

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF K-12 CAFETERIA WORKERS WHO  
PERCEIVE THEY ARE OVERQUALIFIED FOR THE JOB

by

Cecily D. Anthony

A Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

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March 2013

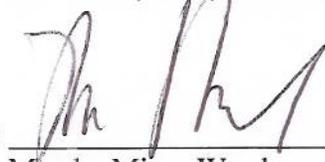
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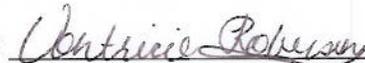
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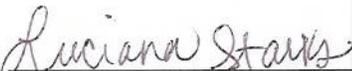
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## **Abstract**

This qualitative, phenomenological study analyzed the lived experiences of overqualified hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and determined what leadership strategies may be employed to alleviate feelings of deprivation that may arise from feeling underemployed. Many of the employees working in K-12 dining departments are women who have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations. Working in this capacity gives a mother the opportunity to work part-time earning a paycheck, while giving her the time to spend with her children in the mornings before school, on weekends, during holidays, and during the summer. The job searches for these women were based on spouses finding work, thus their job searches became secondary. The three industries with the largest numbers of overqualified workers are wholesale/retail trade, hotel and catering, and transportation industries-all service sectors. K-12 dining is a segment in the hospitality service sector. The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (thirty-one percent) when compared to other industries. This study produced leadership strategies for recruiting, managing, and retaining women workers employed in the K-12 segment of hospitality.

## Dedication

This work is written in dedication to Dr. Gail Pope, a strong leader and the person who gave me the opportunity to lead a department of extremely talented “Cafeteria Ladies.” I also dedicate this work to Mrs. Nancy Potter, a Cafeteria Manager and “Jack of all Trades” and Laura Thompson, a Cafeteria Manager and the department technology expert. Both women inspired me to pursue this research because they are feeding America’s children on a daily basis, but have so much more in the way of skills, experiences, and education to offer the world. To Judy Barnhill, a once stay-at-home mom, now part-time K-12 dining worker, and part-time psychology student, you have inspired this work more than you know. While your work is rewarding, it is difficult and requires a lot of your time and energy. Many “cafeteria ladies” in this country fit this description. Therefore, this work is an “Ode to the Cafeteria Lady”, America’s “Hidden Jewels” and unsung heroes.

I also dedicate this work to my husband and my daughter because they stuck with me and worked with me throughout this entire process. It has certainly been a long road, but I am thankful to Darren and Doralyn for their love and support, which without, I would not have been able to make the journey.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Of the 123 million women living in the United States, ages 16 years and over, 72 million (59%) are labor force participants. Women make up 46% of the labor force in the United States. Seventy-six percent of women have full-time jobs, and 27% work in part-time positions (United States Department of Labor, 2010).

Twenty-one percent of women work in service organizations, and less than 1% of women in the labor force work in K-12 school cafeterias. The K-12 dining services are a segment of the hospitality service industry. In the United States, approximately 133,000 cafeteria workers earn on average \$10.93 per hour and \$22,000 per year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

School food service workers stand for many hours, are required to lift heavy items, work near large commercial ovens, and use knives and other sharp utensils (Urbauer, 2012). Full and part-time positions are available in this segment of the industry, but the majority of positions are part-time, day only, Monday through Friday work. The wages are low, but the benefits packages are fair, offering medical insurance, pensions, and an employer retirement plan. The job requires constant contact with coworkers and students (Urbauer, 2012).

According to the University of Mississippi's National Food Service Management Institute (2008), job performance does not differ by age in the K-12 dining segment. Workers who perform at high levels in the industry remain on the job for longer periods than workers at low levels, but turnover rates overall are high in this industry. Workers, ages 36 and over, have a lower turnover rate (University of Mississippi: National Food Service Management Institute, 2008).

Many hospitality workers report dissatisfaction with their jobs because of the low level of skill required to perform tasks. Low-skilled service jobs offer limited opportunities for advancement, which leads to recruitment and retention problems for hospitality employers (Lindsay, 2005; Gill, Mathur, Sharma, & Bhutani, 2011). At least one in five workers experiences some form of underemployment. A higher percentage of women (22%) than men (16%) are underemployed (Jacobe, 2011).

Women's job search is primarily based on familial obligations, but many women who work as cafeteria workers are employed in these positions because their job search was also contingent on their husband's geographical search for employment. A husband who is the principal breadwinner accepts a position in which he was qualified to work, and his wife who possesses more skills, education, or experience than necessary (Frank, 1978) to work in a school cafeteria, seeks and accepts a position in the K-12 dining sector of hospitality. According to Frank (1978), this phenomenon describes a theory of differential overqualification.

Differential overqualification occurs when the probability is high that married women working in small labor markets and in positions for which they are overqualified accept these positions because they take a secondary role to their husband's search for employment (Buchel & Battu, 2003). The objective of the current research was to explore the overqualification of female hospitality workers in K-12 dining departments in Northern Virginia. The study involved examining demographic variables associated with the overqualification of cafeteria workers. Results in previous studies on the topics of overqualification and underemployment indicate that women working in cafeterias can find enjoyment and satisfaction on-the-job, even when harboring feelings of

overqualification, if they are empowered to employ the skills, education, or experiences they have gained in previous positions (Feldman, 1996).

According to Moncarz, Zhao, and Kay (2009), overqualification and job dissatisfaction are important concerns in the hospitality industry because dissatisfaction in workers leads to high turnover throughout the industry. Employee turnover is a major area of decreased organizational efficiency in the hospitality industry (Moncarz et al., 2009). Staff retention is a major problem for hospitality managers because of its negative impact on the bottom line of service organizations (Gill et al., 2011). Hospitality industry workers experience dynamic, unplanned, and unforeseen peaks in their work environments, causing some employees to leave the job (Gill et al., 2011).

According to Lim (2008), hospitality employees are a unique group of workers because they are paid low wages but are among employees who work the hardest in the service sectors. The low wages, long hours, and difficult work lead to job dissatisfaction. Many of the positions in the hospitality industry require workers to expend physical and emotional energy (Tesone, 2006).

The hospitality industry is known for employing individuals who need direction, guidance, and structure (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2000). Job satisfaction increases for employees who work in the casual dining segment of hospitality when they receive rewards and compensation for quality work. Other drivers of job satisfaction for hospitality workers include training opportunities, increased salaries and benefits, support from colleagues, and support from superiors (Cheng-Hua, Shyh-Jer, & Shih-Chien, 2009).

A significant relationship exists between perceived overqualification and job dissatisfaction or distress (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Workers who consider themselves overqualified are less satisfied with their jobs and more likely to leave the organization (Hersch, 1991). Workplace stressors such as work relationships, changes in the work environment, relationships with coworkers, and job changes contribute to job dissatisfaction (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Workers not well suited for a particular position because of an inability to use their skills may also become dissatisfied (Warr, 1987). Underemployment is a workplace phenomenon in which a worker may possess more education than necessary to perform the essential duties related to the job (Warr, 1987). Dissatisfaction occurs when factors of skill underutilization, underemployment, lack of opportunity for growth and change, and overqualification to perform the essential duties of the job are present (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). High unemployment has resulted in workers seeking to fill inferior positions (The Atlantic, 2010). The unemployment rate in the United States is high at 9.7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The general problem is that at least one in five workers in the United States experiences underemployment in one form or another; a higher percentage of women (22%) than men (16%) are underemployed (Jacobe, 2011). Between 20% and 28% of workers perceive themselves as overqualified, possessing more skills and education than required for the job (Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Felstead, Gallie, & Green, 2002; Green & McIntosh, 2007; Jacobe, 2011; Verhaest & Omeij, 2006). The three industries with the

largest numbers of overqualified workers are all in service sectors and include wholesale/retail trade, hotel and catering, and transportation (Green & McIntosh, 2007).

The K-12 dining industry is a segment in the hospitality service sector. The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (31%) when compared to other industries (Dolan Technologies Corp., 2010). Fifty-five percent of American workers are dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with their jobs, and 33% believe they have reached a dead-end in their career (Career Vision, 2005). Only 20% of Americans are passionate about their work (Career Vision, 2005).

Underemployment is becoming more common as many organizations implement customized work arrangements like part-time or contingent work as a way to decrease wages and benefits (Barker, 1995; Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Beard & Edwards, 1995; Gallagher, 2002; Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006). Part-time workers are more likely to be overqualified (Green, McIntosh, & Vignoles, 2002). Many of the workers employed in the K-12 dining sector are part-time workers (Covelli, 2011).

The current economic environment will cause the underemployment organizational trend to continue, and more individuals will be forced to take positions that do not allow them to use their skills or education (Feldman & Leana, 2000). One-quarter of the North American workforce is composed of part-time, temporary, and intermittent workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; Kim, Park, & Chang, 2011). Thirty-three percent of the part-time and 66% of temporary workers hold these positions because no other employment opportunities are available (Ansberry, 1993). The numbers of part-time, temporary, and intermittent jobs are expected to increase, and newly created jobs will be part-time or temporary types (Gallagher, 2002). Employees who perceive

themselves to be underemployed may feel less emotionally attached to the organization (Borgen, Amundson, & Harder, 1988).

The specific problem is that underemployed hospitality workers are dissatisfied with the low level of skill necessary to perform their specific jobs. Low-skilled service jobs offer limited opportunities for advancement, which leads to recruitment and retention problems for hospitality employers (Lindsay, 2005). Recruitment and retention problems lead to decreased organizational efficiency within the hospitality industry (Moncarz et al., 2009). The choice of qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical design for the current study supported the exploration of the overqualification of married women working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments.

### **Background of the Problem**

According to McGuinness (2006), overeducation occurs when an individual pursues higher education and many other people make the same decision. The competition moves from higher education to the job market, making it difficult to find a fitting job (McGuinness, 2006). Being overeducated is a viable alternative to being unemployed, but for women the cost of finding a fitting job may come at the cost of her husband's search for employment (Frank, 1978).

Women who have a family to care for experience the phenomenon of overeducation, and women in this situation experience underemployment more often than men. Service workers are becoming increasingly overqualified because of the rising number of college graduates entering the workforce and offering a different array of skills required to acquire many jobs (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Khan & Morrow, 1991). Being overeducated for a position is one factor in underemployment, but having more

skills, knowledge, abilities, and experiences than necessary to perform a job contribute to the phenomenon (Maynard, 1998).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study was to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and to identify leadership strategies to alleviate feelings of deprivation that may arise from feeling underemployed. Many of the employees working in K-12 dining departments are women who have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations (Covelli, 2011). Working in this capacity gives a mother the opportunity to work part-time, earn a paycheck, and have time to spend with her children in the mornings before school, on weekends, on holidays, and during the summer. A K-12 cafeteria position includes paid holidays, paid sick days, and a state-sponsored pension (Covelli, 2011). These women based their job searches on spouses finding work, making their job search secondary (Frank, 1978).

Employees who perceive themselves to be underemployed may feel less emotionally attached to the organization (Borgen et al., 1988). Overqualification, leading to feelings of deprivation, can be alleviated by providing autonomy and communicating to employees that they are valuable assets and are respected (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Empowerment can be used as a moderator between perceived overqualification and job satisfaction because empowerment is associated with positive attitudes and behaviors (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005).

Low levels of empowerment and low levels of retention lead to organizational performance problems. Examples of organizational problems include poor quality of

service, low productivity, and higher labor costs (Gill et al., 2011). Increased empowerment decreases negative feelings regarding overqualification, intentions to remain on-the-job, and turnover (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Workers who receive challenges and an increase in work roles and assignments experience empowerment, and empowered workers often change their attitudes toward their work (Warr, 1999).

People instinctively take positions for which they are qualified (McCormick, DeNisi, & Shaw, 1979). McCormick et al. (1979) posited that people eventually leave or are terminated from a job for which they are under or overqualified and find a position that is more commensurate with their skills, experiences, or education. The ultimate goal of the current research was to make recommendations for lessening feelings of deprivation, organizational turnover, and employment terminations for women workers perceiving themselves to be underemployed, overqualified, or overeducated for positions in the K-12 dining sector of hospitality.

### **Significance of the Study**

The three industries with the largest numbers of overqualified workers are all in service sectors and include wholesale/retail trade, hotel and catering, and transportation (Green & McIntosh, 2007). The K-12 dining is a segment in the hospitality service sector. The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (31%) when compared to other industries (Dolan Technologies Corp., 2010). The findings of the current study might assist hospitality employers who seek to hire passionate and committed employees and might contribute to lower turnover rates in the industry.

The study includes recommendations for managers and owners/operators of hospitality organizations to improve employee retention and reduce intention to quit. Analyzing overqualification is crucial for the hospitality industry because negative outcomes can affect individual and organizational productivity (Lim, 2008). The study findings also include leadership strategies for recruiting, managing, and retaining women workers employed in the K-12 segment of hospitality.

Human resources managers and hiring managers define overqualification as a surplus in education, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Maynard, 1998). Workers, who perceive that they are overqualified, report greater intentions to leave their jobs. These workers often engage in more job search behaviors than the workers who believe they are adequately employed (Burris, 1983; Feldman & Turnley, 1995). Employers seeking to find employees who have more experience, skills, or education than required to do a particular job generate an inadequate demand-ability fit (Maynard et al., 2006).

Underemployed workers accept jobs where they are underpaid, hold temporary work, or hold part-time work are in a need-supply mismatch situation (Maynard et al., 2006). Many recruiters do not hire candidates they believe are overqualified for positions because they know that such employees are likely to leave the organization after working a short time (Allan, 1990; Wells, 2004). Some research indicates that many employees who believe they are overqualified perform better on the job. Supervisors of overqualified employees have reported that these workers are high performers (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Fine & Nevo, 2007, 2008; Holtom, Lee, & Tidd, 2002). Such workers

might leave the organization sooner than others, creating turnover, but they may perform at a higher level while on the job (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009).

Organizational leaders benefit from understanding how workers perceive overqualification in relationship to personal feelings, attitudes, and behaviors concerning the job. Human resources managers or hiring managers can strategize by understanding more about positive and desirable work attitudes for workers in the hospitality industry. Leaders of organizations can benefit from individuals' high performance while dealing with the possible harmful effects of perceived overqualification (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Leaders of organizations can use employee empowerment to mitigate the negative implications of perceived overqualification (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Rose, 1994). According to Khan and Morrow (1991), empowerment is a means to overcome the effects of perceived overqualification in organizations.

Organizational leaders must offer ways for workers to avoid feeling inadequate by giving them more control over how they perform their jobs (Battu, Belfield, & Sloane, 2000). Feelings of empowerment make workers feel important in the organization and make workers believe that leaders trust them with the autonomy to make decisions on behalf of the organization (Eisenberger, Rhoades, & Cameron, 1999). While overqualified workers report feelings of deprivation, advantages exist to hiring workers who perceive they are overqualified.

Employee empowerment can mitigate negative work attitudes and turnover (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Guest, 2002). Factors in job satisfaction include job challenge, autonomy, variety, and scope. In any industry, these factors not only predict job

satisfaction but also decrease other important outcomes like turnover (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Parisi & Weiner, 1999; Weiner, 2000).

Human resource managers benefit from understanding individuals' reactions to and ways of coping with underemployment. Workers with a high level of education report that structural labor market conditions are responsible for their underemployment, and they are hopeful that they may come across a suitable position in the near future (Borgen et al., 1988). Workers with little education make internal assumptions concerning their underemployment and express more hopelessness regarding their position in society than employees with more education (Borgen et al., 1988).

Women who work as cafeteria workers may fit the latter description. Their work lacks stimulation and is not considered challenging, arousing, or intrinsically rewarding enough to motivate feelings of job satisfaction (Fine & Nevo, 2008). Cafeteria work takes little skill and may be categorized as "rarely glamorous, usually repetitive, and often physically taxing" (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998, p. 296).

**Significance of the study to leadership.** Unemployment receives much attention, but underemployment is largely ignored. Researchers have yet to investigate fully the economic and emotional problems associated with underemployment for educated individuals working in jobs that require less education. These workers are holding positions offering low wages, few benefits, few working hours, and less job security than jobs previously available (Newman, 1988).

One of the most important items for human resources departments and hospitality managers to determine is information regarding employees' validated measures of their own level of job satisfaction (Roznowski & Hulin, 1992). Enz (2001) suggested that one

of the major issues in the hospitality industry is the care and motivation of workers, which will help them believe that they are valued in their jobs. Workers in the hospitality industry represent the only sustainable competitive advantage for many hospitality organizations (DiPietro, 2008). Increasing organizational commitment is essential to the success of hospitality organizations because it contributes to lowering turnover and helps increase employee retention and performance (Dermody, Young, & Taylor, 2004).

Schneider (1978) attributed the person-job fit to the application of personnel selection strategies to analyze the job, define ability requirements, and seek to hire the person with abilities that match the position. Despite knowledge about behavioral or attitudinal effects of overqualification, little is known about job performance as it pertains to overqualification. Existing research is atheoretical and includes data sets to document relationships in underemployment (Feldman, 1996) or provides mixed conclusions with many limitations on the phenomenon of overqualification that is difficult to assess (Fine & Nevo, 2007).

Many layers exist in the phenomenon of overqualification. King and Hautaluoma (1987) found that the performance of overeducated city and government workers was not significantly different from the performance of more or adequately educated individuals. Ariss and Timmins (1989) and Schmidt and Hunter (1998) found no direct relationship between level of education and job performance. Feldman (1996) recommended future research be conducted to examine economic factors, job characteristics, career history variables, job search strategies, and demographic variables involved in overqualification.

For research on the topic of underemployment to advance, the theoretical reasons behind underemployment need to be studied with large and diverse samples (Feldman,

1996). Future researchers must investigate the influence of short-term (wages and moods) and long-term (general feelings of deprivation and mental health) factors. Such studies can increase researchers' opportunities to examine the impact of underemployment on spouses, children, and friends of the underemployed (Feldman, 1996). The current research study involved examining demographic variables associated with the overqualification of cafeteria workers. Previous studies on overqualification (Feldman, 1996) have shown that women working in cafeterias in the Northern Virginia area, although possibly overqualified, may find enjoyment and satisfaction on the job if empowered to utilize the skills, education, or experiences that they have gained in previous positions.

