions (siloed vs. interactive support; primacy of coworker vs. primacy of supervisor support).

Participants either tended to indicate that the support they received from coworkers and supervisors was siloed (e.g., they turn to coworkers for certain types of support and supervisors when they need different support) or there was an interaction between the two (e.g., a compounding effect in which more support is better). Although a few participants indicated that

at times they have turned to a coworker when a supervisor wasn't supportive (the reverse was not mentioned), most communicated that they go to supervisors for certain issues and coworkers for other issues, as exemplified by the following passage:

> "It very much depends on the situation because the supervisor can only do so much and the coworkers can only do so much. So, in certain aspects where, like, if it's just watching out for [my sister], at that particular time, I think the coworkers have definitely helped me out there. But as far as like the scheduling goes, that's only something that the general manager or the upper management at my other job can do." – (male participant, non-manager)

This quote is representative of participants' responses, as most indicate that they turn to supervisors for scheduling-related issues and coworkers for help with work tasks and in-the-moment assistance.

The type of support a participant perceives as more valuable (i.e., primacy of either coworker or supervisor support) really seemed to depend on the quality of the relationships. For example, one participant mentioned that, "[support] is more important from your actual coworkers that are in store" while another said that, "my supervisor [is more important] because I trust him." For those indicating coworkers are more valuable, coworkers tended to be able to swap shifts without much manager involvement and employees reported minimal interactions with their supervisors (e.g., only saw them once per week). Conversely, those who indicated that supervisor support is more pivotal, tended to have close relationships or look up to their supervisor as a trusted authority figure who could give helpful life advice. However, despite some participants claiming that support from one source was more valuable, virtually all participants indicated that it is more helpful to get support for work-family issues from both sources rather than just one.

Providing Support

In order to better understand the potential toll *providing* support takes, questions inquired about which behaviors participants engage in that support their own coworkers. Many of these behaviors map onto the types of support they reported receiving. For example, the most common type of support provided fell under the umbrella of scheduling support: "Whenever they need coverage, especially for family life... I'd always be able to cover...So no matter who it was, no matter what the circumstance was, I'd always be able to come for them. And that's really the best that I did to help them."

Other participants described providing emotional support. Specifically, they mentioned talking with their coworkers about family life, being a person they could vent to, and offering general encouragement. However, as noted above, those individuals who noted they prefer to keep work and family separate did not report providing emotional support.

Another key way in which participants conveyed they helped their coworkers is by taking on additional tasks so coworkers can get home earlier to their families:

> "I just try to help wherever I can. I really do. I try to be everywhere I try to help them whenever I can. If I'm closing, and I finish my closing tasks early, I'll help them close because at the end of the day, I know that everyone just wants to go home. I'll stay sometimes an hour, maybe sometimes hour and a half later, just helping other people there close, even though I could have left a while ago. – (male participant, non-manager)
> Lastly, some participants reported offering financial assistance to their coworkers:
> Yeah, I provide support in terms of finance in case so – if some coworkers may have a problem, they ask you to provide financial support. You just leave it there to offer them." – (female participant, non-manager)

One question going into this study was whether or not providing support to coworkers would be burdensome on individuals who are already facing heightened family and financial demands. However, none of the participants indicated that providing support takes a toll on them, even if they are going out of their way to cover a shift last minute or doing something that

is inconvenient for them. There were two main viewpoints when it came to providing support. First, participants described matching the level of support they received from their coworkers. For example, if coworkers had covered their shift in the past, the participant would return the favor. As one participant put it, "It's just something I wanted to do. And besides, they've been good to me. So, it's actually nice to help too, if I can, since they've been good to me." In this case, the norm of reciprocity (i.e., social exchange theory; Blau, 1964) seemed to motivate the desire to help. The second perspective came from employees who just wanted to help out coworkers without any expectation of coworkers returning the favor. However, it is important to note that all employees also said they offer this help because they want to and if it was too burdensome, they would not offer it.

Overall, participants largely reported offering coworkers the same type of support they received. Most commonly, participants offered to change or cover shifts for a coworker. Several others described providing emotional support, as well as helping with tasks so their coworkers could leave earlier. Participants indicated that they provided such support either in reciprocity (e.g., their coworkers do the same for them) or simply because they liked helping and did not expect anything in return. Interestingly, in contrast to speculations in the literature (e.g., Griggs et al., 2013), no participants reported feeling mentally or physically drained from offering their support.

COVID

The fourth research question asked participants about the impact of COVID-19 on their workplace. For context, interviews took place during early 2021 before the vaccine became widely available to the general public. Interestingly, although the intention was to better understand any changes in coworker and supervisor relationships, many participants also

discussed other effects of COVID-19, particularly safety perceptions, organizational responses to COVID-19, and financial stressors related to COVID-19.

Supervisor Response to COVID-19

Participants tended to express one of two views of their supervisor's response to COVID-19, which were polar opposites of each other. On the one hand, several participants commented that their supervisors were understanding of their concerns (e.g., fear of the virus) and tried to be as flexible as possible with regards to scheduling changes due to COVID-19. Many participants noted that there has been high turnover at their stores since the start of the pandemic, either from employees being fearful of contracting the virus at work or opting to take unemployment, which has made scheduling more challenging for supervisors. Furthermore, mandatory quarantine periods for employees who contracted the virus or came in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 has imposed additional scheduling challenges. Several participants expressed that their supervisors were understanding of these unpredictable situations and made efforts to accommodate schedule requests, even filling in themselves if needed. One participant who contracted COVID-19 said that his general manager and HR both called and texted him to see how he was feeling while he was recovering, which was appreciated.

However, several other participants reported that their supervisor's response to COVID-19 had only added stress to their lives. For example, one participant stopped working for several months because she was worried about giving COVID-19 to her children, but finally returned to work when her boss threatened to fire her. Other participants said they did not feel comfortable voicing their safety concerns about COVID-19 for fear of losing their jobs.

Other participants noted that their relationship with their supervisor has become more tense and created a stressful environment since the start of COVID-19, mostly due to staffing

shortages. Another participant explained that since the pandemic began the general manager stepped down, several other managers left, and many employees had quit, leading to poor management of the store over the last ten months. A total of two participants I spoke with had contracted COVID themselves. The first reported a fairly supportive reaction from his supervisor (as noted above); however, the second was disappointed by the manner in which his supervisor responded to his diagnosis. This particular participant contracted COVID-19 along with several of his coworkers and described his supervisor's reaction upon returning to work as follows:

> "[The day I returned] I was thrown in the deep end. Uh, yeah, pretty much as soon as I got back, they're like, 'Oh, thank God, everyone gets three days off, except the people who had COVID.' And I'm just like, 'No! No!' Actually, when I got back to work the first day, the district manager's, like, 'Oh, did you have a nice little vacation?' I was like, 'I almost f****** died!' That's not a vacation. That – I required those two weeks off 'cause like, ugh. Chest pains through the roof." – (male participant, non-manager)

The two experiences of participants who contracted COVID-19 were quite different, yet highlight a common theme we saw throughout the broader discussions of supervisor support – participants tended to rate their satisfaction with supervisor support based on the level of discretion they believe supervisors have in the situation. For example, although the COVID-19 situation was not ideal for anyone, participants reported being happy overall with their supervisor's response if they felt they did everything that was within their power regarding scheduling and keeping employees safe. Conversely, as the quote above demonstrates, other participants who felt their supervisors could do more or be more supportive but chose not to were less satisfied with their response to COVID-19.

Coworker Response to COVID-19

Interestingly, participants also reported mixed changes in their relationships with coworkers due to the pandemic. Generally, they described COVID-19 as either bringing them closer to coworkers or weakening those relationships. For those who felt the pandemic had

strengthened coworker bonds, they cited things like more empathy and flexibility from coworkers, as well as a mentality of being in something together. One participant said that COVID-19 had made his coworkers more open to listening to each other (e.g., about difficulties making new childcare arrangements), and he began to lean on them more for emotional support.

As mentioned previously, the pandemic has led to turnover and staffing shortages in the workplace of many participants, leading many to work more hours. Some participants explained that this increase in time spent at work has strengthened their relationships with coworkers because they are around them more and have gotten to know them on a more personal level. However, several other participants noted that the changing work dynamics have led to more stress among coworkers. For example, one participant explained that:

> "Yeah, everybody's a little more stressed. They're more observant... They're just kind of being standoffish, a little bit more – like they were just kind of thinking of their own situations. And more like the walls are up I guess.... They don't talk as much as they used to." – (female participant, non-manager)

This sentiment of coworkers being more "standoffish" was repeated by other participants. A few indicated that their coworkers, particularly those with young children and older parents, were extremely afraid of catching COVID-19 and assumed that everyone might have the virus, leading them to try to create distance between each other.