Hiring managers and supervisors of overqualified employees need to understand the dynamics involved in having more skills that are needed for the position obtained to improve organizational effectiveness and productivity and to decrease organizational turnover. The recommendations from the current study inform policy and help improve practice in hospitality organizations. When job role complexities increase, the phenomenon of overqualification will slowly decrease (Fine & Nevo, 2007). Hiring managers may still hire people overqualified to work in some areas, but they generally prefer to hire people who are adequately suited for the job rather than people who are overqualified or underqualified (Maynard & Hakel, 1999). This research will allow hospitality organizations to develop normative expectations about appropriate behaviors and skill-sets, reducing the negative variations in the types of individuals hired and the attitudes permitted in the organization (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982).

Researchers of the overqualification phenomenon have identified two forms of fit that may be important to individuals making the hiring decisions in organizations: person-job fit or person-organization fit. Person-job fit describes how well the applicant matches the specific requirements for the job. Person-organization fit describes the match between the person and broader organizational attributes (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Researchers have identified the two types of fit as avenues for hiring the right candidates for a job, but hiring managers are not making good use of this information by differentiating between the two concepts. The research on the type of fit valuable to predicting hiring outcomes is inconclusive (Kristoff-Brown, 2000; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999).

Many positive outcomes at the job and at the organization levels follow the recruitment and hiring workers with a good fit. The person-job fit is achieved when the person meets the demands of the job and when the job fulfills the needs of the individual (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Person-organization fit is achieved when an underlying similarity exists between the person and the organization (Kristoff, 1996). Recruiters often hire applicants who share organizational values and show the ability to assimilate in the organization's culture. An increase in cultural strength is linked to positive organizational performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

Little is known about how applicant characteristics indicate person-job fit or person-organization fit (Kristoff-Brown, 2000), making more research necessary to understand how hiring managers can use research findings to assess and hire the right applicants for specific positions, especially in the hospitality industry. French, Caplan, and Harrison (1982) explained the person-environment fit model and stated that strain

results from a discrepancy between characteristics of the work environment and individual characteristics. A good fit reduces workers' personal strain. According to Warr (1987), the more people can use their skills on the job, the better the person-environment fit. The inability for people to use their skills and abilities on the job is a possible source of stress (Warr, 1987).

### **Nature of the Study**

The qualitative approach was appropriate for the current study whose purpose was to find answers to questions, collect evidence, and produce discoveries applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). According to Mack et al. (2005), qualitative research facilitates understanding a problem or phenomenon from the perspective of the research population and understanding the values, opinions, and behaviors of research participants. The phenomenological design was appropriate to interview the participants concerning their lived experiences and obtaining their perspectives about overqualification K-12 cafeteria jobs (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The topic of overqualification is complex, involving many dimensions and layers. The overall goal of the current research was to examine and expose the deep intricacies of overqualification in the workplace, specifically for women working in K-12 cafeterias in Northern Virginia. Little is known about the experiences of women working in the K-12 sector of hospitality.

This research was designed to target the unknown and derive ideas to explore the topic and develop ideas for further research. A hermeneutical design was appropriate to understand the meaning (Neuman, 2003) of overqualification for women working in

positions in which they perceive they are overqualified. This research project was an examination of the meaning embedded in the responses obtained during the interview process. A deeper understanding was developed to describe how each of the parts relates to the whole (Neuman, 2003).

The selection of the qualitative phenomenological, hermeneutical approach enabled suitable exploration into people's perspectives, feelings, and understandings of the phenomenon affecting their lives. Interviews and textual descriptions provided access to thought processes of subjects concerning the common issue impacting their lives. The approach helped draw focus on emotions, opinions, values, and behaviors. The interviews generated data describing personal behaviors, work histories, education, skills, career experiences, marital situations, and familial obligations.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of the qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study was to explore the overqualification of female hospitality employees working in K-12 dining departments in Northern Virginia. The identification of the general research problem and questions about the phenomenon of overqualification led to the development of an appropriate area for research and focused research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

- RQ 1. What is the level of engagement experienced by overqualified workers?
- RQ 2. How does overqualification affect job longevity?
- RQ 3. What is the meaning of overqualification in the hospitality industry?

## **Theoretical Framework**

**McGregor and Herzberg.** McGregor (2006) theorized about leadership views concerning worker attitudes that workers belong to two types, the theory X workers and the theory Y workers. According to Powers and Barrows (2006), theory X workers do not like to work and must be controlled through threats of punishment, and theory Y workers are self-directed and enjoy their work. McGregor's theory applies to the hospitality industry because the work lacks glamour and is tedious.

According to Lim (2008), hospitality employees are a unique group of workers because they are paid low wages but are among employees who work the hardest in the service sectors. Low wages, long hours, and difficult work leads to job dissatisfaction (Lim, 2008; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2003). The industry is known for employing individuals who need direction, guidance, and structure (Hersey et al., 2000). Because of the nature of the work for hospitality workers, human resources managers should seek to hire theory Y workers.

According to Herzberg (1966), job satisfaction is based on physical needs and psychological needs. Physical needs help avoid pain and discomfort, and psychological needs help people strive to grow in knowledge and achievement while working in a specific position. Employees can be both satisfied and dissatisfied with different areas of the same position (Herzberg, Mausner, & Syderman, 1959).

McGregor's (2006) theory and Herzberg's (1966) theory were applicable as theoretical framework for the current research project. Based on these theories, human resources or hiring managers can hire workers with a good fit for hospitality positions, especially women who seek and are hired in positions for which they are more than

qualified. Positions must meet certain physical and psychological needs, especially for workers who have more skills, abilities, or education than required for the job. The current research was important for the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry because the findings indicate means exist to close the gap between overqualification and expectations and duties of jobs in K-12 school cafeterias. The findings of the study offer an avenue to decrease the high rates of turnover, mismatch, and frustration experienced in the K-12 dining segment of the hospitality industry.

**Robert Frank—Differential overqualification.** Robert Frank developed the theory of differentiated overqualification (Buchel & Battu, 2003; Frank, 1978). Frank surmised that married women working in small labor markets have a higher probability of working in positions for which they are overqualified (Buchel & Battu, 2003; Frank, 1978). Women search for and accept positions for which they are overqualified when they take a secondary role to their husbands (Buchel & Battu, 2003).

When husbands and their wives conduct a job search, wives tend to become underemployed because they make their job search contingent on whether their husband's search is fulfilled (Buchel & Battu, 2003). The majority of cafeteria workers are women who have chosen to work in local K-12 cafeterias (Covelli, 2011). Cafeteria positions awards these women the opportunity to continue to take care of home life while sharing in the financial responsibilities of the household (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998).

Cafeteria work is often taxing and unglamorous, so leaders need to focus on strategies to increase the chances that the behaviors of theory Y workers are increased in hospitality work settings (McGregor, 2006). Herzberg's (1966) theory concerning job satisfaction indicates that, when the physical and psychological needs of overqualified

workers are met, organizational effectiveness and achievement increase. The outcomes of the research provide strategies for human resources and hospitality managers to increase job satisfaction and lessen turnover for this segment of workers.

### **Definition of Terms**

Semantics pertains to the meaning of words, and most words have more than one meaning. Word meanings fulfill differing functions based on the context in which the words are used (Kurdevatykh & Tan, 2008). Pinker (2000) asserted, “Language comprises a mental dictionary of memorized words and a mental grammar of creative rules” (p. 6). The following are the definition of terms used in this study:

**Empowerment.** Empowerment is the extent to which employees feel their managers allow them to use their own initiative and judgment in performing their jobs (Gill et al., 2011).

**Job engagement.** Rich, Lepine, and Crawford (2010) described job engagement as the investments of an individual’s complete self into a role. Job engagement is “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74).

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction is the response of an individual to the conditions of work based on perceptions shaped by different interpretations of objective differences in work conditions (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Job satisfaction is a useful indicator of the quality of one’s experience in the work role (Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983). Job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive state resulting from ideas about the job or job experience (Locke, 1976).

**Overeducation.** According to McGuinness (2006), overeducation occurs when an individual pursues higher education and many other people make the same decision. The competition moves from higher education to the job market, making it difficult to find a fitting job (McGuinness, 2006).

**Overqualification.** Overqualification is a situation in which a lesser quality of employment is gained compared to some job standard or a unique situation of inadequate unemployment (Feldman, 1996).

**Perceived cognitive overqualification.** Perceived cognitive overqualification is the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to possess more than the skills, education, or experiences required as stated in the job qualifications (Khan & Morrow, 1991).

**Retention.** Retention pertains to factors that contribute to an employee's decision to remain in a particular position. Retention is a critical element in an organizational leader's approach to increase workplace productivity by developing improved processes for attracting, developing, retaining, and utilizing people with the required skills and aptitude to meet current and future business needs (Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009; Lockwood, 2006).

**School food service workers.** School food service workers include a director of food services, cafeteria managers, dietitians, cooks, servers, cashiers, and dish washers (School Nutrition Association [SNA], 2012). Food service workers prepare and serve food, clean, operate cash registers, plan menus regulated by the state and federal governments, and serve healthy meals to school children according to Brown (2012). No higher education is required of food service workers if they do not work in managerial or

leadership capacities. Advancement opportunities are limited unless promoted to managerial or supervisory positions (Urbauer, 2012).

**Turnover.** Turnover refers to an employees' mental consideration or behavioral intention to quit their current job within a year (Jackofsky & Slocum, 1987).

**Underemployment.** Underemployment refers to holding a job that is inferior or of low quality, relative to some standard (Feldman, 1996). Feldman suggested that underemployment includes five dimensions: (a) more education than required by the job; (b) more experience than required by the job; (c) involuntary employment in a field outside of area of education; (d) involuntary employment in part-time, temporary, or intermittent work; and (e) low pay relative to previous job or to others with similar education or experience. Dooley and Prause (2004) defined underemployment as any type of insufficient employment situation or lack of employment. For the current study, the words underemployment, overqualification, and overeducation were used interchangeably to describe the phenomenon examined through the participants' experiences.

### **Assumptions**

According to Covelli (2011), many of the workers employed in the K-12 dining sector are women working part-time who have chosen to work in these positions based on familial obligations. Their job searches became secondary to their husband's (Covelli, 2011). The study was based on several assumptions concerning women working in part-time K-12 dining positions. The first assumption was that the phenomenon being studied was researchable because many K-12 cafeteria workers in Northern Virginia are women who accepted such positions because of the convenient schedule, their familial

obligations, and their secondary job-search role contingent to their husband's search for employment. The second assumption was that many of these women have more skills, abilities, education, or experiences than required for the positions they hold as cafeteria workers. Frank surmised that married women working in small labor markets have a higher probability of working in positions for which they are overqualified (Buchel & Battu, 2003; Frank, 1978). Women search for and accept positions for which they are overqualified when they take a secondary role to their husbands (Buchel & Battu, 2003).

Another assumption was that women are working in these positions because of their obligations to their family and that many of them have husbands employed in professional jobs or in positions in which they are more closely qualified. An assumption was that women have specific feelings about applying for and accepting positions based on a secondary job search contingent to their husband finding a position in line with his qualifications. A final assumption was that participants would discuss their feelings of overqualification openly and candidly. As discussed in the next section, the scope and limitations of the study influenced the assumptions of the study and further highlighted the need for research in the area of women and overqualification in the hospitality industry.

### **Scope and Limitations**

Geographically and in terms of sources of data, the scope of the study consisted of 20 married women working as cafeteria workers in various school divisions in the Northern Virginia area. The selection of women participants was based on the purposive sampling strategy. According to Mack et al. (2005), purposeful sampling is based on a theoretical situation in which participants are preselected based on prerequisite criteria

relevant to the research questions. To qualify for participation in the current study, the women had to (a) live in Northern Virginia; (b) be married women and have at least one child living in the home; (c) to work as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area; (d) have an education, skills, or experiences that they perceived qualified them to work in jobs other than service in a school cafeteria.

The twenty women in the sample participated in in-depth, audio-recorded interviews. To ensure accuracy, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Based on an open-ended questions interview protocol (Christensen, Burke-Johnson, & Turner, 2011), the research participants shared their lived experiences of overqualification relating to working as cafeteria workers. The phenomenological interview was an opportunity for the participants to discuss their everyday experiences relating to the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The interview protocol was similar to a questionnaire and was written like a script (see Appendix E) so that the questions could be read and the participants' responses recorded (Christensen et al., 2011). The interviews were semi-structured (Shank, 2006), face-to-face (Christensen et al., 2011), and conducted at the participants' places of employment as permitted by their supervisors. The study was limited to the honesty and the ability of the participants to be candid (Shank, 2006).

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Method and Design**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the collection and interpretation of qualitative data are interpretive and inherently subjective. Denzin and Lincoln viewed interpretation as an art and a form of storytelling. Researchers first interpret the material obtained through research and data collection and complete the process through retelling

the story to others. Interpretation introduces a weakness in qualitative research that is derived from ideologies, political views, morals, and personal views. Phenomenological research is based on other weaknesses such as socially constructed realities, local generalizations, interpretive resources, stocks of knowledge, intersubjectivity, practical reasoning, and ordinary talk (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To circumvent this weakness, the interviewer created a script (see Appendix E) so that each participant was asked the same set of questions. Participants were given the opportunity to speak openly and candidly about their lived experiences. Verbatim responses were recorded (see Appendices I, J, K, L, and M).

Other errors or weaknesses such as asking bad questions can occur while conducting qualitative research. Asking bad questions is a sign of bad judgment. Questions come from research and previous knowledge on the topic. According to Shank (2006), a bad question can indicate a lack of knowledge or awareness of the topic, which is a result of not conducting proper research before collecting data. To circumvent this weakness, the questions were developed based on the three research questions created for this study. The interview questions were written like a script and each participant responded to the same set of questions.

Another indication of poor preparation is using a research question already asked in previous research. The phrasing of the research question might be faulty. The research question can be ambiguous, preventing appropriate conclusions to the study (Shank, 2006). Because little research has been conducted using K-12 cafeteria workers as study participants, this weakness was easily avoided. The research questions have not been asked in relation to hospitality workers in this segment of the industry.

A third area of weakness in qualitative research pertains to collecting data in a rigid or structured manner. Qualitative research requires that researchers be open to any change or new knowledge emerging during data collection. Qualitative researchers must be flexible and their activities fluid. Some control is permitted during interviews to ensure the conversations remains on topic. Adherence to a research plan is important for qualitative researchers, but flexibility will allow balance and will yield positive research outcomes (Shank, 2006). Although, the questions were written as a script, the research remained open. New nodes emerged as new information was uncovered through interpretation of the texts. Participants were also given the opportunity to speak openly. The interviews ranged between 15 minutes and 45 minutes in length. The transcripts ranged between four and eight pages for each interview.

A fourth possible weakness in qualitative research is failing to identify breakthroughs, new insights, discoveries, and arguments not identified in previous literature. Qualitative researchers must have the courage to conduct studies that others may challenge in order to advance (Shank, 2006). Other weaknesses of qualitative research include (a) the data may be based on participants' personal categories of meaning, (b) the knowledge produced may not apply to other people or settings, (c) qualitative research may carry less credibility for many administrators and commissioners of programs, (d) data collection may take longer than in quantitative research, (e) data analysis is time consuming, and (f) researchers' biases and idiosyncrasies can easily influence the results (University of South Alabama, 2011). Choosing to research the lived experiences of a small segment in the hospitality industry created a breakthrough, new insights, and new discoveries applicable to other segments of the industry. The

segment, although small, is relatable to not only women working in the hospitality industry, but also women working in a wide variety of industries including those outside of the service sectors. The recommendations are applicable to all industries.

Aside from the challenges described, qualitative research provides methods to obtain rich data unavailable through quantitative methods. Qualitative research facilitates the study of a limited number of cases in great depth and the description of complex phenomena (University of South Alabama, 2011). The qualitative approach includes methods that provide an understanding of people's personal experiences of the target phenomenon through a dynamic research process. Qualitative research allows researchers to be responsive to changes that occur during the study by shifting the focus of the study as a result of a change, using an important case to vividly demonstrate the phenomenon, and determining the causes of a particular event (University of South Alabama, 2011).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is most appropriate for asking *what* or *how* questions pertaining to issues of human concern and for predicting outcomes (Leonard, 1984). Qualitative research is expensive, requires an emotional investment, and is time consuming to complete in-depth data collection and analysis. Researchers and participants must put aside time to participate in a hermeneutical study (Whitehead, 2004).

## **Summary**

Chapter 1 included an introduction to the employment problem of overqualification in the hospitality industry. In the United States, at least one in five workers experiences underemployment or overqualification, and a higher percentage of

women (22%) than men (16%) are underemployed (Jacobe, 2011). The three industries with the largest numbers of overqualified workers are service industries, with K-12 dining representing a segment of the service industry of hospitality (Green & McIntosh, 2007). The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) when compared to other industries (Dolan Technologies Corp., 2010).

The specific problem is that underemployed women hospitality workers are dissatisfied with the low level of skill necessary to perform their jobs. Low-skilled service jobs offer limited opportunities for progression and lead to recruitment and retention problems for hospitality employers (Lindsay, 2005). Recruitment and retention problems lead to decreased organizational efficiency in the hospitality industry (Moncarz et al., 2009).

The qualitative, phenomenological design supported the goal of this research project to understand the lived experiences of women (Creswell, 2002) working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments. The study findings include leadership strategies that can alleviate feelings of deprivation for women who feel underemployed. The framework for the study included examining the theoretical reasons for underemployment by studying a more diverse sample than past researchers (Feldman, 1996).

Data collection, supporting this framework, included interviews of 20 married women working as cafeteria workers in the Northern Virginia area. The women were purposefully chosen to be a part of the study by meeting certain prerequisite qualifications. The interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed and subjected to analysis before final interpretations and recommendations.

The hermeneutical design produced discoveries not previously determined about the sample population and applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of this study. The topic of overqualification is complex with many dimensions and layers. The current research provided descriptions of the deep intricacies of overqualification for women working in K-12 cafeterias in Northern Virginia.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the overqualification of women hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments. The current chapter includes the results of searches in literature pertaining to the study topic and the specific phenomenon of overqualification. The review of the literature provided confirmation of the need for new research on perceived overqualification of women working in the K-12 segment of hospitality.

Approximately 202 research documents, journals, and scholarly books were utilized through the University of Phoenix electronic library. Internet search engines EBSCOHost and ProQuest generated material and references noted in research documents and through Internet online searches. Scholarly books and articles were requested from the University of Phoenix through the *Request a Document* and the Interlibrary Loan services. The key words used included *overqualification*, *underemployment*, *overeducation*, *hospitality*, *women in hospitality*, *retention*, *turnover*, *empowerment*, *satisfaction*, and *women in the workforce*.

### Gap in Literature

The literature included in this chapter was published in the past several decades. The majority of the research on workers who are overqualified, underemployed, and overeducated was conducted during the 1970s and 1980s when researchers focused on understanding negative personnel behaviors in such workers (Frank, 1978). The research was published in the past several decades, but is germinal to this study. Leadership theories reflect several approaches to leadership and management, such as situational, contingency, transactional, and transformational (Eliyana, 2010; Humphreys, Zhao,

Ingram, Gladstone, & Basham, 2010; Rice & Kastenbaum, 1983). Although relevant to leadership and management, the theories do not address the negative implications of being overqualified, underemployed, and overeducated on the workforce. Understanding and examining underemployment for women who work in the K-12 dining segment of hospitality as a secondary job to their husband's employment can explain the women's feelings of deprivation and low retention rates.

### **Historic Overview**

Since the early 1980s, relationships between workers and employers in the manufacturing and service industries have changed. Many service industry positions do not offer high level, adequate-paying jobs. The number of high-level jobs available in the service industries is insufficient to meet the needs of highly skilled, educated, or experienced personnel (Mottaz, 1984; Turner & Shera, 2005).

For the first time in history, education levels have increased at a faster rate than the demand for an educated service workforce (Blomme, van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010a; Mottaz, 1984). Workers accept less than optimal employment. For women, such choices mean accepting positions that provide flexibility. Many women are in dual-career family situations, so their job search is contingent on their spouse's search for employment (Blomme et al., 2010b; Feldman, 1996). In the United States, the workforce of today includes more women, more younger workers, and more minorities than ever before. People in these groups wish to find a position in which they can use their education, skills, and experience (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Rok, 2012).

## **The Phenomenon of Underemployment**

The literature includes research on unemployment, but underemployment is largely ignored. Researchers have yet to study the economic and emotional problems associated with underemployment. Information is lacking about underemployment for individuals working in jobs that require less education than what they have obtained. These workers are holding positions offering low wages, few benefits, few working hours, and less job security than previous jobs they have held (Newman, 1988; Richardson, 2008; Rok, 2012).

The majority of the research on workers who are overqualified, underemployed, and overeducated was conducted during the 1970s and 1980s when researchers focused on understanding negative personnel behaviors in such workers (Frank, 1978). The research was published in the last several decades and is germinal to this study. In the past, researchers have looked at underemployment in different ways. Quinn and Baldi De Mandilovitch (1975) used data to determine situations of underemployment by looking at the years of education required by the job and an individual's formal education. Khan and Morrow (1991) measured relative education by comparing workers' self-reports to the perceived amount of education needed to satisfy the minimum qualifications for their current jobs. Khan and Morrow used Likert scales to measure levels of underemployment.

Feldman, Doerpinghaus, and Turnley (1994) surveyed part-time and temporary workers to determine whether the workers utilized previous education and work experience in their current jobs. According to Feldman (1996), one of the dimensions of underemployment is whether the person possesses more work skills and experience than

the job requires. The focus of the current research was on formal education in relationship to the job and on expanded dimensions of perceived skills, experience, and education.

Underemployment correlates with many negative outcomes for the organization and for the individual obtaining the job. Some negative outcomes include poor job attitudes, a decrease in job satisfaction, a decrease in organizational commitment, poor physical and psychological health, lower job performance and organizational citizenship, and withdrawal behavior including absenteeism and turnover (Feldman, 1990, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 2000). Workers who perceive their employment is inadequate may feel disillusioned, frustrated with the lack of career opportunities, and unfulfilled because of underutilization of skills (Borgen et al., 1988; Burris, 1983).

Job mismatch and underemployment (Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Khan & Morrow, 1991), perceived or actual mismatch between education levels and current position (Burris, 1983; Saks & Ashforth, 1997), part-time or temporary work (De Witte & Lagrou, 1990), and pay differences between previous position and current position (Blomme et al., 2010a; Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002; Rok, 2012) lead to perceptions of skill underutilization. Workers who perceive that they are overqualified report greater intention to leave their jobs and often engage in more job search behaviors than individuals who believe their employment is adequate (Blomme et al., 2010a; Burris, 1983; Feldman & Turnley, 1995). Workers who experience a lack of job growth feel trapped and think that few opportunities for advancement exist. A worker harboring feelings of no growth and skill underutilization may experience long-term negative

personal consequences and cause negative organizational problems (Johnson, Morrow, & Johnson, 2002; Self & Dewald, 2011).

A substantial link exists between individual attitudes and behaviors concerning underemployment and organizational success and effectiveness (Currall, Towler, Judge, & Khon, 2005; Self & Dewald, 2011). People's perception of reality drives their reactions to certain situations. Khan and Morrow (1991) examined subjective and objective forms of overqualification and found that feelings of underemployment are strongly associated with job satisfaction. Underemployment is also linked to low psychological well-being, mental health issues, depression, and low self-esteem (Feather & O'Brien, 1986; Mossakowski, 2009).

Underemployed workers express feelings of frustration about the inability to grow and advance in their current positions (Burriss, 1983; Mossakowski, 2009). Workers need to find careers consistent with their work values and preferences, which increases positive organizational outcomes. A good person-job fit leads to congruence between the persons and their environment and to healthy employee-employer relationships, increasing positive organizational outcomes (Anvari, Amin, & Seliman, 2010; Chatman, 1989; DiPietro & Milman, 2004; Edwards, 1991; Holland, 1985; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999).

### **Part-time Work and Underemployment**

One-quarter of the North American workforce is composed of part-time, temporary, and intermittent workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; Kim et al., 2011). The numbers of part-time, temporary, and intermittent jobs are expected to increase because newly created jobs will be of a part-time or temporary nature (Gallagher, 2002).

Not all people working part-time or temporarily should be considered underemployed. Underemployment is present only when the persons would prefer a different work arrangement because of their perceived status. The mismatch between actual work and preferred work creates a situation of involuntary underemployment (Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Porket, 1989).

### **Perceived Cognitive Overqualification**

Overqualification is considered part of broader definitions pertaining to the phenomena of over-education, over-experience, skill underutilization, and underemployment. The meaning of overqualification is a situation in which a lesser quality of employment is gained compared to a job standard or a unique situation of inadequate employment (Feldman, 1996). Overqualification describes a job mismatch in education, experience, or skills needed to perform a particular job (Fine & Nevo, 2008). Overqualification is difficult to measure objectively; a more suitable way to describe the phenomenon is by stating rather that it is perceived cognitive overqualification (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Khan & Morrow, 1991). According to Khan and Morrow (1991), perceived overqualification is the degree to which individuals perceive they possess more than the skills, education, or experiences required as stated in the job qualifications.

The perception of overqualification comes from personal assumptions that skills, education, and experience exceed what a worker believes are normal job requirements. The perception of overqualification may be external for workers who feel they have unfulfilled expectations. Overqualified workers feel disadvantaged because they must work alongside people they feel are more qualified to perform the essential tasks aligned with the position (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

According to G. J. Johnson and Johnson (2000), perceived job mismatch is significantly correlated with satisfaction and with promotion, but education alone is not a significant predictor of job satisfaction. G. J. Johnson and Johnson (2000) found that the effects of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction include feelings of deprivation that stem from feelings of unfulfilled expectations. In many situations, overqualified individuals may be considered ill-suited for a particular job and are overlooked for the job because of their overqualified status (Fine & Nevo, 2008). In increasingly hard economic times, people are being hired for positions for which they have more skills, experience, or education necessary to perform the essential duties of the job (Bruno, 2006). A consequence of overqualification is job dissatisfaction based on feelings of deficiency in the job or jobs being performed (Fine & Nevo, 2008).

### **Overqualification and Job Satisfaction**

Perceived overqualification has a negative effect on job satisfaction (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). In the United States, level of education is closely tied to type of occupation (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Perceived overqualification is associated with feelings of deprivation because of job mismatch. People who have more education than required for the job they have been hired to do feel that they lack opportunities to use their skills and increase their potential for personal and professional growth (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Feelings of deprivation come from harnessing feelings of frustrated expectations.

Other factors that contribute to feelings of deprivation include social comparison in which employees compare their work or behavior to the work of other individuals doing the same job. Workers use the knowledge they have concerning their own

perceived similarities, working proximity, and other relevant information to evaluate themselves in terms of what they are able to offer the organization (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978; Staw & Salancik, 1977). Borgen et al. (1988) suggested that underemployed workers often believe that working hard in inferior jobs is pointless. Individuals may internally form comparisons by looking at skills, abilities, or education needed for other jobs in the organization.

### **Job Dissatisfaction**

Employees who believe they are overqualified report low job attitudes and low levels of job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2002; Maynard et al., 2006; Verhaest & Omev, 2006). These feelings involve being dissatisfied with wages, responsibilities, challenges, and career advancement opportunities (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Khan & Morrow, 1991). Perceived overqualification leaves workers feeling deprived because they develop high expectations concerning their status as they go through the education system and build their skills, knowledge, and abilities (Vaisey, 2006). When workers feel that they are working in a position beneath their level of skills, knowledge, or abilities, they feel a sense of status deprivation and low job satisfaction (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009).

Feldman and Weitz (1991) found that underemployed individuals lose interest in their work and develop negative attitudes toward their work. They develop feelings of *careerism* or *careerist orientation* toward work (Rousseau, 1990). According to Rousseau, people may become frustrated because they have not obtained a job in which they can fully utilize their skills. They become cynical about their job performance and their ability to advance within the organization.

Significant evidence has not been found to support the theory that overqualification and job satisfaction are unquestionably related. King and Hautaluoma (1987) established that the overall job performance of overeducated workers is not significantly different from the performance of less educated or adequately educated workers. Other scholars argue that cognitive ability is considered a strong predictor of job performance and satisfaction (Gottfredson, 1997).

### **Empowerment and Job Satisfaction**

Perceptions of overqualification are related to job satisfaction only when workers report low levels of empowerment. Increased empowerment decreases negative feelings regarding overqualification, intentions to remain on the job, and turnover (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Women who believe they are overqualified to do a job may have feelings of dissatisfaction. Overqualification occurs more often in individuals belonging to minority groups, like women (Feldman, 1996).

Women working as cafeteria workers may fit the description of overqualification. The work lacks stimulation and is not considered challenging, arousing, or intrinsically rewarding enough to motivate feelings of job satisfaction (Fine & Nevo, 2008). Cafeteria work takes little skill and may be categorized as “rarely glamorous, usually repetitive, and often physically taxing” (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998, p. 296).

Variety, interest, challenge, status, autonomy, flow, and assigned tasks influence satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Satisfaction with the nature of the job includes job challenge, autonomy, variety, and scope. These factors predict not only job satisfaction but also other important outcomes, such as turnover, in the hospitality industry (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Parisi & Weiner, 1999; Weiner, 2000).

Satisfaction and performance are enhanced when individuals chooses an occupation compatible with their skills or abilities (Holland, 1985). Some workers are satisfied with different aspects of the same job. They may indicate that they are satisfied with the salary they receive but dissatisfied with the quality of supervision. Other areas of the job are associated with satisfaction like pay, promotion, opportunities, benefits, coworkers, supervision, company policies, and the actual work being performed (Taber & Alliger, 1995).

### **The Role of Women in the Workplace**

In the latter part of the 20th century, through the mid 1990s, women have increased their roles in the workplace and have gained social power, political power, and economic power. Women's participation in the workforce has been a source of empowerment in areas where women have taken on roles in traditional male jobs (Council on Women and Girls, n.d.; Coventry & Morrissey, 1998). Most women find work in traditional female jobs, including jobs in the service sectors (Eitzen & Baca-Zinn, 1989). Women are increasing their roles in the job market, but their main focus continues to be the family, family networks, church groups, and other familial duties (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998; Gray, 1993; Roby & Uttal, 1993). Women spend more time in household activities, caring for their families, and despite gains in the labor market, women working in traditionally female occupations still earn less than men (Council on Women and Girls, n.d.).

For many of these reasons, women have experienced more downward mobility in the United States than men (Newman, 1988). Women often work in positions that do not require the amount of education they possess because they often do not have the work

experience, having given priority to their familial obligations (Weitzman, 1985). Many women want to be home in the evenings to supervise their children (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998). Women often accept lower wages than men so they can balance their job and their familial obligations (Rosen, 1987).

Many women, having no higher education, have taken school cafeteria positions because the jobs are secure and offer low-cost health insurance (Silver & Goldscheider, 1994). Women are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than white men even if economic conditions are favorable (Gordon, 1982). Jobs with flexibility give women an increased amount of time to spend on domestic work. Part week, part shift, and shift work increases the amount of time women can spend at home (Silver & Goldscheider, 1994). Because women continue to be responsible for the majority of the work at home, jobs in a school cafeteria environment give them the opportunity to work, contribute to household expenses, and have the time they need at home.

In the United States, women have earned two thirds less than men within the past few decades. Many researchers have tried to understand the reasons associated with the differences in pay by relating the differences to productivity and discrimination (Frank, 1978). Women who work inside and outside of the home also experience a net increase in the number of hours worked each day. When women choose to work outside of the home, the contribution of the husband to housework remains insignificant (Hartmann, 1981).

When women work outside of the home, they often experience family and employment conflicts. Women experience strain from assuming extra-familial roles by attempting to fulfill two sets of obligations (Glazer & Waehrer, 1977; Mason, Czajka, &

Arber, 1976; Stryker & Macke, 1978). When women work outside of the home, they have two jobs, one at home and the other at their place of employment (Holmstrom, 1972; Walker, 1977).

According to Hall and Gordon (1973), married women working outside of the home feel greater interrole conflict and strain than women who work primarily inside the home. Many women have reported feeling strain in a dual-role situation, but increased family income is a positive net effect for working outside of the home. Men's work is valued over women's work, so women who decide to return to school late in life are examples of women challenging underemployment and the traditional ideals of domesticity.

When women take on more roles, they are attempting to gain equal access, equality, and opportunity. Women's participation in the workforce and in education is an avenue to improving their lives (Sieber, 1974). Women who participate in the workforce as a way to improve their lives are more likely to be overeducated because they require more education to obtain the same job as a male counterpart (McGoldrick & Robst, 2001).

Most women in the labor force are married, but their husbands tend to work more hours and have more education, training, or experience. When husbands and wives search for employment, they often search in the same geographic area. The husband typically accepts the best or more desirable position, and the wife compromises and accepts something less than she is qualified to do. Husbands tend not to make as many compromises as their wives concerning their careers (Frank, 1978).

A wife takes a secondary role and accompanies her husband by locating to a geographic area that minimizes his overqualification risks but increases hers. Family mobility is a joint decision, but the wife taking the secondary role relocates to benefit the primary income earner. This choice leads to a constrained job search for the women (Frank, 1978; McGoldrick & Robst, 2001). Women put themselves in a position in which they must do the best they can in their job search.

Overqualification, experienced by women, is determined by the number of job vacancies in their geographic area. For this reason, single mothers tend to earn more than their married counterparts because the single mother's job search is not secondary to a husband's search (Frank, 1978). Buchel and Battu (2003) found evidence that married women living in rural areas are more likely to be overqualified. Women are tied to an area with little job opportunities based on their familial status (Buchel & Battu, 2003).

The state of being overqualified has a degree of permanence for many women (Green & McIntosh, 2007). Familial situations like the presence of a partner or children may prevent women from moving to accept the most appropriate job (Green et al., 2002). Male employees have higher overall job satisfaction, and highly qualified women are the least satisfied with their jobs (Rose, 2005).

### **The Most Important Benefits for Working Moms**

According to the Working Mother Research Institute (2011), mothers struggle with the decision to stay at home or go back to work after having a baby. Fifty-five percent of stay-at-home moms prefer to work, and 71% of mothers equate work with something to do just to earn a paycheck. Stay-at-home moms report feeling more frowned upon than working moms despite the fact that working moms report feeling

guilty about not keeping a clean house, spending little time with their children, spending too much time at work, and feeling judged by stay-at-home moms (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011).

Common complaints from working moms include (a) not having a clean house, (b) not having enough time with her partner, (c) not taking care of herself, and (d) not spending enough time with her kids. Stay-at-home moms feel judged about (a) not contributing to the finances of the family, (b) not using their education, and (c) not having a clean house (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011). Both working and stay-at-home mothers report that being a stay-at-home mom before children are school-aged is desirable and that working once the children enter school is important.

When returning to work, moms prefer to scale the hours back to a condensed day so they are at home when the children leave for school and are at home by the time the children return at the end of the school day (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011). The most important benefits for moms include (a) 57% flexible hours, (b) 51% ability to use sick leave to care for children, (c) 36% predictable work hours, (d) 24% availability of part-time work, (e) 23% paid maternity leave, (f) 22% subsidized health insurance, (g) 19% option to telecommute, (h) 17% access to child-care benefits, (i) 13% meaningful part-time work, and (j) 10% career support for working moms (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011).