Organizational Response to COVID-19

The most persistent theme participants discussed related to their organization's response to COVID-19 was the lack of sufficient compensation in light of being an essential worker. Several commented that they wanted hazard pay but were not given it, and one participant explained how all employees at her store had to take a pay cut of $2 per hour in order to avoid layoffs at one point during the pandemic. Another participant expressed his frustration that

despite his store doing well, employees were still not granted hazard pay due to the performance of other stores:

> "We're one of the higher earning stores – a lot of the other stores are not making that much money and so it doesn't make financial sense for them to give us hazard pay. And so, a lot of us coworkers were like, 'This is absolutely ridiculous, we're having to do all of these procedures to help the customer not get COVID. But if we get COVID, we're on our own." – (male participant, non-manager)

That quote also touches on sentiments around forced time off due to COVID-19 exposure, which emerged as another theme throughout the interviews. Most participants reported that their organization only did what was required by law in terms of paying employees who had to take time off work either because they contracted the virus or were exposed to it. For example, one person had to take off 14 days and received an 80-hour paycheck; however, that barely covered his bills because he is a delivery driver and makes most of his money from tips. Another participant also had to take 14 days off and was not paid, so he had to file to unemployment. The following passage highlights reactions echoed by several participants:

> "If there's somebody who tests positive for COVID, or comes into contact with COVID, and they are forced to not work, not because of their own doing, but because of the virus, I feel as if that some of these franchises need to pick up their own slack and pay the wages that they would have earned otherwise. That – that, to me is a big aspect. And I'm very disappointed that they won't do that. Because it's like, we don't get to work, through no fault of our own, and you guys – you guys say that you guys want to help us out, yet you guys are not helping us out the way we want to see it." – (male participant, non-manager)

Considering another aspect of pay and the pandemic, some participants noted that their organization typically does not allow for overtime, but due to difficulty staffing and employees having to take time off due to COVID-19 exposure, they were willing to pay any amount of overtime just to make sure shifts are covered. However, the widespread consensus was an overall disappointment that organizations would not offer sufficient pay to cover quarantine or time off to get the vaccine.

Safety Perceptions

Despite overall satisfaction with corporate safety measures, many participants still expressed fear or anxiety about working during the pandemic. Several participants who could not afford to take time off work reported feeling nervous due to COVID-19, and one participant with a compromised immune system said she "just sucked it up and dealt with it."

Safety concerns from working during the pandemic also spilled over into employees' nonwork lives and family interactions. Several participants reported an increase in family-related stressors, as either family members caught COVID-19 or they cannot see extended family due to the fear of spreading the virus to loved ones. COVID-19 has also impacted broader social ties and personal health:

> "I was supposed to have a surgery that was going to have me out of work for five weeks. Um, my friends and my family were going to take care of me. I had to actually cancel surgery entirely. I'm constantly canceling dates. I haven't seen my father since last, uh, I haven't seen my father since August and normally we see each other every two or three weeks. I can't get the time off to do anything with anyone really." – (female participant, non-managerial supervisor)

Other participants who have had to work more hours during the pandemic expressed leaning into family more. For example, one participant who reported having to work 84 hours one week, explained how her grandmother has helped out significantly taking care of her children.

The last theme that emerged in terms of safety perceptions specific to COVID-19 has to do with customer behaviors. Although not a common complaint among participants, some did indicate that the volume of customers who enter the store without masks is alarming. Again, not all participants expressed concerns about customer behavior during the pandemic. However, those who did also reported not feeling like there was nothing they could do in the moment that would effectively correct the customer's behavior without further risk to their safety.

In summary, COVID-19 has had varied impacts on fast-food workers relationships with both supervisors and coworkers. Some report that the pandemic has brought them closer together because they are leaning on each other more, while others report the opposite – stress and fear of spreading the virus between people at work has weakened relationships. Most participants expressed an overall disappointment in their organization's response to COVID-19, most specifically a lack of hazard pay and policies that required taking time off without pay (e.g., after exposure to the virus). Overarching everything was a general concern for personal and family safety due to working in an environment in close proximity to coworkers and customers.

Organizational-Level Support

Although not a primary research question, it is important to understand how levers at the organizational level (e.g., policies and procedures) affect employees' experiences of balancing work and nonwork demands, as well as their perception of supervisor and coworker support. For example, a recurring theme was that participants' satisfaction, particularly with supervisor support, tended to be how much they thought their supervisor did given the constraints imposed by the organization.

However, participants were not always clear as to the latitude or discretion with which supervisors operate (e.g., some participants were unclear if scheduling restraints were imposed by the supervisor or by corporate policy). Despite some ambiguity around certain policies, clear themes emerged at the organizational level. Specifically, participants discussed financial support (or lack thereof), policies and procedures specific to scheduling, as well as more general policies and procedures.

Financial Support

Participants expressed a unanimous desire for higher pay. Some participants talked about corporate being all about the bottom line and solely focused on earning money at the expense of employee wellbeing and financial stability. Although all participants communicated wanting higher pay, there was an interesting split in focus that emerged in regards to work hours. Some mentioned how they would like to work more hours, but their organization is unwilling to pay for overtime and so they feel stuck, despite their location being understaffed. However, others focused on how higher pay would allow them the freedom to work fewer hours and have more time for family.

Policies and Procedures Specific to Scheduling

Just as scheduling emerged as a main theme in regards to supervisor and coworker support, specific scheduling policies at the organizational level was also commonly brought up by participants, although specific policies tended to vary by franchise. For example, one participant who works at a relatively new fast-food chain (i.e., the founders are still alive) explained that the atmosphere is very family-friendly and policies around adapting schedules are very flexible to meet family demands.

As discussed earlier, some establishments allow supervisors or coworkers to easily swap shifts; however, a few participants reported very strict policies that made accommodating nonwork demands difficult. For example, one policy mandates that if an employee calls in sick they must take three days off. This policy becomes challenging to employees who cannot find someone to cover their shift and are forced to call in sick instead.

Several other scheduling policies were also described by participants. For example, some participants reported a lack of stability around hours, meaning that they do not necessarily have a

steady paycheck they can count on. One participant explained that their organization tried pushing 10-hour workdays, four days a week so that each employee has three days off. However, that participant struggled to take care of her child on that schedule and felt the policy led to burnout and high turnover with coworkers.

The last pervasive theme within scheduling policies fell within miscommunication and understaffing. Many participants described their store as understaffed, but as mentioned before, were unclear if the staffing issues stemmed from poor supervisor planning or corporate restrictions around hiring more employees. Another individual detailed how an expectation of quick, high-quality service starts with corporate and trickles down to general managers, managers, and then employees. However, the high expectations coupled with low support and ability to choose the number of hours worked makes things challenging.

Other Policies and Procedures

The other policies and procedures mentioned by participants mostly revolved around benefits. Very few participants I interviewed were offered the option of healthcare through their employer. However, none of the participants actually utilized any healthcare benefits offered because they are cost prohibitive, with one participant claiming that it is only practical for the executives. When asked what the organization could do to better support employees, besides offering more pay, many participants expressed they wanted more access to benefits, including mental health resources. Interestingly, one participant thought an off-site retreat would be helpful for teambuilding and getting to know both supervisors and coworkers better.

In summary, participants across a range of fast-food chains expressed an overall frustration at their hourly wages. Specifically, participants voiced a desire for increased wages combined with more schedule flexibility (e.g., willingness to schedule employees for fewer

hours or approve overtime). Creating more family-friendly policies (e.g., allowing employees to call out for last-minute emergencies without being penalized) would also be helpful according to participants. Finally, very few participants were offered any sort of healthcare, and out of those, none enrolled due to the high premiums each month. Therefore, participants expressed wanting access to more affordable health coverage from their organizations.

DISCUSSION

This qualitative study investigating work-nonwork social support for lower-wage workers contributes to both the supervisor support as well as coworker support literatures through investigation into four research questions. First, the most significant work-family stressors identified by participants primarily involved insufficient time to effectively balance both work and family demands (e.g., spending enough time with children), as well as financial stressors.