Once a part of the labor force, moms report having specific needs concerning engagement in the workplace. Moms need to have confidence in their leadership and need to feel that they are treated fairly at work. Moms need to be able to trust the people they work with, and they have a desire to make friends at work. Moms need to feel that

they are needed in their positions and that they have a purpose. Finally, moms need to feel a sense of accomplishment when taking the time and effort needed to master their work (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011).

### **Organizational Turnover**

Negative attitudes about a job can result in departure from the job (Burriss, 1983; Johnson et al., 2002). Jackofsky and Slocum (1987) developed the concept of turnover or employee intention to quit. Job retention is positively correlated to organizational performance, and turnover decreases organizational performance (Beadles, Lowery, Petty, & Ezell, 2000; Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2002). Turnover is unfavorable to the success of organizations (Campion, 1991).

Turnover disrupts job performance when an employee intending to leave the organization remains for an extended amount of time. The employee becomes less efficient. The same is true when an experienced employee leaves an organization. Much time is lost during the replacement process (Shaw et al., 2002). Staff retention and high turnover are major problems for hospitality managers because of the negative impact on the bottom line of service organizations (Gill et al., 2011).

Intention to leave results in a worker leaving the organization and to high turnover. For service organizations, turnover causes high hiring and training costs. The productivity of the new employee may be lower than the productivity of the experienced employee who left the organization (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004; Shields & Price, 2002).

Some researchers suggested that organizational turnover can improve organizational performance. A benefit of turnover is that poor performing employees

leave (Price, 1989). Turnover is a serious issue for many organizations. Turnover is prevalent for all organizations at every level (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000).

The costs of turnover can be serious for organizations. American organizations spend \$11 billion each year as a result of turnover. The costs of turnover for American organizations include termination, advertising, recruitment, selection, and hiring (Mobley, 1982). Intangible costs of turnover include morale and disruption in organizational communications (Mobley, 1982; Upchurch, DiPietro, Curtis, & Hahm, 2010).

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are good predictors of workers' intentions to leave the organization (Allen & Griffeth, 2001; Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, & Sincich, 1993; Wasti, 2003). Job satisfaction derives from the organization's interest in the career growth of an employee and influences the employee's commitment to the organization. The result is a decrease in organizational turnover and increase in employee retention, job performance, and productivity (Rehman & Waheed, 2011).

### **Empowerment**

The following factors are involved in employees' decision to quit their present jobs: (a) low self-esteem (Bowen, 1982), (b) job insecurity (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989), (c) job dissatisfaction (Firth et al., 2004; Li, 1995), (d) lack of advancement opportunities, and (e) job stress (Firth et al., 2004). Empowering employees offers a way to increase their self-esteem and lower the possibility that the employees will develop the intention to leave the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Low levels of empowerment and low levels of retention lead to organizational performance problems.

Examples of organizational problems are poor quality of service, low productivity, and higher labor costs (Gill et al., 2011).

Perceptions of overqualification are related to job satisfaction when workers report low levels of empowerment. Increased empowerment decreases negative feelings regarding overqualification, intentions to remain on the job, and turnover (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). When workers are challenged and receive new work roles and assignments, they experience empowerment and develop positive attitudes (Warr, 1999). According to Simons and Enz (1995), hospitality workers noted that job security, good wages, and opportunities for advancement and development were the most important factors in their work.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to present a summary of literature pertaining to areas that contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of overqualification for women hospitality workers. The historic overview illustrated how hospitality organizations have not met the needs of highly skilled, educated, or experienced personnel because of the low level of skill required for service jobs coupled with the low level of pay (Mottaz, 1984). According to Mottaz (1984), education levels have increased at a faster rate than the demand for an educated service workforce, resulting in workers accepting positions for which they are overqualified. For women, this situation means accepting positions that provide flexibility. Many women working in part-time and flexible work situations are doing so because their job search was contingent on their spouse's search for employment and other familial obligations (Feldman, 1996).

Research indicates that people who are overqualified for a specific job may develop negative feelings about their work. Rousseau (1990) suggested that people may become frustrated because they have not obtained a job in which they can fully utilize their skills. This disparity has led to perceived cognitive overqualification.

Overqualification is a situation in which a lesser quality of employment is gained compared to a job standard or a unique situation of inadequate employment (Feldman, 1996). Perceived overqualification is the degree to which individuals perceive they possess more skills, education, or experiences than required as stated in the job description (Khan & Morrow, 1991). Perceived overqualification has a negative effect on job satisfaction (Johnson & Johnson, 2000), but workers finding careers consistent with work values and preferences or empowerment contribute to an overall increase in positive organizational outcomes (Chatman, 1989; Edwards, 1991; Holland, 1985; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999).

In the latter parts of the 20th century, women have increased their roles in the workplace (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998), but many women still spend more time on household and familial activities than men and often work in positions that do not require the amount of education, skills, or experience they possess (Newman, 1988). Underemployed women tend to be so even when economic conditions are favorable (Gordon, 1982).

The phenomenon of underemployment leads to turnover, which is disruptive to many organizations. Staff retention and high turnover are major problems for hospitality managers because of the negative impact on the bottom line of service organizations (Gill et al., 2011). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are good predictors of

workers' intentions to leave the organization (Allen & Griffeth, 2001; Jaros et al., 1993; Wasti, 2003).

Many factors contributing to employees' choice of leaving their jobs include job dissatisfaction and a lack of advancement opportunities (Firth et al., 2004; Li, 1995). Increased empowerment decreases negative feelings regarding overqualification, intention to remain on the job, and turnover (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Chapter 3 includes details of the research methodology used to gather data and answer the research questions.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study was to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in K-12 dining departments in Northern Virginia. The choice of phenomenological design was appropriate to fulfill the goal of the research, which was to obtain first-hand accounts of the overqualification experience of women working in K-12 cafeterias (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The hermeneutic approach facilitated understanding the meaning (Neuman, 2003) of overqualification for women working in positions for which they perceive they are overqualified. The main source of data was phenomenological interviews with 20 participants.

#### **Research Methodology**

The qualitative approach was appropriate for the current study whose purpose was to find answers to questions, collect evidence, and produce discoveries applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). According to Mack et al. (2005), qualitative research facilitates understanding a problem or phenomenon from the perspective of the research population and understanding the values, opinions, and behaviors of research participants. The phenomenological design was appropriate to interview the participants concerning their lived experiences and obtaining their perspectives about overqualification K-12 cafeteria jobs (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The topic of overqualification is complex, involving many dimensions and layers. The overall goal of the current research was to examine and expose the deep intricacies of overqualification in the workplace, specifically for women working in K-12 cafeterias

in Northern Virginia. Little is known about the experiences of women working in the K-12 sector of hospitality.

This research was designed to target the unknown and derive ideas to explore the topic and develop ideas for further research. A hermeneutical design was appropriate to understand the meaning (Neuman, 2003) of overqualification for women working in positions in which they perceive they are overqualified. This research project was an examination of the meaning embedded in the responses obtained during the interview process. A deeper understanding was developed to describe how each of the parts relates to the whole (Neuman, 2003).

Phenomenology is a means to access a person's perception of the meaning of an experience. A phenomenological study is suitable to explore people's perspectives, feelings, and understanding of a situation affecting their lives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Data in a qualitative study consist of textual descriptions of how people experience different situations. Interviews provide access to the human thought processes about a particular issue impacting the participants' lives, with a focus on emotions, opinions, values, and behaviors (Mack et al., 2005). In-depth interviews for the current study generated data describing personal behaviors, work histories, education, skills, career experiences, marital situations, and familial obligations.

Unique, separate descriptions of lived experiences provided a general understanding (Neuman, 2003) of overqualification in the workplace. Qualitative studies involve studying complex phenomena that occur in natural settings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The meaning of a phenomenon emerges through multiple perspectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The topic of overqualification is complex with many dimensions and

layers. The current study purpose was to access the intricacies of this complex phenomenon as experienced by women working in K-12 cafeterias in Northern Virginia.

### **Study Population and Sampling**

School nutrition employees are the core of every K-12 school division's dining program (SNA, 2011). These employees feed more than 30 million school students each school day and are responsible for ensuring the health and wellness of each student (SNA, 2011). School nutrition employees are tasked with the preparation and delivery of breakfasts, lunches, and snacks. They are responsible for carrying a heavy load in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry.

Although the work of service can be rewarding, the pay does not always equal the effort each worker puts forth every day. Dining employees in K-12 schools work hard and have a great responsibility, but some feel unappreciated and overqualified for the positions they hold (Nettles, Carr, Johnson, & Frederico, 2008). The recruitment strategy to create a sample of participants for the current study involved targeting K-12 workers who are married, have children, live in Northern Virginia, and are characterized as having more education, skills, or experience than required by their positions as K-12 cafeteria workers.

A recruitment strategy is a plan developed by researchers to identify participants for a study. The criterion for screening potential participants is identified in the recruitment strategy (Mack et al., 2005). Sampling is the main activity in the recruitment strategy. The type of sampling used for this research project was purposeful sampling.

Purposeful sampling is based on a theoretical situation in which participants are preselected based on prerequisite criteria relevant to the research questions (Mack et al.,

2005). For this research project, the participants needed to have met the following demographic-related criteria: (a) lived in Northern Virginia; (b) were married women and had at least one child living in the home; (c) worked as cafeteria workers in the Northern Virginia area; and (d) had education, skills, and experiences that they perceived qualified them to work in jobs other than school cafeteria dining. The specific demographic-related criteria were identified based on the common circumstances that women working in the K-12 dining environment share.

The participants recruited worked for K-12 school divisions in Northern Virginia. The first step was to obtain permission to interview the participants from school division human resource representatives. The human resource representatives received a letter to school divisions (see Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the study. School division human resource representatives were asked to sign a permission to use the premises form (see Appendix A). Once permission was obtained from school division human resource representatives, school nutrition directors and supervisors were contacted and introduced to the study with a letter to food service directors (see Appendix C).

The food service directors and supervisors (i.e., cafeteria managers) also received details about the purpose of the study and were asked if they agreed to identify workers they believed would fit the demographic-related prerequisites. The identified workers were asked to be a part of this research project and also to identify other workers who might qualify and be interested in the study. This approach to identifying and recruiting more participants is known as the snowball sampling method. Snowball or referral sampling occurs when participants provide the interviewer with the name of another potential participant (Mack et al., 2005).

## Research Questions

The purpose of the qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study was to explore the overqualification of women hospitality employees who work in K-12 dining departments in Northern Virginia. The research process consisted of identifying a general research problem, developing research questions about the phenomenon of interest, and formulating interview questions based on the insight obtained through preliminary research and review of literature (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The interview questions were appropriate to answering the research questions, to understanding the problem of overqualification in the hospitality industry, and to obtaining the purpose of this study. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. What is the level of engagement experienced by overqualified workers?

RQ2. How does overqualification affect job longevity?

RQ3. What is the meaning of overqualification in the hospitality industry?

Through purposeful and snowball sampling, 20 research participants were selected (Mack et al., 2005). The research sample consisted of participants who answered positively to the demographic-related prerequisites. The prerequisites identified individuals who had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

### Demographic-related Prerequisite Questions:

1. Do you live in Northern Virginia?
2. Are you married?
3. Do you have at least one child living in the home or one dependant under your care?

4. Do you have education, skills, or experience that you perceive qualify you to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria?

The research participants were interviewed on their lived experiences of overqualification relating to working as a cafeteria worker. Open-ended questions were asked as a part of the interview protocol (Christensen et al., 2011), but the participants had the opportunity to discuss openly their everyday experiences relating to the phenomenon of overqualification (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The interview protocol was similar to a questionnaire, and the interview was written like a script so that the interviewer could read the questions and record the participants' responses (Christensen et al., 2011). The interviews were semi-structured (Shank, 2006). The participants were interviewed face-to-face (Christensen et al., 2011) in their places of employment as permitted by their supervisors.

According to Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003), qualitative interviewers must learn how to phrase questions by avoiding closed questions, asking open questions, and generating dialogue and reflection. Interviewers must be skilled at dealing with unexpected answers or behaviors from interviewees. Interviewers must suppress their own feelings, actions, beliefs, or assumptions. Interviewers must be aware of any sensitive issue that may arise during the interview process. Finally, interviewers need to understand that the transcription process will be an arduous and time-consuming task (Roulston et al., 2003).

### **Interview Protocol**

According to Shank (2006), it is impossible to do good qualitative research without learning the correct ways to conduct an interview. An interview is simply a

conversation. Working on conversational skills enhances interviewing skills (Shank, 2006). The most important skills to hone are talking and listening. In addition to listening, the interviewer must build trust by reciprocating intimate information.

After the interviewee releases personal information, the interviewer should do the same to build trust and to ensure that the information gathered is truthful (Shank, 2006). Skilled interviewers can sustain intimacy by allowing the interviewees to control the flow of the conversation so that they may disclose uncomfortable situations. Nonverbal signs can help. Interviewers can nod in agreement or shift their body forward. The interviewer must always be aware that the interviewee is sensitive to the interview process.

Interviews are best conducted face-to-face. The best method is to listen without interrupting the interviewee (Rapley, 2001; Shank, 2006). Interviews should be both descriptive and structured (Spradley, 1979). Descriptive questions should be asked with a degree of uncertainty, asking probing questions (e.g., Can you give me an example of what you are talking about?) (Spradley, 1979). The participants in the current study were given the opportunity to do most of the talking. Notes and an audio recording device were used to assist in taking field notes and keeping track of key words, findings, and common themes.

The interview protocol included the following questions:

1. What are your feelings regarding your current wages?
2. What is your husband's level of education, technical training, or work experiences? Can you provide examples of this?
3. What is your level of education?
4. What are your feelings regarding your level of education?

5. Do you have specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying you to do different work? Can you provide examples of this?
6. Have you ever worked in a capacity where you have been able to utilize your other skills?
7. How do you feel about working in a school cafeteria?
8. Can you provide examples of factors influencing you to choose to work in a school cafeteria?
9. How do you feel about your decision to work in a cafeteria?
10. Are you currently taking classes to gain more education or another skill?
11. What other interests are you pursuing or would you pursue if you were not working here?
12. Do you plan to work in a school cafeteria environment until you retire?
13. Do you have any long-term goals?
14. Have you discussed your long-term goals with your supervisor?
15. Do you believe that this work is mentally stimulating?
16. Do you believe that you are working with people who have more or less education, skills, or experiences than you do?
17. How would you feel if you were given the opportunity to utilize some of your other skills, education, hobbies, interests, or experiences while in your current position?
18. How would you describe the nature of your relationships with coworkers and your supervisor?
19. How would you describe the nature of your annual evaluations?

20. What could your supervisor do to increase your satisfaction of your job?

### **Data Collection**

The research participants were chosen based on their supervisor's knowledge about their personal histories related to the prerequisite questions presented in the letter to food service directors (see Appendix C). Food service directors and supervisors were asked to identify participants who may fit the criteria. Data collection took place at the participants' places of employment before or after their scheduled shift. Before the interviewing process, the prerequisite questions were asked of participants to ensure they qualified for participation.

The research participants were asked to sign an informed consent (see Appendix D) to ensure their rights and privacy were protected. The participants responded to 20 questions pertaining to working in a K-12 dining environment. The participants were also asked to describe their spouse's work and how each participant came to work in a K-12 dining environment.

The participants were asked how their work could become more meaningful and whether they have plans to remain in K-12 dining or leave the industry. An assumption was that the participants would be willing to discuss their feelings regarding working in the K-12 dining segment of the hospitality industry because they would feel honored that they were perceived as overqualified for the positions they held. The interviews were recorded, and notes were taken during each interview. The interviews were transcribed, and the results were recorded and analyzed using Nvivo 10 software.

Data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews, examining personal behaviors, work histories, education, skills, career experiences, marital situations, and

familial obligations. At the onset of the interview process, the participants might have felt uncomfortable with disclosing such personal information to a person they did not know. To ease each participant into the interview, the interviewer discussed her own background and why the study was meaningful to her and to others who work as food service directors and supervisors in the hospitality industry. Participants were told how important their insight was to assisting leaders who desire to understand how to manage more efficiently.

Interviews provide a reliable source of research material through effectively measuring attitudes and content. Interviews are effective for asking probing and follow-up questions that lead to gathering more in-depth information from the interviewees. Interviews have high response rates (Christensen et al., 2011). According to Spradley (1979), qualitative interviews are conducted to discover the everyday lived experiences of the interviewees. When the interviewees' narratives are captured, the interviewer searches for key meaningful themes.

One of the most powerful interviewing skills is the ability to create and understand metaphors and move from the familiar to the unfamiliar (Shank, 2006). Data gathering is an important step in empirical research, and researchers have a unique way of collecting data (Shank, 2006). According to Miller and Fredericks (2003), data are evidence of a claim and can shed light on a variety of points. Data collection involves in-depth efforts over a substantial amount of time, addressing a variety of concerns and interests (Shank, 2006). The phenomenological and hermeneutic data collecting methods in the current study included (a) observational notes (i.e., recording all relevant events that occur during the interview), (b) theoretical notes (i.e., reflecting on the meaning of

factors drawn from the interview process), (c) methodological notes (i.e., reminding the interviewer to do certain things at certain times), and (d) analytical memos (i.e., abstract summaries generated at the end of the sessions) (Shank, 2006).

### **Data Analysis**

Data were recorded and analyzed using Nvivo 10 software. During data collection, statements pertaining to the topic were identified and grouped into meaning units using nodes; divergent perspectives were explored using tree nodes, and an overall description of the phenomenon was developed into composite responses and overarching themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The data were explicated by bracketing and using phenomenological reduction, delineating units of meaning, clustering of meaning units to form themes, summarizing each interview, and making a composite summary (Shank, 2006). Bracketing and using phenomenological reduction involved listening to the interview tapes to understand the full meaning of what was said by listening to points of view and subsiding preconceived notions.

Delineating units of meaning involved examining relevance and the frequency of statements, discarding ambiguities, and developing a list of clear concepts. Clustering involved grouping meaning units by examining each unit to ensure that the right pairs were made. Clustering involved looking for emergent themes. Summarizing each interview involved going back to the data to see how well the themes addressed the issues and concerns of the interview participants.

The next stage required modifications. Finally, making the composite response involved bringing all the data together and examining each interview for its own unique

set of themes. Common themes were identified, then a composite response of unique findings were generated (Shank, 2006).

Data analysis was conducted using the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) developed by Smith and Flowers (2009). The interpretive phenomenological approach is widely used in human and social sciences and involves trying to understand lived experiences. The approach is based on the perception and accounts of events, which produce the meanings the events have for research participants (Smith & Flowers, 2009).

The approach requires that researchers are able to gain close access to each participant's world or gain access through the process of interpretive activity. Gaining access to the participant's world produces the second layer of the approach, hermeneutics. Interpretive phenomenology and hermeneutics is used interchangeably in the current study to describe how events and verbatim responses were identified to identify common themes and understand lived experiences of participants. Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation (Smith & Flowers, 2009).

As participants reveal their lived experiences during interviews, themes emerge, and researchers record, analyze, and interpret the themes (Smith & Flowers, 2009). Coding is an essential part of the interpretive qualitative research process (Gibbs, 2002). For the purpose of extracting thematic information, coding was used to identify and record participant interviews, using Nvivo 10 software.

The software was used to connect interview themes to nodes. Using different themes that emerged during the interview process, nodes were created. Nodes connect a

theoretical concept or idea with passages of the text that demonstrate and support those ideas.

Each node was not used simply as a name or label but also as a way to connect ideas and concepts within each interview. The nodes provided the basis for analytical thinking and qualitative analysis. According to Gibbs (2002), recording and analyzing nodes are essential activities to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research. The names given to nodes reflect preexisting theoretical ideas (Gibbs, 2002).

For this study, nodes were created based on the focus of the interview questions as well as emerging themes. For example, the node *participant's feelings regarding being a stay-at-home mom* was not reflective of any interview questions developed for this project. The node came about as a result of recurring themes and discussions during their interviews. Researchers should not go into qualitative research with preconceived ideas on what the nodes will be but rather should pull from the data what is occurring and not impose interpretation based on preexisting theory, research, or individual bias (Gibbs, 2002). Items that can be coded using nodes include specific acts or behaviors, events, activities, strategies or tactics, states or conditions, meanings (i.e., how participants understand the world or what meaning or significance the experience has for the participant), and the participants' involvement or adaptation to the setting (Gibbs, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Strauss, 1987). Other items that can be coded include relationships or interactions, conditions or constraints, consequences, settings, and reflexive interventions (i.e., my role in the process).

Hermeneutics is a science that involves interpreting texts (Grondin, 1994). Scholars developed hermeneutics to unlock the hidden meaning primarily in the Bible,

then in other texts. According to Moustakas (1994), seven principles are grounded in all hermeneutic research: (a) commitment to use qualitative methods, (b) primary focus on the whole experience, (c) search for meaning over a search for rules, (d) primary use of first accounts as main data sources, (e) insistence that accounts of experiences are a necessary part of any scientific understanding of any social phenomenon, (f) conducting research guided by personal interests and commitments by researchers, and (g) the necessity of treating experiences and behavior as integrated parts of a single whole.

Hermeneutics focuses on the interviewer as the interpreter, not as the expert in the field of study. Meaning is not based on new knowledge but on a shared understanding and interpretation of culture, history, language, or practice. Hermeneutics is a means of understanding a multifaceted world.

### **Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

The participants were assured that their names would not be disclosed and that confidentiality would be maintained. Participants were asked to provide their phone numbers as an identifier. A participant study code was created to link the name of the participant to the data, should the need arise to recover and dispose of the information. The participants' names were kept separate from the interview instrument and the audio-recorded interview. Participants who desired to withdraw from the study were told they could contact the interviewer by telephone, email, or by mail sent through the United States Postal Service (USPS), stating that they no longer want to be involved in the study (see Appendix D).

The informed consent form (see Appendix D) contained directions for withdrawal from the study. Before the start of the interviews, directions for withdrawal were

verbally communicated to the interview participants. My contact information was communicated to the interview participants through a business card and in the informed consent form (see Appendix D).

If a participant desired to withdraw from the study, the participant was asked to provide a phone number. The phone number would act as the link to the participant study code, which would provide a link to the participant's name. The participants' name was held in a separate and locked location. The data would be retrieved in this manner and shredded if the participant notified me that she no longer desired to participate in the study.

Any digital notes would be retrieved using the participant phone number and study code. Digital notes would be deleted upon notification that a participant no longer desired to be a part of the study. Information regarding the study procedures was communicated to the participants verbally at the onset of the interview. The participants also received a copy of the study procedures as a part of the informed consent (see Appendix D).

A discreet coding system was developed with the participants' telephone numbers. The phone numbers were linked to a participant study code such as PI1 (Participant Interview 1) and PI2 (Participant Interview 2). The participant interview code was linked to each participant's name.

The names of the participants were kept in a separate locked location in my home. None of the identifying information was kept in the same location in my home. All data stored were kept in locked file cabinets, safes, and on locked computers. Codes and keys are required to enter safes, computers, and file cabinets in my home.

Personal information about the study participants will not be released without prior written approval from research participants. Data will be concealed to prevent readers from determining the identity of the research participants. A letter to participants (see Appendix H) was provided, ensuring all participants of confidentiality and privacy of the information they provided.

The data stored in a secure and locked area will be held for 3 years and destroyed after that time. Digital files will be permanently deleted, and paper files will be shredded. Once data have been collected, they must be handled properly. Data handling involves data access, data storage, and data retrieval (Shank, 2006).

The research data collected for the current study include field notes, interview response forms, and audio recordings. Physical data will be stored in a locked, fireproof safe in my home office. The field notes and interview response forms were typed and stored on my computer. Access to the computer may be gained only by way of a password. The computer network in my home office is secure.

### **Assumptions**

A theory is interesting and important when it challenges assumptions. Discovering the gaps in existing theories helps challenge assumptions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). In addition to striving to capture in text the lived experiences of research participants, several assumptions were made for this study and were important to understand the purpose and significance of this research project.

The first assumption was that the phenomenon being studied was researchable because many K-12 cafeteria workers in Northern Virginia are women working in those positions because of the convenient schedule, their familial obligations, and a job search

contingent to their husband's search for employment. The second assumption was that these women would have more skills abilities, education, or experiences than required for the positions in which they were working. Another assumption was that these women were working in these positions because of their obligation to their families and that many of them had husbands employed in professional jobs or in positions in which they were more closely qualified.

A fourth assumption was that women have specific feelings about applying for and accepting positions based on a secondary job search, contingent on their husband finding a position more in line with his qualifications. A final assumption was that the participants would be willing to discuss their feelings of overqualification openly and candidly because they would feel honored that they are perceived as overqualified to work in their current positions. Obtaining deep meanings of overqualification from the participants' lived experiences helped answer the research questions of the study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The relationship between the researcher and the data is a living, moving, evolving relationship that naturally matures (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative researchers need to be consistent in their observations and data collection and recording. Qualitative researchers use a variety of data collection techniques and use a range of sources. The results must reflect research that has been carefully conducted, using reliable sources of data.

Reliability refers to the dependability and consistency present in the data collection process. Validity refers to how well the research fits into reality and whether the research is meaningful in a real-world setting (Neuman, 2006). Neuman (2003) pointed out that authenticity is important to the qualitative researcher and defined

authenticity as “giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day” (p. 185).

To strengthen internal validity, each interview was recorded and a third party transcribed the data. Each participant received a copy of the transcription for verification purposes. Conducting interviews increases the chance that external validity is maintained. The interview participants were all interviewed using the same set of questions. One person conducted the interviews.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, the most appropriate research method and design was described as a qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical approach to address the problem of overqualification for women working in the K-12 dining sector of hospitality. The most appropriate design for this research study was phenomenology. The phenomenological interviews allowed the participants to express freely their thoughts and opinions concerning their lived experience of overqualification (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Purposeful and snowball sampling techniques were used to correctly identify and screen potential participants (Mack et al., 2005). Twenty participants were selected to participate based on prerequisite criteria relevant to the research questions (Mack et al., 2005).

Data were collected by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews based on an interview protocol (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). During data collection, statements relating to the topic were identified, grouped into meaning units, explored, and developed into a description of the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The participants were assured that their names would not be disclosed and that confidentiality would be

maintained. Chapter 3 included an in-depth discussion of the research method and design used. Chapter 4 contains the findings.

#### **Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study was to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in K-12 dining departments in Northern Virginia and to identify leadership strategies that can alleviate feelings of deprivation that may arise from feeling underemployed. Many of the women working in K-12 dining departments have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations (Covelli, 2011). The job searches for these women were based on their spouses finding work, making the women's job search secondary (Frank, 1978). The study included interviews with 20 women who shared their experiences and perspectives on working in a situation where they believe they are underemployed. Data saturation was reached by participant 20. Data saturation is obtained when interviews no longer produce new information or insights that add to the themes captured in earlier interviews. Data saturation is subjective and determined by the researcher (Creswell, 2005).

Interviews were conducted with 20 K-12 dining female employees who live in the Northern Virginia area. The following three themes emerged from the study:

1. Overqualified workers are engaged when the work hours are conducive to their lifestyles and when they are given opportunities to utilize education, skills, or past work experience in the job.
2. Overqualification adversely affects job longevity for cafeteria workers because they feel frustrated, mismatched, and without hope to progress, but factors preventing the women from leaving to pursue other goals

include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and having been out of school for too long.

3. The meaning of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry is insignificant when assessed against having more time with children and having a spouse who is able to provide the primary financial support for the family.

People who feel underemployed may feel less emotionally attached to the organization (Borgen et al., 1988), but feelings of emotional detachment or deprivation can be alleviated when an employer communicates to workers that they are valuable assets and are respected (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Perceptions of being underemployed or overqualified are related to job satisfaction but only when workers report low levels of empowerment (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Workers who are challenged with new work roles and assignments experience empowerment, leading to a positive change in attitude concerning work (Warr, 1999).

People innately sort themselves into positions for which they are qualified, but they may eventually be terminated or leave a position for which they are under or overqualified. Individuals will find a position that is more commensurate with their skills, experience, or education (McCormick et al., 1979). The current research produced recommendations for lessening feelings of deprivation, organizational turnover, and terminations for women workers perceiving themselves to be underemployed, overqualified, or overeducated for positions in the K-12 dining sector of hospitality. Chapter 4 contains detailed findings of the study, data analysis, and the themes that emerged from the interviews in the following sections: (a) authenticity and reliability of

the study, (b) sampling procedure, (c) demographic information, (d) research questions, (e) the data collection process, (f) data coding and analysis, and (g) interpretation of data.

### **Authenticity and Reliability of the Study**

The relationship between the researcher and the data is a living, moving, evolving relationship that naturally matures (Neuman, 2006), making consistency in how data are observed, collected, and recorded highly important. Qualitative researchers must conduct their research using reliable sources of data. Reliability refers to the dependability and consistency present during the data collection process. Validity refers to how well the research fits into reality and whether the research is relevant in a real-world setting (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative researchers must give a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the perspective of the person who lives it daily (Neuman, 2003).

Participants living the phenomenon of overqualification were interviewed in person and asked to share details of their experience. The participants' narratives provided authenticity, reliability, and validity. The participants signed an informed consent and confidentiality statement (see Appendix D) to ensure that their responses would be kept confidential, further increasing authenticity, reliability, and validity. Participants were encouraged to speak openly and candidly concerning their feelings associated with working in the dining departments of K-12 school divisions, further increasing the authenticity of the data. Internal validity was increased with the notes taken during each interview, asking the same questions of each participant, recording the interviews, and transcribing the interviews. Copies of the transcribed interviews were provided to each participant to verify the data gathered were representative of the conversations during each interview.

## **Sampling Procedure**

The phenomenological, hermeneutical study involved exploring the lived experiences of overqualified, married women with children working in K-12 dining departments. The women are considered overqualified because they have education, skills, or experiences qualifying them to work in positions outside a cafeteria environment. The purpose was to gain insights about their experiences of working in positions in which they believed they were overqualified. The women were chosen to be a part of the study through purposeful sampling. According to Mack et al. (2005), purposeful sampling is based on a theoretical situation in which participants are preselected based on prerequisite criteria relevant to the research questions.

Each participant had to meet certain qualifications by responding positively to four demographic-related prerequisite questions posed by the interviewer at the beginning of each interview. Before the interviews, cafeteria managers and food service directors were asked to assist with sampling based on information they already had about each participant. A return stamped letter was sent to several school divisions requesting permission to conduct research with the participants (see Appendix A).

After gaining permission from school divisions in the Northern Virginia area, a letter was sent to food service directors of the divisions who granted permission for the study to be conducted (see Appendix A). The letter included a self introduction, the nature of the study, a description of the demographic information for each potential participant, and a brief statement about the benefits to leadership that the study results might produce. The information the food service directors and supervisors had about the

potential participants could have been obtained through daily interactions and conversations between the workers and their supervisors.

Snowball sampling was used to identify additional potential participants. Snowball or referral sampling occurs when participants provide the interviewer with a name of another potential participant (Mack et al., 2005). In the final section of the interview instrument (see Appendix E), the investigator recorded leads on other possible participants provided during the interviews.

The prerequisite questions were asked at the beginning of each interview to confirm that each participant fit within the parameters of the study. Each woman had to respond positively to the following demographic descriptions: (a) lives in Northern Virginia; (b) is married and has at least one child living in the home; (c) works as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area; and (d) has education, skills, or experience that the participant perceives are qualifications to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and after signing the informed consent form (see Appendix D), each participant received a copy of the form and received a \$20 gift card. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. I presented each participants with the informed consent form (see Appendix D), which included avenues in which I could be contacted should the participant decide to withdraw. The participants expressed interest in receiving a copy of the completed study. I agreed to present each participant with a copy of the study upon completion.

## **Demographic Information**

The study sample included 20 married women with children and working as cafeteria workers in the Northern Virginia area. The sources of data were limited to the 20 women working in various school divisions in that geographic area. The study was conducted to examine the intricacies of a complex situation (i.e., overqualification) for women working in K-12 cafeterias in the Northern Virginia area. The specific demographic-related criteria were identified based on the common circumstances that women working in the K-12 dining environment share. Little is known about women working in this capacity because very little research has targeted this demographic niche.

Food service directors and cafeteria managers were asked to assist in identifying participants who fit the demographic criteria. Snowball sampling was also used to identify potential participants for the study. All participants had to respond positively to the demographic criteria before beginning the interview.

## **Research Questions**

The following three central open-ended research questions were formulated to guide the study:

RQ1. What is the level of engagement experienced by overqualified workers?

RQ2. How does overqualification affect job longevity?

RQ3. What is the meaning of overqualification in the hospitality industry?

To answer the research questions, the following questions regarding the participants' lived experiences were used during the interviews:

1. What are your feelings regarding your current wages?

2. What is your husband's level of education, technical training, or work experiences? Can you provide examples of this?
3. What is your level of education?
4. What are your feelings regarding your level of education?
5. Do you have specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying you to do different work? Can you provide examples of this?
6. Have you ever worked in a capacity where you have been able to utilize your other skills?
7. How do you feel about working in a school cafeteria?
8. Can you provide examples of factors influencing you to choose to work in a school cafeteria?
9. How do you feel about your decision to work in a cafeteria?
10. Are you currently taking classes to gain more education or another skill?
11. What other interests are you pursuing or would you pursue if you were not working here?
12. Do you plan to work in a school cafeteria environment until you retire?
13. Do you have any long-term goals?
14. Have you discussed your long-term goals with your supervisor?
15. Do you believe that this work is mentally stimulating?
16. Do you believe that you are working with people who have more or less education, skills, or experiences than you do?

17. How would you feel if you were given the opportunity to utilize some of your other skills, education, hobbies, interests, or experiences while in your current position?
18. How would you describe the nature of your relationships with coworkers and your supervisor?
19. How would you describe the nature of your annual evaluations?
20. What could your supervisor do to increase your satisfaction of your job?

The interview questions that address each research question specifically are presented with participants' responses. The interview questions were appropriate to answering the research questions, to understanding the problem of overqualification in the hospitality industry, and to obtaining the purpose of this study. The participants' responses to the interview questions generated common themes. In the next sections, tables are included to display data relevant to understanding the phenomenon.

### **Data Collection Process**

The research participants were selected based on their responses to the prerequisite questions. Food service directors and supervisors were asked to identify participants who might fit the criteria. The research participants were asked to sign an informed consent (see Appendix D) before beginning the interview to ensure their rights and privacy were protected. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to avoid data collection errors. The interviewer took notes during the interviews to ensure related information was collected and to decrease the probability of collection errors. Data collection occurred over two and a half months. The average interview lasted from 15 minutes to

45 minutes. Transcribing the interviews occurred within a week of each scheduled interview. One hundred and four pages of transcribed interviews were recorded. Each interview ranged from four to eight pages in length.

The participants were interviewed on their lived experiences concerning overqualification for their work as K-12 dining workers. The questions in the interview protocol were open-ended (Christensen et al., 2011). The participants were not asked if they believed they were overqualified, but they were asked open-ended questions that related to the phenomena of overqualification, underemployment, and over education. The participants were given the opportunity to discuss their everyday experiences of the phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The interview questions were similar to a questionnaire, but they were written like a script (Christensen et al., 2011) so that the interviewer could read the questions and all participants could be asked the same questions. The interviews were semistructured so that the interviewer could remain open to any change or new knowledge that may have occurred during the study (Shank, 2006). I remained flexible and fluid, giving over control of the conversation to the research participants.

Flexibility yielded information relevant to the meaning of overqualification. A face-to-face interview method was used (Christensen et al., 2011) in which personal interviews were conducted at the participants' places of employment. Supervisors permitted the use of their offices before and after the participants' scheduled shift began or ended.