The second research question focused on which supervisory and coworker behaviors participants perceive as most supportive of their work-family needs. Interestingly, four of the five supervisory support dimensions identified in this study map onto the four dimensions in Hammer and colleagues (2009) FSSB scale (i.e., instrumental support, emotional support, role modeling, and creative work-family management), although instrumental (specifically scheduling support) and emotional support were of primary importance. An additional dimension of supervisor financial support was also found in this study.

Four dimensions of coworker support were identified, which again largely overlapped with the dimensions of supervisor support (only creative work-family management did not emerge as a dimension of coworker support). Instrumental support, particularly schedule flexibility and workload support, was the most commonly discussed type of support, followed by emotional support. As with supervisor support, role modeling and financial support were less commonly mentioned. For both supervisor and coworker support, participants described the level of effort exerted by each as an important indicator of the quality of support and influenced the participant's level of satisfaction with their overall support received from each source (e.g., they

generally had a more positive appraisal of their supervisor if they felt the supervisor went out of their way to help).

The third research question asked about the interactions between supervisor and coworker support and whether they functioned in a compensatory manner (e.g., could strong coworker support make up for a lack of supervisor support). However, participants tended not to describe support in a compensatory way, rather they indicated that supervisors are needed for certain types of support (e.g., approving schedule changes) while they lean on coworkers for other types of support (e.g., emotional support), but support from multiple sources is always more helpful. Interestingly, participants did not unanimously report tending to rely on one more than the other (e.g., rely on coworkers more than supervisors), and who they primarily derived support from varied depending on the overall quality of their relationships with each.

Finally, I was interested to learn how COVID-19 may have impacted participants' relationships with supervisors and coworkers. Based on the interviews, participants' experiences with and perceptions of COVID-19 vary quite widely. Some noted that they feel closer to supervisors and coworkers now that they have gone through a pandemic together and have shared this experience. However, others described feeling more isolated because of a general fear of contracting the virus at work and wondering whether coworkers have the illness. Although participants worked for a variety of fast-food chains, there was an overall disappointment with the organizational-level response to COVID-19. Specifically, participants expressed wanting hazard pay and adequate paid time off to deal with personal and family-related issues specific to COVID-19.

Theoretical Implications

This study has several implications for research and practice and is a first step towards integrating and expanding theory around FSSB and coworker work-nonwork social support. These findings also have implications for the current FSSB (Hammer et al., 2009), C-IWAF (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010), and WFSCB (McMullen et al., 2018) scales, as well as intervention research.

FSSB

The current study uses qualitative methods in order to advance our conceptual and theoretical understanding of FSSB. Specifically, this study answers calls for research to identify whether additional dimensions of FSSB exist and which dimensions are most important (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Hammer et al., 2009). First, findings from this study indicate that the four dimensions of FSSB identified by Hammer and colleagues (2009) (i.e., instrumental support, emotional support, role modeling, and creative work-family management) are applicable in the fast-food industry. However, financial support is also another dimension of supervisor support for work-family issues that has not yet been captured by previous research. Financial support may be particularly critical in low-wage industries where employees depend on their supervisor for approving overtime, consistent paychecks (e.g., some participants reported having to remind their manager to give them their paychecks), and promotions. Additionally, participants noted that receiving gifts (e.g., baby clothes) and occasional help with medical bills from supervisors were unexpected but appreciated acts of generosity.

In terms of the relative importance of dimensions, participants described instrumental support, particularly scheduling support, as the most important type of work-family support they receive from supervisors, which is in contrast with prior research. Previous intervention work

with hourly healthcare workers found that the dimension of creative work-family management actually drove most of the positive results (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). Interestingly, the authors argued that creative work-family management was likely so important precisely *because* the participants were relatively lower-status and had low levels of job control. However, creative work-family management was infrequently cited as a type of support received among fast-food workers in the current study. Perhaps this dimension would have emerged as more salient if participants actually experienced this type of support (the study above measured perceptions after supervisors underwent an FSSB training and learned how to enact these behaviors). Therefore, it is important for future research to understand the precise role of creative work-family management within the fast-food industry, and among lower-wage jobs in general.

Additionally, participants did not readily identify role modeling as a supportive behavior, and even when probed, primarily discussed receiving advice for work-family issues from their supervisor. However, Hammer and colleagues (2009) describe role modeling primarily in terms of behaviors supervisors demonstrate (i.e., effective strategies employees *observe*), and the FSSB scale does not include an item related to advice-giving within this dimension. Therefore, the role modeling dimension of the current FSSB scale may have limited applicability in the fast-food industry and future research should use caution before applying this dimension in its current form to this industry. Prior research supports the use of both the overall FSSB scale as well as individual dimensions (Hammer et al., 2009). Therefore, going forward, researchers using the FSSB scale should carefully evaluate the psychometric properties before including it in analyses, and may instead find more utility in analyzing results at the dimension level.

It is important to note that there is a short-form version of the FSSB scale (FSSB-SF; Hammer et al., 2013) that is also commonly used in FSSB research (e.g., Crain & Stevens,

2018). In comparison to the full scale which models FSSB as a multidimensional, superordinate construct with four dimensions and a total of 14 items, FSSB-SF is a unidimensional construct with four items, one item taken from each dimension of the full scale (Hammer et al., 2013). However, several of the items that appear in the FSSB-SF scale appear to be of limited applicability to fast-food workers, and potentially lower-wage workers more broadly. For example, there are three items within the instrumental support dimension of the full FSSB scale, with two of those items very closely matching the needs described by participants (i.e., *I can depend on my supervisor to help me with scheduling conflicts if I need it; I can rely on my supervisor to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated nonwork responsibilities*). However, the third item, which appears in the FSSB-SF was not directly expressed by participants in the interviews (i.e., *My supervisor works effectively with workers to creatively solve conflicts between work and nonwork*). As mentioned above, advice-giving was the most commonly described form of role modeling, but the item appearing in the FSSB-SF is: *Your supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work issues*. Given that most participants reported they did not know enough about their supervisor's personal life to say whether they are effective at balancing work and family, this item again appears to have limited applicability to fast-food workers. Therefore, based on the findings of the current study, using the FSSB-SF is not recommended within the fast-food industry. Instead, researchers should use the full measure, taking into account the caveats mentioned above (i.e., consider using individual dimensions).

Coworker Support

Interestingly, the dimensions of worker support for work-family issues found in this study largely map onto Hammer and colleagues FSSB dimensions (i.e., a measure of *supervisor*

support) rather than either the C-IWAF (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010) or the WFSCB (McMullen et al., 2018), which are both measures of *coworker* support. As a reminder, the four dimensions of coworker support found in this study are: emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling, and financial support. These findings indicate that there are certain behaviors that are interpreted as supportive among fast-food workers regardless of who is enacting those behaviors (i.e., supervisors or coworkers). Implications for C-IWAF and WFSCB are discussed below.

C-IWAF. It is worth discussing the two coworker-specific scales and understanding which dimensions do and do not map onto the current findings. The C-IWAF (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010) identified six dimensions of coworker support for informal work-family accommodations. Of these six dimensions, only one appeared as entirely applicable to fast-food workers: short-term work modification. This dimension is essentially analogous to instrumental support, as it encompasses covering shifts for coworkers and taking on additional tasks so a coworker can leave early to attend to a family matter (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2010).

Another dimension of C-IWAF is helping behavior. However, this dimension is a confluence of emotional support (e.g., *Offered emotional support to a coworker struggling to meet the demands of work and family*) and instrumental support (e.g., *Spontaneously resolved an unexpected issue for a coworker that occurred during their family-related absence*). Additionally, this dimension also included items not entirely relevant to fast-food workers (e.g., *Provided a coworker with materials (e.g., meeting minutes/notes, etc.) he/she did not receive because of his/her family-related absence*).

The third dimension of the C-IWAF includes childcare assistance (i.e., providing childcare for a coworker or supporting a coworker who brings a child to work). Although two

participants described having either a child or sibling dropped off at work, I classified the supportive reactions of coworkers into the larger category of instrumental support. It is worth noting that no participants explicitly described relying on coworkers for childcare while they were at work.

The fourth dimension, continuing work modification, is analogous to creative work-family management, in that it represents a proactive effort to permanently change a coworker's work arrangements so that they can better meet family demands. However, as noted in the results section, fast-food workers do not typically have this autonomy and the interviews did not reveal a single example of this (e.g., *Shifted breaks permanently to accommodate a coworker's family responsibilities*).