### **Challenges and Unique Occurrences During Data Collection**

The use of the supervisor's offices presented some challenges. Workers looking for the supervisor stopped by, not knowing an interview was being conducted. Schools are busy in the mornings, so the office phones rang during the interviews, also causing interruptions. During the interviews that were held at the end of the day, school dismissal bells or announcements caused disruptions.

Interviews conducted in middle schools or high schools were interrupted by class change bells. These interruptions can be heard on the audio-recordings. When such an interruption occurred, the interview participant and the interviewer stopped the conversation until the interruption ended. The interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed and subjected to analysis using Nvivo 10 software before making final interpretations and recommendations. The next section includes descriptions of the data coding and analysis process.

### **Data Coding and Analysis**

The focus of the interpretive, phenomenological approach is on the social construction of knowledge and understanding of the world through everyday life and the subjective common experiences of many individuals who share similar lived experiences (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000). According to Schutz (1967), an important type of research is the examination and understanding of social interactions in areas that may be taken for granted because they are not explicit or obvious. The interpretive, phenomenological method helps understand the meanings and relevance of real situations (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000).

In the current study, data analysis was conducted using the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) developed by Smith and Flowers (2009). The interpretive phenomenological approach is widely used in human and social sciences and is concerned with trying to understand lived experiences. The approach is based on the perception and accounts of events and produces the meanings of the events for research participants (Smith & Flowers, 2009). The approach requires gaining close access to the participants' world through the process of an interpretive activity. The interpretive phenomenological approach balances phenomenological research. The focus is on meaning rather than causal relationships (Smith & Flowers, 2009).

Gaining access to the participants' world produces the second layer of the data analysis approach, hermeneutics. Unlike the interpretive phenomenological approach, the hermeneutic approach is the interpretive study of texts. Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation (Smith & Flowers, 2009). The approach involves conducting in-depth interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences, and probing to identify emerging themes. As participants reveal their lived experiences through interviews, themes emerge and the researcher records, analyzes, and interprets the themes (Smith & Flowers, 2009).

Coding is an essential part of the interpretive qualitative research process (Gibbs, 2002). For the purpose of extracting thematic information in the current study, coding was used to identify and record the participants' interviews using Nvivo 10 software. The software was used to connect interview themes to nodes created with different themes that emerged during the interview process. Nodes connect a theoretical concept

or idea with passages of the text that demonstrate and support those ideas. The nodes used in the study were as follows.

1. Ability to incorporate skills, education, and abilities into current position
2. Feelings regarding decision to work in a school cafeteria
3. Feelings regarding wages
4. Husband's level of education
5. Husband's work experiences
6. Improving satisfaction
7. Nature of relationships with coworkers
8. Other work experiences
9. Outcomes of annual evaluations
10. Reason for choosing to work in a school cafeteria
11. Participant currently furthering education
12. Participant has discussed long-term goals with supervisor
13. Participant finds the work mentally stimulating
14. Participant having worked in a capacity where she was able to use her other skills
15. Participant works with people who have more or less education or skills
16. Participant's feelings regarding being a stay-at-home mom
17. Participant's feelings regarding level of education
18. Participant's level of education
19. Participant's long-term goals
20. Participant's other careers
21. Participant's other interests

22. Participant's plan to work in a school cafeteria until retirement
23. What the participant would be doing if not working in a school cafeteria

Each node was not used simply as a name or a label but as a way to connect ideas and concepts that each interview shared. The nodes provided the basis for analytical thinking and qualitative analysis. According to Gibbs (2002), recording and analyzing nodes is essential to strengthening validity and reliability in research. The names given to nodes reflect preexisting theoretical ideas (Gibbs, 2002).

For this study, nodes were created based on the focus of the interview questions as well as themes resulting from the interview process. For example, the node *Participant's feelings regarding being a stay-at-home mom* was not reflective of any interview question created for this project. That node came about as a result of recurring phrases and discussions of the participants during their interviews. Researchers should not go into qualitative research with preconceived ideas on what the nodes will be but rather pull from the data what is occurring without imposing interpretation based on preexisting theory, research, or individual bias (Gibbs, 2002).

Items that can be coded using nodes include specific acts or behaviors, events, activities, strategies or tactics, states or conditions, meanings (i.e., how participants understand the world or what meaning or significance the experience has for the participant), and the participant's involvement or adaptation to the setting (Gibbs, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Strauss, 1987). Other items that can be coded include relationships or interactions, conditions or constraints, consequences, settings, and reflexive interventions (i.e., my role in the process). The nodes created during this study were based on the following.

1. Personal events relating to the home life of participants;
2. The meaning of overqualification and the significance this state has had on the participants' lives;
3. Relationships and interactions with coworkers;
4. The conditions and constraints of being underemployed;
5. The consequences of overqualification;
6. The school cafeteria as work environment (Gibbs, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Strauss, 1987).

Passages of texts, whole paragraphs, sentences, phrases, and words were coded to develop the noding structure and arrive at overarching themes. In this study, free nodes were created, which produced a high-level listing of nodes (Gibbs, 2002). The free nodes were used to create tree nodes or node classifications as data were explored. Tree nodes kept the information organized; as the analysis developed, a large number of nodes were created. Tree nodes acted as folders within the nodes to collect and categorize data (Gibbs, 2002).

The trees contained like data grouped to assist in gaining an overall view of the ways in which the conceptual framework grew. The trees reduced the risk of creating duplicate nodes (Gibbs, 2002). The data were explicated by bracketing and using phenomenological reduction, delineating units of meaning, clustering meaning units to form themes, and summarizing each interview with a composite summary (Shank, 2006).

Qualitative data are organized in three distinctive ways. First, a set of cases can be presented with the similarities and differences between each case. Second, an account structured around the major themes can be developed with examples drawn from the

transcripts or texts to support the major themes. Finally, a thematic presentation of research findings can exemplify the major themes (Gibbs, 2002). The findings in this study are exhibited by thematic presentation of findings illustrating the major themes.

The following structured analytical approach (Gibbs, 2002) was used to present the research results: (a) the three research questions are presented at the headings of each section; (b) the interview questions developed to respond to each research question are listed using verbatim quotes from various sections of each interview to illustrate the findings; and (c) the overarching themes found through the research process are presented and discussed as they relate to the research questions. The presentation and interpretation of findings follows.

### **Presentation and Interpretation of Data**

This section includes the findings gathered during the interview process and a discussion of the responses given by all participants to the 20 interview questions. The three research questions are presented as headers to each section. The interview questions developed to respond to each research question are listed, and each interview question is supported by the composite response.

The responses are supported by relevant quotes from participants. The overarching themes found during the interview process are presented and discussed as they relate to the research questions. Tables are included in this section to illustrate the findings. The interview instrument is shown in Appendix E.

#### **RQ1. What is the level of engagement experienced by overqualified workers?**

The purpose of the first research question was to determine the level of engagement overqualified workers have in their jobs. Job engagement describes an individual's

investment of complete self into roles (Rich et al., 2010). Engaged workers report positive feelings, fulfilled vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Overqualification relates to individuals who have a surplus in education, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Maynard, 1998). Overqualified workers report greater intentions to leave their jobs and often engage in more job search behaviors than individuals who believe they are adequately employed (Burriss, 1983).

Workers who experience lack of job growth often feel trapped and think that few opportunities for advancement exist. The feeling of being trapped can have long-term negative consequences and ultimately affects the organization (Johnson et al., 2002). Mothers often report having specific needs concerning engagement, including confidence in leadership, fair treatment, trust in coworkers, workplace friendships, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011). The first research question was developed to identify the investment of women K-12 cafeteria workers in their work roles even when they believed they could be working in other capacities more fitting to their knowledge, skills, and other work experiences.

**Interview questions addressing RQ1.**

1. What are your feelings regarding your current wages?
2. How would you feel if you were given the opportunity to utilize some of your other skills, education, hobbies, interests, or experiences while in your current position?
3. How would you describe the nature of your annual evaluations?
4. What could your supervisor do to increase your job satisfaction?

5. How would you describe the nature of your relationships with coworkers and your supervisor?

**Interview Question: What are your feelings regarding your current wages?**

*Composite response.* Evidenced in the interviews, the feeling from the women was that the wages were fair for the work they did. They thought the pay could be higher, but the return in time spent with children and at home made up for not being paid a large salary. The majority of the participants believed that the pay could be better because the job involved many duties. The job is hands-on, requiring a lot of manual labor, so wages should better reflect the work they are required to do. The benefits, like retirement and medical insurance, associated with working in a K-12 environment made the low wages more acceptable.

The fact that a spouse provides the majority of the income makes the low wages more acceptable. If the woman had no spouse providing the primary household income, the wages would be unacceptable. The women acknowledged that it would be impossible to survive on the income earned solely from working in a school cafeteria. The women reported that the income earned from working in a school cafeteria is used to provide additional support for the family and as extra spending money.

The women who had little education but more or other work experiences believed that the wages were fair, but they would like to earn more because of the types of tasks assigned in their positions as cafeteria workers. Some participants expressed a desire to find other work with higher wages, but because the spouse earned enough to support the household, the women had no motivation to find a more fitting position elsewhere.

Verbatim quotes from the interview participants follow.

Well, now, right because this is a good job for me – the hours and everything. It's not too many hours, so I can go home and take care of my baby. So, it's good. I am working because I really want to work. I want to go out and work. I spent 2 years at my house, taking care of my daughter, and I realized that I need to go out and do something else. So, for me it's good, but I think that, because of the work we do here, it could be better. It could be something more. There's a lot of work here. Most of us here are moms, and we have to take care of the home. My husband takes care of us, but some of my coworkers are working to support their families as well. But, I wonder how a person can live just working here. The pay is not too much. (PI1)

**PI2.** "I want to earn more."

**PI3.** "I make \$11.97, but I have been here almost 5 years. I've only gotten one raise since I've been here. It's because the economy, I think."

**PI4.** "\$11.45. Not a fair wage. I need more."

I don't think we are paid enough. It's very hands-on manual work, and the managers have paperwork, computer work. I don't feel like it's enough. But everybody feels that way. I am pleased with my benefits; wish I didn't have to pay as much, but I am pleased with the benefits. I get the retirement, and I have the option of going in to the 401K plan; I think they call it something else. I have AFLAC and all that stuff. (PI5)

**PI6.** "For what I am doing, I think it's fair, but for what I am worth, not good. There is a trade-off for everything."

**PI7.** "I think for what I do it's pretty good."

**PI8.** “Honestly, I am satisfied with my wages. Um, we haven’t had raises in a while, but having gone that 1 year to XXX and taking a huge cut in pay.”

**PI9.** “Oh, never enough.”

No complaints. I don’t know any different. It’s a career. I like the variety. It’s a great part-time job. I couldn’t find anything better. My boss is fabulous. It’s because of her that I like my job. It’s only because of her. (PI9)

**PI11.** “Excellent.”

This is a good job for me, the hours and everything. For me it’s good, but I think that because of the work we do here, it could be better. It could be something more. There’s a lot of work here. My husband takes care of us, but some of my coworkers are working to support their families as well. But, I wonder how a person can live just working here. The pay is not too much. I am hoping that maybe in the future I can do more than work here. For my education and skills, I think they are good, but like everybody else, I would like more. (PI12)

**PI13.** “Compared to, um, what other type of job I would probably get, they are good wages in my opinion. I like it because I want to work and have some money.”

**PI14.** “I can’t leave and do anything else part-time.”

I feel good because it helps me a lot because I have to pay my daughter’s college you know. I am married and I have two children. I like this job because I work hard every day. I have another job at nighttime too. (PI15)

**PI16.** “I think I am underpaid.”

**PI17.** “I am pretty happy with my salary. I mean a little more would have been nice but I uh was satisfied with my salary.”

**PI18.** “It’s alright.”

**PI19.** “The pay scales should be a little bit more for the work we have to do.”

**PI20.** “They’re terrible (laugh). Um, it’s atrocious. Fortunately, my husband makes a lot of money, so it’s not a big deal, but like I said I told you what I make, not much.”

**Interview Question: How would you feel if you were given the opportunity to utilize some of your skills, education, hobbies, interests, or experiences while in your current position?**

*Composite Response.* When asked how they would feel if they were able to incorporate other skills, abilities, and experiences into their current positions, the women were perplexed as to how this would be made possible. Many had worked in positions or gained education not fitting for work in a school cafeteria. The idea of being able to incorporate skills, education, hobbies, or interests was appealing as evidenced in the interviews, but many wondered how this could be feasible.

After having worked in positions in different industries, the participants believed they were more appropriately suited to work in other positions. Working in a school cafeteria after having other work experience was a point of frustration only mitigated by the fact that the hours in their current job gave them more time with their children. The majority expressed excitement at the idea of being able to incorporate past career experiences into the job.

The desire to utilize education was strong. Only a few women indicated that they were able to use their education in the job and indicated that being able to do this had helped them to enjoy the work all the more. They considered being able to offer more to

the position a benefit. One participant expressed her frustration with not having earned a college degree but offered during the interview that she had previously worked as a purchasing agent and had been able to incorporate the skills gained in that position into her current position as a cafeteria manager. Verbatim quotes from the interview participants follow.

**PI1.** “I’d like to do it.”

**PI2.** “I would love that. I would think that it would be great.”

**PI3.** “If I have this opportunity, I think I would be happy.”

**PI4.** “Yes, I would like to help with some of the paperwork or administrative items.”

**PI5.** “I’d really like it.”

**PI6.** “Great. I would consider keeping this position for the long-term if I was able to utilize my education in this job. It would motivate and inspire me to want to stay around.”

**PI7.** “I’d like it. I think it would be cool to be able to move up and do something different.”

**PI8.** “I would be open to that.”

**PI9.** No response.

**PI10.** “I would be very excited, yes.”

**PI11.** “I’d like to, but I am not sure that I could fit that into my current job.”

**PI12.** “If it’s what I did before I would love it. I did a lot of calculator work.

I kinda do. There was a little boy choking. I used my education for that. One of our teachers got taken out of here yesterday by ambulance. I got to help some of

the other kids while the nurse was dealing with the paramedics. And you know a lot of the teachers say, "I understand you do wedding cakes" They ask me to do wedding cakes. I guess I do use it, not full time but often enough. (PI13)

I'd be fine with it. At one point, Mr. XXX said we need you over in personnel. I was like, yeah, but I realize things are different from when I did it for the government. I know I catch on. (PI14)

**PI15.** "Oh, I would be better. Excited, you know. Because there is more money too, you know?"

**PI16.** "I would like to um expand my horizons."

I have done both. About 3 weeks ago, I took pictures for the leadership run. I also help with in the afternoons like three afternoons a week with XXX. I go to her home for a couple of hours like three afternoons a week just to help her mom out. She has a set of twins too. (PI17)

**PI18.** "I guess I would be teaching children."

I feel I guess it's a plus in life because there are people out there who have no knowledge of any kind of computer per se or have no knowledge to even want to try. And I guess just the fact that I knew only a little bit about a computer I was at least willing to try to do what was needed to be done. Change is hard for everybody, but if it's something that you really feel you want to do you'll strive in that. (PI19)

**PI20.** "I do use my other skills here."

**Interview Question: How would you describe the nature of your annual evaluations?**

*Composite Response.* Overall, all interview participants reported having good annual evaluations, but one worker indicated that her reviewer gave her unfair marks that will remain in her personnel file. Another worker admitted to not having the best attitude at times and that she is saddened that her behaviors are documented within her personnel file. Others indicated with nonverbal and verbal cues that the evaluations were not used in a way that fairly reported how well their work contributed to the success of the organization. Workers pointed out that the evaluations made them feel appreciated by acknowledging the hard work that they do but also believed that negative marks based on the reviewers' perceptions made them feel less valued by the organization. Verbatim quotes from the interview participants follow.

**PI1.** No response.

**PI2.** "Usually always have a good evaluations. XXX is a good supervisor; she is honest with me. She tells me that I am her best worker."

She always appreciates me all the time. She thanks me for my hard work. She buy things for us to reward us. She appreciates me. I appreciate her. I learn from her. I never get angry when corrected because I want to learn more. (PI13)

**PI4.** "Yes, usually good."

**PI5.** "Positive."

**PI6.** No response.

**PI7.** "I think they have all been good."

**PI8.** “I think excellent because XXX is very fair in what she says. Sometimes, I am not always certain because it’s busy, but when she does give us our evaluations, I am always pleased.”

**PI9.** “You never know. I get marked off sometimes because I am always asking a lot of questions.”

**PI20.** No response.

**Interview Question: What could your supervisor do to increase your satisfaction of your job?**

*Composite Response.* As evidenced in the interviews, the women were satisfied with their jobs but pointed out that being given more tasks or work more fitting to their skills and experiences would increase their satisfaction. The participants indicated that knowing their bosses knew their individual skills was a motivator. Being considered for other positions within the department both outside and inside the cafeteria were motivators for increasing satisfaction.

Many women indicated that working in the cafeteria was like working in a sisterhood, but the responses to this interview question indicate that some women had dominating personalities in the kitchens and that if the kitchen manager could control some of these personalities, satisfaction could be increased. The participants pointed out that trust is a major factor that would increase their satisfaction in their jobs. Only three participants indicated that financial resources would increase satisfaction, and others indicated that increased authority, respect, and giving a little more responsibility each year would be major motivators for job satisfaction. Verbatim quotes from the interview participants follow.

**PI1.** No response.

**PI2.** “Nothing as far as the job. Continue to be nice to me, rely on me. She knows that if she is not here, I will make sure everything runs smoothly. She trusts me to cover her.”

**PI3.** “Give me advice to tell me how I am doing. Correct me if I am wrong or tell me that I am doing a good job.”

**PI4.** “More money.”

More money. It’s just hard to make it right now. They take \$328 per paycheck for my insurance. They’re killing me. When they talk like a 2% raise, I think they might as well give that to the children and buy a book. Last year, cafeteria workers got a raise, and the other school division employees did not. That caused big issues, but we make our own money. (PI15)

**PI6.** “Give me authority and power to make some decisions on behalf of the department in his absence. Enriching. Change my job title and give me more money.”