Deviating behaviors, the fifth dimension of C-IWAF, describes situations in which coworkers lie or "cover" for their coworkers when the coworker has to attend to a family matter. For example, one item reads: *Altered time sheets/time cards so a coworker could attend to a personal matter during work hours.* However, participants in the current study did not detail a single example of these deviating behaviors. Finally, facilitating telework (i.e., behaviors that enable a coworker to easily work from home), is the sixth dimension of C-IWAF and is clearly not applicable to fast-food workers.

Overall, the dimension of short-term work modification and to some extent helping behaviors and childcare assistance from the C-IWAF appear applicable for the fast-food industry. However, participants in the current study consistently described helping behaviors, such as schedule support, and emotional support as two distinct types of support they receive from coworkers. Therefore, it is recommended that studies investigating work-family support in the fast-food industry treat these behaviors as two separate dimensions.

WFSCB. McMullen and colleagues (2018) identified five dimensions of support based on qualitative data. Interestingly, these dimensions overlap with the findings of the current study to a somewhat larger degree than the dimensions of the C-IWAF. Specifically, the WFSCB identifies emotional support, defined in largely the same was as it is in the current study (i.e., talking with coworkers and listening to their work-family issues). The WFSCB also includes a dimension called facilitating work adjustments, which includes schedule support and helping with work tasks, which is incorporated in the current study's definition of instrumental support.

The third dimension of the WFSCB is called sharing resources and knowledge. Some examples of this definition are not applicable to fast-food workers (e.g., *Facilitating the provision of work resources while away from the workplace*), while others overlap with advice-giving which is found within the dimension of role modeling in the current study (e.g., *Providing advice for managing competing work and family demands*). Interestingly, examples from a different dimension of the WFSCB, demonstrating an understanding of the value of non-work life, also incorporate behaviors defined within role modeling (e.g., *Displaying work-family balance behaviors in one's own life*). The dimension, understanding of the value of non-work life, also includes an example of encouraging a coworker to attend to family needs, and it is unclear how that differs from advice-giving, which as mentioned, is included in a different dimension (i.e., sharing resources and knowledge).

Similar to the C-IWAF, the WFSCB also includes a dimension around proactively developing solutions (e.g., *Redistributing work among coworkers*). However, as mentioned before, this theme did not emerge in the current study. Based on interview comments it appears that fast-food workers have limited autonomy to enact such changes or feel empowered to make such suggestions to management.

Taken as a whole, findings from the current study indicate that supervisor and coworker supportive behaviors are actually much more similar than previously suggested in the literature. For example, there are only two dimensions from the existing coworker work-family support literature that we find support for in the current study (i.e., short-term work modification from the C-IWAF and emotional support from the WFSCB), although aspects of other dimensions are also relevant. Researchers investigating work-family support among coworkers specifically within the fast-food industry should therefore avoid using dimensions that are clearly not appropriate for the industry (e.g., facilitating telework) and assess whether only using a subset of dimensions (e.g., from the C-IWAF) is appropriate with their data

It is worth noting that I did not set out with the intention of using the FSSB nomenclature to label dimensions. As described previously, I worked with a team of research assistants who have had no exposure or training on Hammer et al.'s definitions of supervisor support. However, after reading each research assistant's first round of self-generated codes (blindly coded, no *a priori* codes) when developing the first codebook, their codes and code descriptions mapped remarkably well onto the dimensions defined by Hammer and colleagues (2009).

Integrating Supervisor and Coworker Support

In order to advance theory, we must also consider how supervisor and coworker support should be integrated moving forward. Although the current study did not find evidence of a compensatory mechanism (e.g., support from one source making up for a lack of support from the other), participants were fairly evenly split when asked which source of support mattered more, with about half indicating supervisors and half indicating coworkers. Therefore, both supervisors and coworkers need to be jointly considered in the development of research

questions going forward because the totality of social support at work may be more important than individual sources.

For example, although coworker support did not "make up" for a lack of supervisor support, participants who reported overall high support from both supervisors and coworkers tended to have a more positive overall evaluation of their work situation compared to participants who only felt supported by coworkers. Granted, the current study did not specifically address antecedents or outcomes of work-family support; however, some participants nevertheless shared these perceptions.

One way for researchers to integrate supervisor and coworker support is to expand Straub's (2012) framework of FSSB. Straub's (2012) model includes anticipated predictors and outcomes of FSSB at multiple levels (e.g., individual- and contextual-level predictors; employee and team-level outcomes); however, based on findings from this study, it may also be useful to include coworker-supportive behaviors in this framework. Research on FSSB is well-established in the literature, and thus is why I recommend integrating coworker support into this literature instead of vice versa. Although more research will need to be done, findings from this study suggest that coworker supportive behaviors are likely also related to employee and team-level outcomes such as well-being, organizational commitment, and team performance, and are likely influenced by individual- and contextual-level factors such as work-family interference and family-supportive organizational culture (Straub, 2012).

Additionally, as mentioned in the introduction, much of the work-family literature examines the role of resources. When considering resources (e.g., as in the job demands-resources model; Demerouti et al., 2001), findings from this study align with previous research that indicate both supervisor and coworker work-family support should be considered potential

resources at work. Alternatively, one question going into this study was whether *providing* support functioned as a demand for fast-food workers given their already limited resources (e.g., financial strains, limited time). However, this notion was not supported, and participants did not provide any evidence that we should consider providing support as a demand on these workers.

Practical Implications

The current study has several practical implications as well. Interestingly, behaviors and actions identified as supportive from both coworkers and supervisors all had a counterpart that participants perceived as unhelpful or unsupportive. For example, scheduling support was one of the most commonly identified themes, and those who reported being satisfied with that support cited virtually the same criteria as those who felt a lack of support expressed they wish they had. The practical recommendations below outline steps supervisors, organizations, and intervention researchers can take to enhance perceptions of support while also decreasing perceptions of unsupportive behaviors at work.

Supervisor Level

There are several actions supervisors can take to better support employees in the fast-food industry. First, no employees interviewed expressed having the agency to permanently affect their coworkers' schedules, rather their support tended to be more in the moment when emergencies arose. However, supervisors can increase perceptions of autonomy by encouraging employees to make suggestions that will help coworkers better manage work-family demands (e.g., setting up a suggestion box, having brainstorming meetings with all employees). However, supervisors following this suggestion should be ready to act on employee recommendations that are feasible, otherwise face potential negative backlash from employees who feel their concerns are not being taken seriously.

Supervisors can also play a role in scheduling support by promptly responding to shift-change requests, facilitating coverage if possible, and proactively working with employees to create a schedule that better accommodates their nonwork demands in the first place. One common barrier to trading shifts is the lack of individuals trained on the necessary skills to cover another role. For example, one participant explained that only one other person is trained in his job, and they work the opposite shift as him, so getting them to cover is incredibly difficult. However, cross training more employees on multiple positions would allow for greater scheduling flexibility and should ease strain related to family conflicts. Therefore, supervisors should not only be allowing, but encouraging cross training or job rotation. Not only will this help decrease employee stress when they need to find coverage for a shift by providing more options, but it also serves to disrupt the monotony some participants described and keep work interesting. One participant who works at a location that employs some of this cross training had very positive reviews and said, "now we don't feel like we are in like an assembly line or anything like that."

Organizational Level

As mentioned above, supervisors play a role in scheduling support; however, policies at the organizational level can also be amended to provide more flexibility for employees. To be clear, it appears that some fast-food chains already have flexible policies for trading shifts and attending to family emergencies. However, other chains have much more restrictive policies (e.g., taking a minimum of 72 hours off work if an employee cannot find coverage and decides the best option is to call in sick). Therefore, implementing policies that give employees more freedom to directly trade shifts with coworkers and not punishing employees who cannot find coverage when they have a family emergency should be considered, as participants working at

fast-food locations with similar policies described being satisfied with the ease in which they could swap shifts when conflicts between work and family arose. Similarly, participants working in locations with stricter policies reported greater stress when trying to attend to an unexpected family issue.

The most needed change however is for organizations to increase employee pay and access to benefits. Financial concerns emerged as a large stressor for many participants, with some participants working multiple jobs to feed their family and others foregoing important medical surgeries in order to keep working because they cannot afford to lose their job. Organizations should also consider more affordable access to benefits, including medical and mental healthcare. Only a few participants indicated that they were eligible to receive medical benefits; however, none actually enrolled because the monthly premiums made it cost prohibitive. As one participant indicated, these benefits are really only feasible for executives. Given the hardships imposed by insufficient pay and restricted access to medical benefits, participants noted supervisors and coworkers sometimes shoulder the responsibility to help financially (i.e., the dimension of financial support from both coworkers and supervisors). However, this burden should not fall on supervisors and coworkers – rather fast-food chains should be paying their workers a higher wage with affordable access to medical and mental healthcare. Such changes might therefore eliminate the dimension of financial support in the fast-food industry.

Intervention Work

Findings from this study may also have practical implications for future work-nonwork social support interventions. Specifically, given the importance of coworker support identified in this study, such interventions in the fast-food industry may benefit from jointly training both

supervisors and coworkers on family-supportive behaviors. Incorporating FSSB with coworker support was suggested by McMullen et al. (2018), and the current study provides insights that can be used to inform the design of these dual trainings.

Traditional FSSB trainings have included computer modules, face-to-face training, and behavioral self-monitoring (e.g., Hammer et al., 2011), most of which could be adapted for employees to learn how to be more supportive coworkers. Therefore, although the material will be slightly different for supervisors and employees, going through trainings together could help foster greater understanding between the two. However, given the stressors fast-food employees already experience, workers should not be required to attend trainings outside of their normally scheduled work hours. Therefore, to make trainings feasible, employees may need to rotate through the activities in small groups.

Furthermore, in order to make these trainings maximally effective yet still cost-effective, trainings may want to prioritize teaching instrumental and emotional support, as those emerged as the most important types of social support. Instead of spending equal time focusing on each dimension, this training could be updated to spend the majority of the time focusing on developing instrumental and emotional support and relatively less time on the other dimensions. However, it should be noted that some participants expressed a preference for not discussing family life at work, meaning that training on emotional support in particular should also be inclusive of this preference.

It may also be helpful to have certain elements of interventions be specific to just employees. For example, employee-specific trainings could incorporate teambuilding exercises in order to the eliminate power dynamics that some participants discussed (i.e., more tenured employees tending to offer less help to new hires). Utilizing technology to allow for more

avenues of communication between coworkers may also be useful for building rapport. For example, some participants explained that their organization has an internal instant messaging system that allows them to informally chat, post shift change requests, and get to know one another. Another option may be to create a peer mentoring system whereby new hires can message or meet face-to-face with more tenured employees who help them adjust to their new role and help them navigate work-family conflicts that may arise. Technology could also be used to build relationships between employees and supervisors. Several participants noted only seeing their general manager once or twice a week; therefore, frequent virtual meetings could allow supervisors to get to know employees even when they are not able to physically be at the store.

Interventions in the near future should also take into account impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on work relationships. Many participants indicated that their relationships with coworkers have become weaker as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, teambuilding exercises may be particularly crucial right now. Additionally, several participants noted that they have increased fear due to COVID-19 and concerns about lifted mask mandates. As Hammer (2020) notes, supervisors should aim to reduce the stigma around COVID-19 fears and difficulties individuals may be facing, for example by acknowledging challenges employees are facing and reminding employees of resources available to them.

Limitations

This study it is not without limitations. First, although steps were taken to limit biases throughout this process, qualitative research is inherently subjective, and thus different researchers conducting this study may have reached different conclusions (King, 2004). For example, I decided to name and define dimensions in accordance with the FSSB scale developed by Hammer and colleagues (2009) (e.g., instrumental support) because I felt this most accurately

depicted each dimension for both supervisor and coworker support. However, another researcher may have categorized themes under different codes. I attempted to limit my biases by working with a group of research assistants who had no prior knowledge of the FSSB or coworker support literatures. We began with no *a priori* codes and each team member independently generated their own descriptive codes, which aligned very well with the dimensions already described in FSSB. Furthermore, I also included an ample number of direct quotes throughout the results section in order to directly convey participants' experiences instead of solely relying on my interpretation of the interviews.

Second, although attempts were made to recruit diverse fast-food workers from all over the country, I was limited in the workers I was actually able to reach. For example, all participants except for one learned about the study via the internet (i.e., either Reddit or Craigslist); however, there are likely other fast-food workers who do not look at these sites and may have different experiences. For example, the current sample was relatively young and their work-family stressors and experiences of work-family support may differ from older employees in the industry. It is important to note that attempts were made to recruit participants in various ways, including in-person methods with flyers. Although these attempts did not yield any participants, upon visiting one fast-food chain an employee asked if the interviews could be conducted in Spanish, as most of the workers in that location did not feel comfortable speaking English. As the lead researcher, I am not fluent in Spanish and was thus unable to offer this option; however, this represents a limitation of the study, as individuals from different cultural backgrounds may have different work-family support needs (e.g., Hammer et al., 2009). Lastly, interviews were conducted in early 2021, in the midst of the pandemic and before the vaccine became widely available. Therefore, although I was interested in understanding how coworker

and supervisor relationships had changed as a result of COVID-19, some participants began working during the pandemic and therefore had no pre-pandemic point of reference for which to compare their experiences.

Interviews did not focus on antecedents or outcomes of supervisor and coworker support, and thus represents an additional limitation of this study. Interviews were limited to approximately one hour in order to be considerate of participants' time and prevent participant fatigue. Given this time restraint, I felt it was best to prioritize depth over breadth and chose to dive deeply into the four primary research questions of interest. However, that meant that many other useful questions were not able to be covered throughout the interview, including employee perceptions of why they felt supervisors and coworkers either did or did not engage in work-family supportive behaviors. Understanding employee perspectives would be useful to inform future research on discrepancies between employee and supervisor perceptions of why one engages in supportive behaviors; however, this was not the main focus of the current study.

Although interviews provided a lot of useful information, focus groups may have generated more conversation and participation, particularly among individuals who were more hesitant to share initially. Focus groups can also help highlight conflicting experiences among participants (Kreuger & Casey, 2014). However, individual interviews were ultimately chosen over focus groups for several reasons. First, in-person focus groups were not an option due to COVID-19, meaning that many of the benefits of a traditional focus group would likely be lost in a virtual format (e.g., harder for participants to read body language; participants might not feel comfortable interjecting or sharing). Additionally, given the potentially sensitive nature of COVID-19 (e.g., if a participant or family member had become ill with the virus) some participants might not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with strangers. Relatedly,

interviews afford more privacy for participants who may want to share negative experiences at work but are concerned about the information remaining confidential. Thus, despite some limitations of individual interviews, I felt they were the best option for this particular study.

Lastly, the findings from this study should not be viewed as an empirical test of FSSB or coworker support. The small sample size from a particular sector of the workforce is not intended to generalize to all lower-wage workers. Rather, this study is intended to be exploratory and provide insights for future research.

Future Directions

Going forward, the current study will hopefully prompt additional quantitative follow-up studies, the findings of which will be more generalizable to lower-wage workers across the United States. As a first step, research should investigate the dimensions of supervisor and coworker work-nonwork support identified in this study. This may include revising and adding to the existing FSSB scale (e.g., accounting for financial support), as well as revising the FSSB-SF scale. Given the significant differences between the dimensions of coworker support found in this study and C-IWAF, a new scale of coworker support for work-family issues is likely warranted.

If items are to be revised, it would also be fruitful to incorporate the concept of "effort" into future scales. Interviews revealed that the amount of effort participants perceived supervisors and coworkers put forth influenced their satisfaction with support. Therefore, it would be useful to investigate items that differentiate between different levels of effort (e.g., have a positive and negative valence).

Future research should also focus on better understanding scheduling support given the significance placed on it during the interviews. For example, Hammer et al. (2009) classify

individual-level scheduling support as a type of instrumental support (as does the current study). However, Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2010) split up schedule support into two different dimensions (i.e., short-term work modification and continuing work modification). Therefore, scale development studies in the future need to clearly operationalize schedule support (e.g., is it only reactive scheduling support or is it also proactive?) and examine whether it is distinct from instrumental support.

The current study focused on perceptions of support provided by supervisors and coworkers. However, when participants who reported they had strong, supportive relationships at work were asked how those relationships developed, many participants weren't quite sure or couldn't remember. Very little research has focused on how individuals seek support at work (e.g., Bradshaw, 2014; Wong, 2019); however, more research should investigate these support seeking behaviors on behalf of employees, as well as support providing behaviors of others. Some participants expressed wanting to have closer relationships with others at work and so understanding tools and techniques one can use to build their social support network may be particularly valuable to these employees.

Although most literature calls for increasing supportive behaviors for work-nonwork issues from both supervisors and coworkers, we need to be cognizant of the employees who prefer to maintain strict boundaries between work and nonwork. As we saw in the interviews, several participants reported wanting to maintain professional boundaries at work and not discuss their families or nonwork lives with either supervisors or coworkers. Therefore, future research should integrate the segmentation literature (e.g., Kreiner, 2006) with the support literature in order to investigate the best way to train supportive behaviors while still respecting personal boundaries and making sure those individuals are not penalized for not wanting to share.