**PI7.** “Help out.”

**PI8.** “Never retire; don’t leave us.”

**PI9.** “Trust me, first of all. She knows that I can do the job. Respect me. Not yell at me. Understand me.”

**PI10.** “She gives me a little more every year.”

**PI11.** “I’m pretty satisfied. I can’t think of anything.”

**PI12.** “Have things on a more consistent level. Don’t let one employee do something you are not going to let the other.”

**PI13.** “I’d like to knock down that wall, and I really could use another serving line. Sometimes there’s so much food out there. We need more space.”

**PI14.** “I wish my manager could control dominating personalities better. I know she came up in the system where there was no management training, so, I see that. I understand that. I do think managers need training.”

**PI15.** “Nothing.”

**PI16.** “Nothing. I enjoy the job. I really do.”

**PI17.** “Be more supportive.”

**PI18.** “Stay.”

Well, I mean she worked with me as far as team building about how to be more of a team person providing; I mean instead of you know being negative about something that was said or done. Always trying to uplift me as far as you know encourage me and stuff. You probably should have said it this way, maybe if you say it this way, because you know I get so busy at times you know. Somebody would pop in 10 to 15 minutes earlier, and then I would need to change their time sheet, and they might have taken it offensive and to me it wasn’t offensive. I was just busy. So if she helps me to look at how I approach things versus the way other people thought I was approaching things. (PI19)

**PI20.** “Double my pay.”

**Interview Question: How would you describe the nature of your relationships with your coworkers and your supervisor?**

**Composite Response.** The participants reported having positive relationships with coworkers and reported the relationships were similar to a sisterhood fostering very

strong and close relationships. The women working in cafeterias had similar reasons for working there, and this brought them closer together. The workplace friendships made the work easier to engage in as evidenced in the responses from the interviews.

The cafeteria workers reported not being respected by people working in positions outside of the cafeteria. Other issues with coworkers seemed to be learning how to navigate differing personalities, reporting that at times there are workplace issues, but that the women worked together to resolve the issues so that they could foster the sisterly environment. Verbatim quotes from the interview participants follow.

**PI1.** No response.

**PI2.** “We are friends. When we have to work and do the job we get along well; I am ok with everybody.”

**PI3.** “I really you know consider them friends and sisters. When I have something going on at home, I can come here tell them, share with them. They share with me. We have a very strong relationship.”

**PI4.** “We are not friends. I haven’t known them long.”

**PI5.** “It’s good, and we are um friends outside of here, some of us. Sometimes, we will all meet for lunch during the summer. We’ll go yard-selling together.”

**PI6.** “I do get along well with my coworkers. They are all good people.”

**PI7.** “I think ok. The best I can.”

I think good. I think we all get along well. We like to kid and joke around. I mean, well, if there’s ever anything that anyone is going through, seems like everyone is there to support you. I think we have a good group. Even if there are

differences in opinions, your opinion is respected. You can agree to disagree.

Without hard feelings or discontentment. (PI8)

**PI9.** “Yes, I get along well with them.”

**PI10.** “Everybody’s good. I have a good relationship with everybody as far as I know.”

**PI10.** “My boss is fabulous. It is because of her that I like my job. It’s only because of her.”

**PI11.** “I get along with everybody. I respect everybody.”

Some excellent, some you tolerate. I am the manager in my department, but I feel that people don’t have the level of respect for me that they should because I work in food service. I know that, when working in the cafeteria, that when people are over you, the level of respect is not there. They think I don’t know what I am doing. (PI12)

Up to this year, I thought it was pretty good. I work with them. I don’t ask anybody to do anything I wouldn’t do. I thought it was really good, but I question it this year. I love my supervisor. I respect my supervisor as much as I give her a hard time. (PI13)

Depends on who they are. There are some that are just vulgar. I finally said I have had enough. I just can’t listen to it anymore. The vulgarity just really got to me. It’s totally unnecessary in a work environment. (PI14)

**PI15.** “Good.”

**PI16.** “Almost like family. Working this job is like working with family.”

**PI17.** “Great. Everybody loves me because I love everybody.”

**PI18.** “Excellent rapport.”

It’s been hard times with some of them, but overall it’s pretty good. I don’t think that anyone ever has a perfect relationship with all their coworkers; it’s just not going to happen anywhere. But that’s just something you have to work on to be able to do. (PI19)

I think everything is fine. We get along well because we speak what’s on our mind and get it over with. There’s no pussyfooting around. We don’t talk about each other. There’s no room for attitude. We don’t have a choice. (PI20)

### **Overarching Theme**

Recurring themes were as follows:

1. The wages are fair for the type of job.
2. Participants are engaged because of the return on investment of more time spent with children.
3. Participants are encouraged about being able to utilize their past work experiences, educational experiences, or skills in the current job.
4. When the supervisor acknowledges other skills and experiences and offers the workers the ability to incorporate some of those skills into their current position, workers feel motivated.
5. Working in the cafeteria is like being a part of a sisterhood and the sisterhood makes the work easier to engage.

The women are engaged in their positions as cafeteria workers because the hours give them flexibility to raise a family. Satisfaction, despite the low wages, can be

achieved if the women are considered for higher positions, which gives them greater responsibilities and if kitchen coworkers, teachers, and other school division employees respect them. Overqualified workers are engaged when the work hours are conducive to their lifestyles and when they are given opportunities to utilize education, skills, or past work experience in the job.

**Research Question: How does overqualification affect job longevity?** The purpose of this research question was to determine how the participants' levels of education, skills, or other work experience influenced their commitment to remaining in their positions for a long-term period. Many women working in K-12 school cafeterias are doing so because their job search was primarily based on familial obligations and came secondary to their husband's geographical search for employment (Covelli, 2011). The husband, and principal breadwinner, accepted a position for which he was qualified, and the wife possessing more skills, education, or experience than necessary (Frank, 1978) to work in a school cafeteria, sought and accepted a position in the K-12 dining sector of the hospitality industry. According to Frank (1978), this phenomenon describes the theory of differential overqualification.

The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (31%), when compared to other industries (Dolan Technologies Corp., 2010). The phenomenon of overqualification or underemployment leads to turnover, which can be extremely disruptive to many organizations. Staff retention is a major issue for hospitality managers because it has a negative impact on the financial soundness of a service organization (Gill et al., 2011).

Job satisfaction and commitment to the organization can be reasonable predictors of a worker's intentions to stay or to leave the organization (Allen & Griffeth, 2001; Jaros et al., 1993; Wasti, 2003). Many factors contribute to workers' decision to leave their job, and job dissatisfaction and lack of advancement opportunities are the most important (Li, 1995). Workers report feeling overqualified when they experience low levels of empowerment. Empowerment decreases negative feelings regarding overqualification, intentions to remain in a position, and turnover (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009).

According to Warr (1999), employee empowerment comes from managers giving assignments that are challenging and increasing work roles and assignments. According to Simons and Enz (1995), hospitality workers consider job security, good wages, and opportunities for advancement and development the most important factors concerning their work. The purpose of the research question, How does overqualification affect job longevity? Was to identify how overqualification influences job longevity for women experiencing differential overqualification because of their decision to work in a K-12 dining position and to determine whether empowerment influences longevity in this segment of the hospitality industry.

**Interview Questions Addressing Research Question:**

1. What is your level of education?
2. What are your feelings regarding your level of education?
3. What other interests are you pursuing or would you pursue if you were not working here?
4. Do you have any long-term goals?
5. Have you discussed your long-term goals with your supervisor?

6. Are you currently taking classes to gain more education or another skill?
7. Do you plan to work in a school cafeteria environment until you retire?

**Interview Question: What is your level of education?**

*Composite response.* As evidenced in the interviews, many of the interview participants indicated having graduated from high school and going on to higher education to receive bachelor's degrees. Some women who had gone on to higher education had not completed their secondary education, one participant had only completed middle school, and four participants had completed high school only. Most of the participants who had completed some level of higher education desired more schooling.

The participants who had taken some college courses had regrets about not completing their degrees. The participants having a high school education had regrets about not going on to complete higher levels of education. Verbatim quotes from the participants' interviews follow along with a visual depiction of the levels of education and feelings regarding the levels of education for each interview participant (see Table 1).

Table 1

*A List of the Levels of Education and Feelings Regarding Level of Education of Interview**Participants*

<b>Interview Participant</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Feelings Regarding Level of Education</b>
PI1.	Bachelor's	Desires more
PI2.	College experience	Regret
PI3.	High school	Regret
PI4.	Technical school	Desires more
PI5.	College experience	Desires more
PI6.	Bachelor's	Content
PI7.	College experience	Regret
PI8.	College experience	Regret
PI9.	Middle school	Desires more
PI10.	College junior	Regret
PI11.	High school	Content
PI12.	High school	Regret
PI13.	Nursing degree	Desires more
PI14.	College experience/Top secret clearance	Regret
PI15.	College experience	Desires more
PI16.	College experience	Desires more
PI17.	High school	Desires more
PI18.	High school	Regret
PI19.	High school	Content
PI20.	High school	Regret

**PI1.** “Bachelor’s in business administration.”

**PI2.** “I went to the university for 4 years but I didn't finish it.”

I finished my high school in my country. I did not study anything here because when I came here, I got married and I had my kids. I always stayed home with my kids. It's been 5 years since I started working. That's it. My kids appreciate me. They always tell me ‘mom you are the best mom, you never left us to go the daycare or a babysitter.’ My husband never made a lot of money, but I worked

hard to schedule everything so that I could afford everything, you know. Rent, food, clothes, everything. My daughter said, 'When I need anything financially, I am coming to you mom because you know how to do the finances.' (PI3)

**PI4.** "Three years in a technical school for computers."

**PI5.** "High school graduate with 1 year of college. Looking to go back to school. I am talking to Liberty. I want to do psychology."

**PI6.** "A BS in business management with a concentration in marketing and a secondary in management studies."

I didn't finish NOVA. I was a semester short for my accounting degree.

Associate in accounting. I decided I didn't like it, so I didn't finish. It's a puzzle that fits at the end of the day, but when you make a mistake and transpose numbers, it's not good. I've done the Computer Learning Center and just NOVA and the Computer Learning Center. I thought I might like to do computers, but too lonely. (PI7)

**PI8.** "I had some college."

**PI9.** "Middle school."

**PI10.** "A junior in college, finally, 67 credit hours under my belt."

**PI11.** "High school."

**PI12.** "Twelfth grade."

**PI13.** "I have my LPN, my nursing degree; I got it in Pennsylvania. I am licensed in South Dakota and Virginia."

**PI14.** “I have a high school diploma - I have a top secret SI clearance. I had a pass where I could get on a train, bus, plane whatever and go to secret locations when I had to report.”

**PI15.** “I studied at college for one year.”

**PI16.** “Some college.”

**PI17.** “Just a high school graduate.”

**PI18.** “High school graduate.”

**PI19.** “Just 12th grade.”

**PI20.** “High school.”

**Interview Question: What are your feelings regarding your level of education?**

*Composite response.* As evidenced by the interview data, the majority of participants indicated they desired more education and expressed sadness and regret for not having continued and completed their technical or college level education. Some felt stuck and wished that they had made different decisions regarding education and careers a long time ago. The majority of interview participants indicated that they regret not having more education, but their responses indicate that they are content because, in their positions as cafeteria workers, they have time to spend with their kids. The money they earn as cafeteria workers provides additional income for the household, and they are able to use the money for things they want or things they would like to get for their children. Verbatim responses from participant interviews follow.

I would like more, but right now I don't drive. I don't have a license, so everything is limited. But, at the same time I want more. I am hoping that maybe

in the future I can do more than work here. I work 5 hours, but it's good, my husband said; but it's not too much money. I said I don't care because, I don't want to come home and spend just two hours with my kids, then have to do a lot of things at the house and not spend time with her. I don't want her to spend the whole day in daycare. I think it's perfect for me and for her. I can use the money for me if I want something or for her if I want to get her something. I don't have to ask him. I love that. (PI1)

**PI2.** "It's too bad because now I can't do something different."

**PI3.** "I do like to do more, but I do want to wait for my kids because I need to work because I have to support them. Maybe if I have time. I can go study more."

**PI4.** "I would like to go back to school to study nursing or to be a teacher. I like to teach."

Back when I was in school, they didn't have the opportunities to go to college as they have now, so I wish that it was higher. I've always wanted to be able to work as a counselor with teenagers and children. Sometimes, I feel stuck because I know more things about the computer and how to work it. I do things for my boss. I just applied for the job next door, the bookkeeper. (PI5)

**PI6.** "I am proud of my level of education."

**PI7.** "I wish I had finished my associate's. Not so much a bachelor's, but I was so close to the associate's that I should have finished."

**PI8.** "I wish I had continued college."

**PI9.** "I want to get more. Oh yes."

Well, I just wish I had done it 30 years ago the first time around, but I really appreciate it now. I like going to school, and I just wish I had done it sooner. I can't say that because I was with my kids, I was at home. It's more of a hobby, I am not as . . . people are too young to go to college right after high school. (PI10)

**PI11.** "I'm fine. I am content."

**PI12.** "Sad."

**PI13.** "I've always wanted to go back to become,; I've always wanted to be a flight nurse. I'm too old to do it. I put my kids first. My son flies now, so that's good."

I've taken a few college classes here and there you know; um the reason I have a high school education is because my dad, and he changed his mind by the time he died. As we were growing up, there were three girls and dad just thought that a girl going to college was taking a job away from a man who needed to be the head of the household. Dad always said that if we wanted to be a teacher or a nurse something like that, he knew the only way you could do it was with a college degree he would find a way. He painted cars for a living. He would find a way to get us into college. He saw no point in going to college just to go. (PI14)

**PI15.** "I am hoping to go back to school. I love education and I like this country. I want to get a better job, you know."

**PI16.** "I would like to do more um I would just need someone to push me. I am not the type of person to sit down and say, 'Yep this is what I am going to do'."

**PI17.** "I probably in the next 2 years will be pursuing more going back to college and getting a degree."

**PI18.** "Sorry I didn't do more sooner."

I mean, for I was never a person who really wanted to go out and just explore you know the computer field and stuff like that, but for what I need to know here, I have been able to learn basically by watching someone else do it. So I was not one to just say, 'Ok I am going to go to college for 12 years so I can be this top CEO person'. (PI19)

**PI20.** "It wasn't an option. College wasn't an option for me. I went to work right after high school. I've worked ever since except for when I took off for the kids."

**Interview Question: What other interests are you pursuing or would you pursue if you were not working here?**

*Composite response.* When the participants were asked what interests they would pursue if they were not working as cafeteria workers, they indicated they had interests outside a school cafeteria that included career interests and endeavors to pursue higher levels of education. The participants indicated that they would finish their education, work in fields that would result in earning higher income, or go back to previous work in the clerical, accounting, and nursing industries. Some women indicated that, if they were to continue to work in the K-12 environment, they would desire a higher-level position like cafeteria manager or assistant director. One participant shared that she would like to earn a culinary and event planning degree to further her knowledge of the hospitality industry. Another participant indicated that she would increase her volunteer activities, and another stated that she would take part in more arts and crafts activities.

**PI1.** No response.

**PI2.** "Finish my education perhaps in getting a job work and make more money, you know."

**PI3.** “Yes, I have a lot. I would like to work in a bank or in accounting so that I can have a larger home with a garage and more bedrooms.”

**PI4.** “Daycare maybe, nursing, or teaching. I like to work with kids.”

**PI5.** “Liberty for Psychology, that is my goal.”

I mean I’ve told XXX repeatedly to make an assistant director position for me and make it 7 hours a day. I would like do something. If he made it seven to three that would be perfect. I am here at 7:00, and I can stay till 3:00. (PI6)

**PI7.** “Classes on autism. We have a lot of kids over at XXX with autism.”

I do enjoy working with food, and it is a lot of hard work, but I have thought about taking some sort of class to get into like catering, to become like a specialist. That’s something I’ve always wanted to do. It would be so much fun to have a bed and breakfast. Yeah, something for the latter years. I’m definitely there, to keep me busy. (PI8)

**PI9.** “No response.”

**PI10.** “Psychology.”

**PI11.** No response.

I would like to manage something, working in a company and working in human resources or things like that. I really like that. I like human resources. Working with the people, helping people, working in a company to try to make everything better for them. (PI12)

I took 4 years of sign language, but it’s like any language. If you don’t use it, you will lose it. I was an interpreter for the church for a while til we moved. I wouldn’t mind going back, just recreational classes. You know sign language.

Pottery making. I'd love to do scrapbooking. It can be expensive though, too.

(PI13)

**PI14.** "The food bank."

**PI15.** "A management position. A cafeteria or custodian manager."

**PI16.** "Computer classes, um, I would like to learn more about the job how school nutrition works."

**PI17.** "Photography."

**PI18.** "No response."

**PI19.** "No response."

**PI20.** "None – to wake up every morning."

**Interview Question: Do you have any long-term goals?**

*Composite response.* Not many participants indicated that working in the K-12 environment was a long-term goal. In the previous question concerning feelings about level of education, several participants indicated having regrets about not having more education, and others indicated the desire for more education. Almost all indicated that they would rather be doing anything besides working in a K-12 school cafeteria.

The participants consider their current job acceptable, but they want to do work that makes them feel good. Two interview participants indicated that K-12 dining might be a part of their long-term goals. Other interview participants indicated that they would be going on to bigger and better things: plans to own businesses, further education, find different work, see their children graduate and get married, do more arts and crafts, and taking up other passions.

Right now it's like. I just want to work. I want a nice job that lets me spend time with my family. I want to work with people I like. I want to do work that makes me feel good. (PI1)

**PI2.** "I would like to find another job, but that depends on the economy. I'd like to find another job that offers more money than what I'm making right now."