Lastly, beyond integrating the supervisor and coworker literatures, future work should also investigate the role of culture in social support. McMullen et al. (2018) called for more cross-cultural and international work; however, workers within the U.S. come from a variety of backgrounds, and thus understanding how their cultural identity interacts with social support needs would be a valuable inquiry. This work may require interdisciplinary collaboration with scholars outside of psychology (e.g., sociology).

CONCLUSION

Findings from this exploratory study indicate that although fast-food workers share some supervisor and coworker support needs that are identified in existing measures, they are insufficient to fully capture the nuances present in the fast-food industry. This qualitative study investigating work-nonwork social support for lower-wage workers contributes to both the supervisor support as well as coworker support literatures through three main contributions. First, this study qualitatively assesses the construct of FSSB, with findings indicating that scale revisions (e.g., addition of a dimension; item revision) may be warranted to make this construct applicable to fast-food workers. Second, this study bridges the supervisor and coworker support literatures by investigating how multiple forms of support interact and jointly shape workers' experiences. Interestingly, supervisor and coworker work-family support do not seem to function in a compensatory way. However, the two types of support do appear to interact and jointly influence the perception of a worker's overall support system. Last, this study answers the much-needed call for more research on lower-wage workers who often face challenges balancing work and family demands. Findings from this study indicate the primacy of instrumental support (specifically scheduling support), as well as emotional support to effectively balance competing work and family demands. This last contribution is particularly important given the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1

Final Codebook

Code Name	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Quote
SUPERVISOR SUPPORT				
Instrumental Support				
Positive/Helping Scheduling	Participant discusses the helpful ways in which supervisors approach scheduling issues that arise due to work-family conflicts.	Include unexpected and temporary schedule changes.	N/A	If I need to take time off to go and see [my family member], um or if I need to take care of her last minute, they're pretty understanding about that.
Negative/Unhelping Scheduling	Participant discusses the UNHELPFUL ways in which supervisors approach scheduling issues due to work-family conflicts.	Include unexpected and temporary schedule changes.	N/A	Sometimes he tries to give us shifts without really notifying us.
Other Positive Instrumental Support	Participant discusses how a supervisor helps them manage work and family demands that arise on the *day-to-day* level. This is at the individual employee-level and is typically reactive to unexpected situations that arise.	Include information on helping interpret W-F policies, ensuring employees' job gets done, providing day-to-day resources to help employee manage conflicts between work and family.	Do not include information on scheduling.	Some of the things he does is he...he helps me to look at my dad's different medications to see which ones have negative side effects.

Other Negative Instrumental Support	Participant expresses that a supervisor is either NOT helpful or actively unhelpful in managing their work and family demands that arise on the *day-to-day* level. This is at the individual employee-level and is typically reactive to unexpected situations that arise.	Include information on ensuring employees' job gets done, providing day-to-day resources to help employee manage conflicts between work and family.	Do not include information on scheduling.	And I couldn't leave. I wasn't able to leave because I was the only cashier there and the manager there was busy doing other stuff. And they were like, 'No, you can't, you can't leave because we'd have to close the store' basically.
Emotional Support				
Positive Emotional Support	Participant discusses feeling cared for by a supervisor and is comfortable discussing nonwork issues with them.	Include participants describing that their supervisor expresses concern for the way that work affects nonwork life and/or offers advice.	Do not include references to nonwork conversation.	I just told him about my issues, and they were able to empathize and show sympathy for me.
Negative Emotional Support	Participant discusses NOT feeling cared for by a supervisor and is NOT comfortable discussing nonwork issues with them.	Include participants describing that their supervisor DOES NOT expresses concern for the way that work affects nonwork life and/or offers advice.	Do not include references to nonwork conversation.	When I was pregnant... I tend to think maybe he never understood the situation and maybe he thought I'm becoming lazy or I don't work my job.

Creative Work-Family Management				
Positive CWFM	Participant discusses ways in which the supervisor *proactively* helps restructure work to accommodate both work and family. Managerial-initiated behaviors to balance sensitivity to employees' work-family responsibilities with company & coworker needs.	Include information on permanent changes in the time, place, and way that work is done.	Do not include information on temporary scheduling accommodations.	He made precautions, like you have to do a little questionnaire and that takes a few minutes more...um and wearing a mask.
Negative CWFM	Participant discusses ways in which the supervisor *proactively* RESTRICTS or PROHIBITS restructuring work to accommodate both work and family. Managerial-initiated behaviors lack sensitivity to balancing employees' work-family responsibilities with company & coworker needs.	Include information on changes in the time, place, and way that work is done.	Do not include information on temporary scheduling accommodations.	It's ridiculous – they hire 16 year-olds, 17 year-olds, give them two days of training so it's no their fault they can't help me.

Role Modeling				
Positive Role Modeling	Participant discusses the ways in which supervisors demonstrate how to balance work and family through certain behaviors.	N/A	Do not include information on being a good role model just at work.	The way he talks, the way he gives advice, you can tell that he is there at home, supporting his family, and he is there at work to support us.
Negative Role Modeling	Participant discusses the ways in which supervisors demonstrate INEFFECTIVE strategies for balancing work and family through certain behaviors.	N/A	Do not include information on being a good role model just at work.	They usually have strained relationships with their family at best, just because once you get into a more supervisor position, you tend to work more overtime, longer hours.
No Affect/No Role Modeling	Participant is unable to make a judgement about role modeling because the supervisor keeps their family life separate from work.	N/A	N/A	I don't know much about them, so I can't tell you that.
Financial Support				
Gift-Giving	Participant describes gifts given by the supervisor.	Include gifts for holidays and birthdays, as well as gifts for employee's children.	Don't include information on raises or financial relief specifically	They went and got us that gift basket, right when [my child] was born.

			due to COVID.	
Help with Bills	Participant specifically indicates that a supervisor helped with personal or family bills.	Include medical and living expense bills for the employee and dependents.	Don't include help with bills specific to COVID.	Back when I got my baby, he paid my bill for the whole month.
Effort				
Exerting Effort (positive support)	Participant expresses supervisor effort that goes above and beyond what is required/expected.	Include efforts to accommodate work-family demands and non-work-family demands (e.g., going out of their way to get food for the crew).	N/A	They would do absolutely everything that they could to make sure that their employees are recognized.
Minimizing Effort (negative support)	Participant expresses MINIMAL supervisor effort or failure to do something help that would help the employee in some way.	Include efforts to accommodate work-family demands and non-work-family demands.	N/A	They could have done more, and they chose not to either because they didn't have to, or they just– they just didn't want to.
COWORKER SUPPORT				
Instrumental Support				
Positive/Helpful Scheduling	Participant discusses the helpful ways in which coworkers approach scheduling issues that arise	Include unexpected and temporary schedule changes.	Don't include information on long-term schedule flexibility.	We do shift trades and exchange time.

	on short-notice due to work-family conflicts.			
Negative/Unhelpful Scheduling	Participant discusses the UNHELPFUL ways in which coworkers approach scheduling issues that arise on short-notice due to work-family conflicts.	Include unexpected and temporary schedule changes.	Don't include information on long-term schedule flexibility.	N/A
Other Positive Instrumental Support	Participant discusses how coworkers help them manage work and family demands that arise on the *day-to-day* level. This is at the individual employee-level and is typically reactive to situations that unexpectedly arise.	Include descriptions of a coworker helping with an employees' tasks so they can go home early.	Do not include information on scheduling.	Well, what they've done is they've driven us to the hospital when my car was broke. They drove myself and my dad to the hospital. So, they helped him to the hospital for his doctor's appointment.
Other Negative Instrumental Support	Participant discusses how coworkers are either NOT helpful or actively unhelpful in managing their work and family demands that arise on the *day-to-day* level. This is at the individual employee-level and is typically	N/A	Do not include information on scheduling.	It feels like you almost have to earn their help.

	reactive to situations that unexpectedly arise.			
Emotional Support				
Positive Emotional Support	Participant discusses feeling cared for by coworkers and is comfortable discussing family issues.	Include coworkers expressing concern for the way that work affects family life.	Do not include references to nonwork conversation.	They are so close that they are family. They are really close, so most of the time I kind of talk about family related issues.
Negative Emotional Support	Participant discusses NOT feeling cared for by coworkers and is NOT comfortable discussing family issues.	Include a lack of coworker expression of concern for the way that work affects family life.	Do not include references to nonwork conversation.	It was a coworker who was very not understanding of the situation, and was telling– er, essentially told me that I need to prioritize this– this job over my family, because I kept 'calling in too much' in his words.
Role Modeling				
Positive Role Modeling	Participant discusses the ways in which coworkers demonstrate how to effectively balance work and family through certain behaviors.	N/A	Do not include information on being a good role model just at work.	Yeah, I feel like some are actually very good because they've been there before me. They've been working for a very long time. So, it's something they kind of are very used to.

Negative Role Modeling	Participant discusses the ways in which coworkers demonstrate INEFFECTIVE strategies for balancing work and family through certain behaviors.	N/A	Do not include information on being a good role model just at work.	They really don't balance their like, work-family like too well. They really are just all job all the time.
No Affect/No Role Modeling (neither positive nor negative)	Participant is unable to make a judgement about role modeling because coworkers keeps their family lives separate from work.	N/A	N/A	Um, I don't see them.
Financial Support				
Gift-Giving	Participant describes receiving gifts from coworkers.	Include gifts for holidays and birthdays, as well as gifts for employee's children.	Don't include information on raises or financial relief specifically due to COVID.	A lot of them got together and they got me a birthday card, birthday gifts, etcetera just because I normally don't celebrate my birthday.
Help with Bills	Participant specifically indicates that a coworker helped with personal or family bills.	Include medical and living expense bills for the employee and dependents.	Don't include help with bills specific to COVID.	They just contributed towards my child bills to the hospital.
Effort				
Exerting Effort (positive support)	Participant expresses coworker effort that goes above and beyond	Include efforts to accommodate work-family demands and	N/A	One of my coworkers even took me grocery shopping a

	what is required/expected.	non-work-family demands (e.g., going out of their way to get food for the crew).		couple of times.
Minimizing Effort (negative support)	Participant expresses MINIMAL coworker effort or failure to do something help that would help the employee in some way.	Include efforts to accommodate work-family demands and non-work-family demands.	N/A	N/A
COMPENSATORY SUPPORT				
Interactions	Participant describes the ways in which support from different people at work interact.	Include information on one source of support making up for a lack of support from another source.	Do not include information on sources of support outside of work.	Yeah, depending on the circumstance... getting a different set of opinions from each person, or input on something we can do to make some more things - changes at work is helpful.
Siloed Support	Participant indicates that support from supervisors and coworkers is distinct and not interchangeable or compensatory.	N/A	Do not include information on sources of support outside of work.	It very much depends on the situation because the supervisor can only do so much and the coworkers can only do so much.
Primacy of Supervisor Support	Participant indicates that	N/A	N/A	When I had my child, support

	supervisor support is more valuable than coworker support.			from my supervisor was much more valuable than from coworkers.
Primacy of Coworker Support	Participant indicates that coworker support is more valuable than supervisor support.	N/A	N/A	[Support is] more important from your actual coworkers that are in store.
SUPPORT PROVIDED BY EMPLOYEE				
Scheduling	Participant describes how they help their supervisor or coworker by taking on additional shifts or being flexible with then they come in/leave.	N/A	N/A	So, whenever they need coverage, especially for family life, I'd always you know, take up shifts.
Emotional	Participant describes how they listen to others at work talk about their work-family lives.	Include descriptions of listening to others vent, being sympathetic, and expressing that they care.	Do not include the ways in which a participant helps others come up with a plan for how to handle difficulties.	Outside of work, I text them. I you know, just check in on them.
Helping with Tasks	Participant describes taking on additional tasks at work that are not typically their responsibility, but doing so	N/A	N/A	I try and help them out with whatever tasks... restocking everything, making sure everything is

	would help out a coworker.			set up for the next shift or for whoever you're working with. I try and help them out with that if I have free time...Just like even one or two less tasks makes the day less stressful.
Financial	Participant describes providing financial support.	Include descriptions of gift-giving and help with bills.	N/A	Maybe like for example, if someone is not able to settle his or her bill at the time, I can offer to help maybe by half or even to pay the full amount.
Matching	Employee talks about matching the level of support they get from others at work.	N/A	N/A	I try my best to give them the exact same support they give me.
ORGANIZATIONAL -LEVEL SUPPORT				
Financial				
Org-Level Financial Support	Participant expresses contentment with org-policies related to pay and promotion	N/A	Do not include information specific to pay changes due to COVID-19	She paid me [on maternity leave] what I used to earn before.
Org-Level Financial Stressors	Participant expresses strain resulting from org-policies related to pay and promotion.	N/A	Do not include information specific to pay changes	But like being paid more would definitely help – help with everything,

			due to COVID-19.	because then I could take on less hours and be there more for my family, you know?
Scheduling Policies & Procedures				
Helpful Scheduling Policies & Procedures	Participant discusses company-wide policies around scheduling that are helpful or accommodating to their needs.	N/A	N/A	I know [my organization] has done the best that they can to make sure that they're still accommodating. That's probably the reason I'm still around.
Unhelpful/Stressful Scheduling Policies & Procedures	Participant discusses company-wide policies around scheduling that are UNHELPFUL or UNACCOMMODATING to their needs.	N/A	N/A	There's really no swapping shifts.
General Policies & Procedures				
Positive/Helpful General Policies	Any other general policies not covered by other codes that the employee finds beneficial.	N/A	Do not include information specific to COVID.	Corporate is pretty hands off, so it does give our owners and management a lot more flexibility that they might not have it other stores, and they might not have in other

				chains. So, I guess just the corporate flexibility and that they sort of let stores do what they want to do - that gives our management the opportunity to be more supportive to me.
Negative/Unhelpful General Policies	Any other general policies not covered by other codes that the employee finds hindering.	N/A	Do not include information specific to COVID.	I think that having some counseling lines available, like a nurse line, that you can call for some support...discounts on daycare, you know. And I think stuff like that would be helpful because then people feel more valued that the organization can help them out a little bit.
COVID-19				
Org Policies Specific to COVID				
Helpful Org Policies Specific to COVID	Participant describes specific policies put in place by the organization that they have found helpful	Include safety-related policies (e.g., mask-wearing, safety glass, etc.), policies specific to	N/A	I think, from what I read, I think it's a lot better than a lot of other fast foods. They made, like they

	throughout COVID.	taking time off due to COVID, and financial policies specific to COVID.		set up the shields and stuff from my location a lot earlier than a lot of other fast-food locations. So, I'm pretty, I would say they did a pretty good job.
Unhelpful/Stressful Policies Specific to COVID	Participant describes specific policies put in place by the organization that they have found unhelpful or stressful throughout COVID.	Include safety-related policies (e.g., mask-wearing, safety glass, etc.), policies specific to taking time off due to COVID, and financial policies specific to COVID.	N/A	They could have at least you know, covered like, a couple of days of pay just to give them a little bit, you know, for their - when they went and got their vaccine or if they got quarantined.
Supervisor Response				
Supportive Supervisor Response to COVID	Participant describes helpful supervisor response to COVID-related issues.	Include things like: showing concern for employees who get sick, taking precautions to keep their staff safe.	N/A	They're pretty much understanding especially like, because it was COVID-19. So, they were understanding because– that– it was not an excuse you can help... like you can't help COVID.
Unsupportive Supervisor Response to COVID	Participant describes unhelpful or stressful supervisor	Include things like: not giving enough clarity around changes due to	N/A	I had COVID along with four or five of my other coworkers.

	response to COVID-related issues.	COVID, lack of concern for employees who get sick, failing to take precautions to keep their staff safe.		Um, and to avoid being shut down actually, uh, our district manager would intentionally send some of the workers to other facilities around town specifically, because they were about to call uh, the health department about it.
Coworker Response				
Strengthened Coworker Relationships due to COVID	Participant describes helpful coworker response to COVID-related issues or strengthened coworker relationships.	Include things like: feeling closer to coworkers, showing concern for employees who get sick, going out of their way to help pay bills, etc.	N/A	[My relationship with coworkers] has definitely become more positive.
Weakened Coworker Relationships due to COVID	Participant describes unhelpful or stressful coworker response to COVID-related issues or weakened coworker relationships.	Include things like: feeling disconnected from coworkers, lack of concern for employees who get sick, failing to adhere to certain safety precautions at work, etc.	N/A	Most people now they don't want to interact, they feel like - like, well, they just think everyone might have the virus.
Customer-Related Stressors	Stress caused by customer	N/A	N/A	This can be so stressful, trying

	behavior specific to COVID (e.g., not wearing a mask).			to get them to make use of the hand sanitizers and wear their mask.
Safety	Participant perceptions about personal safety at work due to COVID.	Include information about fear or anxiety (or lack thereof) over the virus.	Do not include information about the organization or supervisory responses to COVID.	I was a little nervous due to the, the COVID. But, I just kind of, like I said, just sucked up and dealt with it.
WORK-FAMILY STRESSORS				
Family Care	This includes providing care for family, as well as spending time with family.	N/A	N/A	Having to take care of my brother or having to take care of my mom, when my stepdad's not able to do it. And like, having to go to work or like having to do in the middle of the night, after working a long shift.
Health	This refers to the health of others (e.g., family, friends) *not* the participant's personal health.	N/A	N/A	My dad – he recently had knee replacement surgery and can't really get around on his own.
OTHER STRESSORS[3]				

[3] These results were not included in the write-up because they were not central to the research questions.

Safety	This refers to any safety concerns about the workplace.	Include concerns about customers and equipment.	Do not include COVID-specific safety concerns.	I've had to call the police another time because a guy came in here with a knife waving it in my face because he got the wrong pizza.
Personal Health	Participant discusses their own health.	N/A	Do not include information on the health of family, friends, etc.	I'm also a cancer patient. So, I deal with chemotherapy and surgeries, and then coming to work the same day.
Transportation	Difficulties getting to and from work/unreliable transportation.	N/A	Do not include transportation difficulties coworkers face.	I live really far away...I drive an hour and 15 minutes to get to work every day. And if it's snowing, it takes me two hours sometimes.
Impression Management	Participant discusses having to self-regulate in the workplace and appear happy all the time.	N/A	N/A	There's almost like a weird correlation between being happy and being at work but in the worst way possible. So, where you feel like whenever you're happy, you feel like you're at work or you're on like – you're in

				your work zone.

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APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction to the interview after welcoming participant and obtaining verbal consent for study (researcher to individual):

Thank you for taking time to meet with me today. My name is Shalyn, and as a reminder I study experiences at work and how those relate to your family life and life outside of work. I am very curious to learn more about your experiences in the food industry, and your insights today will be extremely valuable, so thank you once again for participating in this interview. I also want this to be valuable for you and a time to voice opinions around issues that are important to you. Today I would like to ask you about your experiences with work and your family life. "Family" can be anyone you consider family, for example partners, spouses, children, parents, and siblings. Family can also include people you consider family who are not necessarily related to you. Although I will be focusing on family, if you have other important nonwork experiences that come to mind, such as friends, health, pet care, or anything else outside of work please feel free to share those as well.

I cannot guarantee specific actions will be taken as a result of this session, but I will be writing a report about broad themes that will go to the larger research community. I am also going to write a shorter summary report that I plan to distribute to the local community. I will be happy to send you a copy if you would like and would appreciate your input on how best to circulate the findings.

For today, my plan is for this to be an informal conversation; there are no right or wrong answers. I do have some questions prepared to guide us, but feel free add other points that come to mind.

Before we get started, are you in a location you feel comfortable talking with me today? I am happy to wait a few minutes so you can get to a place where others cannot overhear your responses. [Wait for response]. I want to remind you that what you say in here will remain confidential on my part and no identifying information will be used, unless you would like me to include your real name in the write-up. With that being said I want to remind you that I am very interested in everything you have to say, but you do not have to share anything that you do not want to share or do not feel comfortable sharing. Do you have any questions before we get started?

As I mentioned, I study work and family, so most of these questions are going to be about your experiences managing and balancing the two.

1. What are your biggest family or nonwork responsibilities?
2. Working in the fast-food industry, how do you balance your work with your family life?
3. Have you been working since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March?
    a. Possible probe: Were you forced to or did you choose to take any time off of work?
4. How has COVID-19 impacted your work life?
    a. Possible probe: How has it impacted how you balance your work and family lives?

Going forward, please think about the questions in your overall work experience and note any changes that have happened as a result of COVID-19.

5. Think of a time when your work responsibilities and your family responsibilities conflicted. What happened in this situation? How did you handle it?
    a. Possible probe: Has this changed since before COVID?
6. Who provides you support when you have a challenge between work and family?
    a. Possible probe: How do they support you?
    b. Possible probe: Has this changed since before COVID?
7. How would you characterize the support you get from coworkers?
8. How do your coworkers play a role in you managing work and family life?
    a. Possible probe: What behaviors or actions do you find most helpful?
    b. Possible probe: Is there anything else you wish your coworkers did to support you more?
    c. Possible probe: *If they only describe how they make it easier* – Have there ever been times when your coworkers have made it harder? What happened?
    d. Possible probe: *If they only describe how they make it harder* – Have there ever been times when your coworkers have made it easier? What happened?
    e. How has your relationship with coworkers changed since the start of COVID?
9. What are some nice things your coworkers have done for you?
10. How have your coworkers shown they care for you?
11. Have your coworkers ever gone above and beyond for you? What the situation and what did they do?
12. Are any of your coworkers particularly good at role modeling or demonstrating good strategies for balancing work and family? What do they do?
13. How do you provide support to your coworkers?

a. How do you feel about providing this support?
b. Is the support you provide an expected part of your job?
c. Do you feel that providing support ever takes a toll on you?
d. Do you ever feel obligated to provide support to coworkers?

14. How would you characterize the support you get from supervisors?
15. How do your supervisors play a role in you managing your work and family life?
    a. Possible probe: What behaviors or actions do you find most helpful?
    b. Possible probe: Is there anything else you wish your supervisor did to support you more?
    c. Possible probe: *If they only describe how they make it easier* – Have there ever been times when your supervisor has made it harder? What happened?
    d. Possible probe: *If they only describe how they make it harder* – Have there ever been times when your supervisor has made it easier? What happened?
    e. How has your relationship with your supervisor changed since the start of COVID?
16. What are some nice things your supervisor has done for you?
17. How has your supervisor shown they care for you?
18. Has your supervisor ever gone above and beyond for you? What the situation and what did they do?
19. Are any of your supervisors particularly good at role modeling or demonstrating good strategies for balancing work and family? What do they do?
20. Thinking about support from supervisors and coworkers, is one type of support more valuable? Is it more meaningful or helpful to get support from one or the other?

21. For this next question, I would like you to think about how support for family life from different people at work interact. Has support from either a supervisor or coworker made up for a lack of support or help from the other? For example, maybe your supervisor wasn't understanding of your family responsibilities, but talking to a coworker made you feel better.
    a. Possible probe: In what situations, if ever, is it more helpful to get support from both coworkers and your supervisor rather than from just one?
    b. Possible probe: Has this changed since before COVID-19?
22. Have you ever felt unsafe at your job, for example has a customer ever been threatening?
    a. If so, did coworkers do anything to make the situation better?
    b. If so, did your supervisor do anything to make the situation better either while it was going on or did they change policies/safety equipment afterwards?
23. What could the fast-food industry do to better support employees with families?
    a. Possible probe: How could the fast-food industry better support you during COVID?
24. What else about your job or your work-nonwork experiences would you like to share?
25. Those are all of the questions I have for you today, but before we leave, I want to let you have a moment to think about this session and let me know your thoughts. What did you think of your experience participating in this interview?
    a. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX B: SCREENING & PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS[4]

Instructions*: Please answer the following questions as best you can. As a reminder, answers to these questions will be kept confidential and no personally identifying information will be shared with anyone outside of the research team. The organization you work for will not be notified of your participation.*

Do you work in the fast-food industry?*

What company do you work for?

How long have you worked in the fast-food industry?*

How many jobs do you currently have?

How long have you worked at your job?

If multiple jobs: How long have you worked at each job?

How many hours per week do you work?

What is your job title?

What are your primary responsibilities at work?

How much do you make per hour at your job?*

What shift or hours do you typically work ?

[4] Questions were asked verbally at the start of the interview. Screening questions were first asked via email and asked again before beginning the interview to ensure eligibility
* Denotes a screening question

Do you always work the same shift?

How long does it take you to get to work each day?

How do you typically get to work each day?

Does your work provide any benefits, such as healthcare?

If yes: What are those benefits?

During the past 6 months have you provided at least 5 hours of care per week to someone inside or outside your home? For example, this could include providing childcare or helping with a parent.*

Who do you provide care for?

Does anyone help you with the caregiving?

Are you currently a full-time student?*

What is your approximate combined annual household income?

Which race or ethnicity do you identify with?

How old are you?

What state do you live in?