**PI3.** No response.

**PI4.** "I would like to own a restaurant, an American restaurant, any kind, really. I would also like to pursue nursing."

I would like to work in the school system with troubled teens. I would also like to work with autistic children. My son had to deal with a lot of anger issues and stuff because he was stuck in a chair all his life. I want to work with those kids. (PI5)

**PI6.** "Yes, schooling, culinary school."

Maybe if there's some sort of more education in food service. I don't know what classes they would be. Um, would be fun to take to learn more. Um, maybe like Servsafe is all about being safe and food safety. But maybe how do you cater? How do you figure food for an event? How do you know your vendor? What do you look for in a vendor? (PI7)

**PI8.** "Bed and breakfast."

**PI9.** "No."

I am pretty content where I am. Even with the degree, I don't . . . . I am probably one of the unusual ones. I am fine where I am because I see retirement in 15

years and um I like my job. I like to think on both sides of my brain, and I don't really have any plans unless someone has plans for me. (PI10)

**PI11.** "Just to continue my life and help out my girls and wait for grandkids."

**PI12.** "No."

See my daughter get married. See my kids be happy. I have this chest that's filled with all kinds of crafts that I have been buying throughout the years, and my goal is to finish every craft in that chest before I die. (PI13)

It will be the food bank. I mean people at the church really want me to quit work because the people who are doing it are in their 70s. They love it when I am available in the summer to load that food. It's a lot of work. (PI14)

**PI15.** "No."

**PI16.** "Just to be financially secure. I just want to be able to take care of myself if anything happens."

I love taking pictures, so my number one passion is photography. So when I go back to school, I know that will be one of the classes I take. But in XXX, there's a lot of photography pictures on the beach. Family pictures in white. I'll be in the school district too so I guess I'll be doing that on the side. (PI17)

**PI18.** "Just to rest and relax."

**PI19.** "Just going to take one day at a time."

**PI20.** "None."

**Interview Question: Have you discussed your long-term goals with your supervisor?**

*Composite response.* This question was posed to determine whether the participants were openly discussing intentions to quit with supervisors. The majority of participants indicated that they had not discussed their intentions to quit with their supervisors. Some indicated that they could but that the work environment was kept professional. Others responded that, although they had not discussed intentions to move on to their goals, their supervisors would be happy for the women if they did, and others had no response to this question.

**PI1.** “No. We don’t have time to chat. He told me that there might be an opportunity for a cafeteria manager.”

**PI2.** “Yeah, last year I told him, you know, because for the last 3 years, we haven't received a raise.”

**PI3.** “Yes, we talk about it. Yeah. I talk to her sometimes.”

**PI4.** “No.”

**PI5.** “No, although he would probably think it’s a good thing. I did tell him that I was thinking about going to Liberty, but I didn’t tell him for what.”

**PI6.** “Yes.”

**PI7.** “No. No.”

**PI8.** “No.”

**PI9.** “No.”

**PI10.** “Yes.”

**PI11.** “Yes.”

**PI12.** No response.

**PI13.** “Yes.”

**PI14.** “Yes.”

**PI15.** No response.

**PI16.** “No, but she knows I am interviewing for other positions.”

**PI17.** “No, we just keep everything professional.”

**PI18.** “No, but I could.”

**PI19.** No response.

**PI20.** No response.

**Interview Question: Are you currently taking classes to gain ore education or another skill?**

*Composite response.* Even though participants had indicated that they desired more education, were saddened that they did not have more, and felt stuck in their current positions, the majority of participants responded that they would not be going back to school to further their education. Factors preventing this from occurring include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and being out of school for too long. Verbatim responses from interview participants follow.

**PI1.** “No.”

**PI2.** “Further my education, no.”

**PI3.** “No, I don’t have time. I have 5 hours here, then to my mom’s, then home to work. I wake up every morning at 5:30 and start cleaning my house in the morning before I come.”

**PI4.** “No.”

**PI5.** “I am waiting for the high school to send my transcripts over to Liberty. I’m supposed to start in May.”

**PI6.** “I don’t have time or money. I could find the time, but I have a busy schedule. I have the motivation to make it work. But, I need the money. I still want to go to culinary school.”

**PI7.** “No. But I am looking at different things.”

**PI8.** “No.”

**PI9.** “No, not right now. I was.”

**PI10.** “Yes I am. A BA in psychology.”

**PI11.** “No.”

**PI12.** “No.”

**PI13.** “No.”

**PI14.** “Not right now. I’ve got the food bank. I run the food bank.”

**PI15.** “No.”

**PI16.** “I am not. I would like to take more computer classes because I really am computer illiterate.”

**PI17.** No response.

**PI18.** “No.”

**PI19.** “No.”

Unfortunately, I have been out of it for too long. I have no desire to go back.

What I realized after taking that month off is how physical this job is. I almost couldn’t after the first week. I wanted to die. I think I have a hernia. It’s very physical for \$25,000. I’m looking at my coworkers, and they are not making

much. Single moms . . . Their rent is going up. Some have lost part of their child support. (PI20)

**Interview Question: Do you plan to work in a school cafeteria environment until you retire?**

*Composite response.* Half the participants believed they would be retiring from the K-12 dining environment, and the other half responded that they would only work until their kids graduated from high school or from college. Feelings concerning retirement were split. Verbatim responses from participant interviews follow.

No. I hope not. I like to work here, but we don't have insurance. I can't live my whole life without insurance. And retirement, I want to save money for my retirement. That's the thing that I am worried about. For now it's ok, because my husband takes care of everything we need. (PI1)

**PI2.** "I don't know."

**PI3.** "No, but I don't know. I don't think so. When my kids graduate from college, I do want to learn more. I want to study. This is basically a demanding job."

**PI4.** "No. I may work here until my kids graduate from high school."

**PI5.** "No."

**PI6.** No response.

**PI7.** "Maybe."

**PI8.** No response.

**PI9.** "Yes. Yeah. When I quit here, that's it. Then time to enjoy your life."

**PI10.** "Yes."

Well, I thought April would be my last month. But that did not work out; the log cabin in West Virginia. I plan to stay as long as I can physically. Yeah, XXX was asking me how long I would be working here and if I'd be commuting. I told her, yeah, 30 more years. Just joking . . . I can't work another 30 years here.

(PI11)

**PI12.** "Yes."

**PI13.** "Yes."

**PI14.** "Yeah."

**PI15.** "Yes."

**PI16.** "Not the cafeteria; hopefully not, but in the food service department, yes.

Yes, I would like to."

**PI17.** "No."

**PI18.** "Yes."

**PI19.** "Yes."

**PI20.** "Yes."

### **Overarching Theme**

Recurring themes were as follows:

1. Only some interview participants had achieved higher levels of education, completing all or some of college, or attained technical training.
2. The majority of interview participants who had college experience had regrets about not completing their degrees.

3. Interview participants who had not completed their college degrees and were working in the cafeteria solely based on the convenient schedule were saddened that they had not completed their education and felt stuck in their positions.
4. Working in the cafeteria is not a long-term goal, and feelings regarding retiring from the school division are split.
5. Time, money, other interests, and being out of school for too long were factors influencing women in the decision to remain in their positions as cafeteria workers.

Overqualification adversely affects job longevity for cafeteria workers because they feel frustrated, stuck, and mismatched, but factors preventing the women from leaving to pursue other goals include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and being out of school for too long.

**Research Question: What is the meaning of overqualification in the hospitality industry?** The purpose of this research question was to understand what it means to be an overqualified worker in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry. Overqualification describes workers who are not well suited for positions based on an inability to use their skills (Warr, 1987). Rousseau (1990) suggested that people may become frustrated when they do not obtain a job that allows them to fully utilize their skills. The frustration leads to perceived cognitive overqualification, which is the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to possess more skills, education, or experience than required as stated in the job description (Khan & Morrow, 1991). The research question helped find, understand, and interpret the meaning of overqualification pertaining to skill underutilization, underemployment, lack of opportunity for growth and

change, and an overqualification to perform the essential duties of the job (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

**Interview questions addressing research question:**

1. Do you have specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying you to do different work? Can you provide examples of this?
2. How do you feel about your decision to work in a cafeteria?
3. How do you feel about working in a school cafeteria?
4. Have you ever worked in a capacity where you have been able to utilize your other skills?
5. Can you provide examples of factors influencing you to choose to work in a school cafeteria?
6. Do you believe that this work is mentally stimulating?
7. Do you believe that you are working with people who have more or less education, skills, or experience than you do?
8. What is your husband's level of education, technical training, or work experience? Can you provide examples of this?

**Interview Question: Do you have specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying you to do different work? Can you provide examples of this?**

*Composite response.* The participants' responses to this question varied, but all indicated that they had specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying them to do work outside a K-12 dining environment. Table 2 shows the various careers and industries in which the interview participants had been involved before taking their

positions as cafeteria workers. The previous positions included flight attendant, hotel manager, nurse's aide, finance, attaining a degree in business, assembly line work, owning a small crafting business, working as an accounts payables clerk, and working as a purchasing agent. The information in Table 2 matches the verbatim responses from each interview participant. Verbatim responses from interview participants follow.

Table 2

*A List of Specialized Training, Technical Skills, Hobbies, Talents of Interview*

*Participants*

<b>Interview Participant</b>	<b>Technical Skills/Hobbies/Talents/ Work Experience</b>
PI1	Flight Attendant, Tourism Degree, Hotel Manager
PI2	Childcare Provider
PI3	Nurse's Aide
PI4	Administrative
PI5	Math, Finance, Business Law
PI6	BS in Business Management with a concentration in Marketing and a secondary in Management Studies, Commercial Property Management
PI7	Accounting
PI8	Business
PI9	Snack Factory-Assembly Line
PI10	Governor's Office, Hospital
PI11	Sewing, Quilter, Knot Crochet. Macramé, Toll Painting
PI12	Accounts receivable clerk
PI13	LPN–Licensed practical nurse
PI14	Personnel management specialist
PI15	Fast food manager
PI16	Accounts payables, receivables clerk
PI17	Special ed teacher's assistant
PI18	Dance teacher, volunteer for the Red Cross
PI19	Assistant manager
PI20	Purchasing agent

**PI1.** “Yes, flight attendant, tourism degree; worked in a hotel for 7 years as a manager.”

**PI2.** “Just for little time in the school for the child day care in the afternoon, just for like 2 months.”

**PI3.** “Part-time as a nurse’s aide.”

**PI4.** “Yes, administrative and computers.”

**PI5.** “I studied math finance and business law . . . then I got pregnant, had complications, then stopped schooling.”

**PI6.** “Yes. I have a 4-year college degree. A BS in business management with a concentration in marketing and a secondary in management studies.”

**PI7.** “Yes, accounting.”

**PI8.** “Yes, I was studying business in college.”

**PI9.** “I worked in Korea in a snack factory.”

**PI10.** “I don’t know, just experience. The variety of jobs I’ve had. The governor’s office, the hospital. Stuff like that.”

**PI11.** “Sewing. I am a quilter. I knot crochet. I’ve done macramé. I’ve done toll painting. I just love hobbies and crafts.

Accounts receivable clerk. I worked at a little country store my mom managed.

Out in XXX, that’s when we lived in XXX. I was there for . . . I don’t know . . . I don’t know how long I was there. That was it. Before I came here, my kids were little, so I would babysit. (PI12)

**PI13.** “Yes, I am an LPN.”

I ended up as a personnel management specialist. I worked a lot. I was at the headquarters for a while. The whole wide world used to report civilian strength to me, and I did strength reports, and whenever the department of defense, the

pentagon, Congress wanted to know what we were going to have a shortage in in the next 3years, I would write the programs. I wouldn't write the programs, but I would write the requirements for the programmers to see what data we had to look at to see career fields and ages and retirements and strengths. (PI14)

**PI15.** "I have been working for 12 years at Burger King. The owner owns 15 stores. He has five here. I have been working at his stores."

**PI16.** "In my previous job, I did some accounts payables and receivables there."

**PI17.** "Special Ed teacher's assistant."

**PI18.** "Before all this, when I was younger, I was a dance teacher for Arthur Murry and had also done water color painting in DC and I was a volunteer for the Red Cross."

**PI19.** "I learned as an assistant manager to do the manager's position."

**PI20.** "I was a purchasing agent."

**Interview Question: How do you feel about your decision to work in a school cafeteria?**

*Composite response.* All participants, except two who had no response and one who wished she had not made the same decision and had gone to college instead, believed they had made a good decision to accept a job working in a school cafeteria. The job has taught them patience, and they enjoy working with children. The participants felt good about their decisions, based on familial obligations. The schedule is conducive to raising small children, and the participants noted that working in the school environment gave them close access to their children. Verbatim responses from interview participants follow.

**PI1.** No response.

**PI2.** “I feel good, I feel good, I'm happy.”

**PI3.** “Yes.”

**PI4.** “I like it.”

**PI5.** “It’s good; it’s taught me a lot. Nothing else has taught me more patience. I needed that.”

Those are the two things that I love the most . . . kids and food. To be able to integrate those into one job is great for me. And I love that I get some interaction with the students. I love being on the register being able to interact with them. I love doing the food. I love doing the additional projects. I get to use some of my skills. For me, I love standardizing the recipes and creating the recipes and trying new things, and you know I think the other folks are like, ‘Why do we have to change anything?’ ‘Why do we have to do fresh because it’s more work.’ (PI6)

**PI7.** No response.

**PI8.** “I don’t regret it. I am happy I did.”

**PI9.** “I feel good.”

**PI10.** “Good.”

**PI11.** “I think I made a wise decision.”

**PI12.** “Good.”

Family-wise it was good. It was the best decision I made. I do miss nursing, I can’t lie, but family-wise and my kids, it was the best decision. And I’m still with kids, and you know I worked pediatrics for 12 years and OB. And you know I got to deliver babies. (PI13)

**PI14.** “Great.”

**PI15.** “Good.”

**PI16.** “Great.”

**PI17.** “I was very glad that I applied for the position, and I have very much enjoyed it.”

**PI18.** “I would not have made the same decision. If I could go back, I would have gone to college and had a career.”

I think, um, like I said back to the kids just being able to be there with them at home in the afternoons to help them with their homework and to be able to provide dinner and stuff for them because for a long time my mom helped them in the afternoons and would fix dinner and stuff. So when I took this position, as they were smaller made it easier and to be able to be home with them and cook a home cooked meal and to sit around the table with them cause I did do two jobs. I did this and the daycare and just last year I quit the daycare.0 (PI19)

**PI20.** No response.

**Interview Question: How do you feel about working in a school cafeteria?**

*Composite response.* Like the previous question, this question was asked as a follow-up to gather more information concerning how participants felt about how others viewed their work as cafeteria workers. The participants’ responses ranged from “I love it” (PI3 PI9 PI10 PI11 PI17 PI20) to “I like it” (PI13 PI4 PI1 PI2 PI3 PI5 PI6 PI7 PI12 PI13 PI14 PI15 PI19). Some noted that they liked it because they were able to work and save money. Others noted that they enjoyed cooking, loved children, and enjoyed providing a service to the school community. Another pointed out that she is on a

mission to improve school lunches and promote healthier school meals by offering alternatives to preparing processed foods.

A concern brought up in the interviews is that the cafeteria worker position is not generally a respected position. The participants indicated that, at the beginning, not really knowing how people would react when told what they did for a living was a concern. Generally, the participants believed that cafeteria work was a good part-time job, and they felt needed. Verbatim responses from interview participants follow.

I like it because I want to work and have some money, but at the same time, it's like so many years studying and working in a good position and everything and now I am here. Sometimes it's frustrating, but I think it's a sacrifice for my daughter. She needs me so I can do it. But, sometimes it's hard. (PI1)

**PI2.** "I like it, like to work here, I like to cook two to make my job joyful."

I really like it. Um, at the beginning when I started working, I did not believe that I would like it, but I like it. I love children, I love the kids, I love to work with them, and I love to cook and bake. At home too. I always cooked and baked at my house. I never eat out. Sometimes. I never buy canned food. I bake here. I love my job. I love it when the kids tell me that they love my rolls or my fried rice. So, I love it. The principal of this school . . . whenever he eats he comes to the kitchen, and he asks for me and tells me that I make the best rolls. (PI3)

**PI4.** "It's good. I have been working here 1 month. I worked in another school cafeteria for 1 year."

**PI5.** "I like it. I like working with the kids. It's hard on the body though. I have some issues going though, so it's time."

Yeah, um, I like it. I've had a good experience. I think XXX is a great supervisor to work for. I feel like we share that same philosophy about childhood and school lunches. I support his mission. So I think when I decided, we sort of had agreed that, when our youngest started kindergarten, I would go back to work, but I still wanted parenting to be you know I wanted to be there to get them off to school and get them home from school and keep them out of childcare a little bit longer. Um, so when I decided to go back into the workforce I was looking for something that allowed me to do that. So I wanted to work while they were in school.

Going . . . I have a background in commercial property management. To be a commercial property manager, that's a 10-12 hour a day normally and so that once a month when we have to do financial reporting or during budget season those numbers increase. And so I didn't want to do that. I thought it would be nice to be in the school system because then I would have daily interaction with my kids. The point where you get a job you no longer get to volunteer. You lose that contact with them. I thought well if I am working in the schools, I will still cross paths with my kids even though I am not volunteering. So, that was a huge motivator for me. I interviewed for two positions. Substitute teacher and this and I interviewed for the sub first and I really liked it and I got offered the job right away and I was really excited. And I came to this interview because it was already set up, and I thought well I'm going to go through with it because it can't hurt but fully expecting for it to be a fifteen minute interview and rejecting the job and doing the sub route. And I met with XXX for like an hour and 45 minutes, and the first thing out of his mouth was, 'You've got a college degree, you've got

skills. Why do you want this job? Anybody can put food on a tray and serve it,' and so we talked about that. And he talked about well I've got some goals for this food service program and these are my goals and this is my philosophy and this is what I want to accomplish. Being a foody, that really resonated with me. I thought oh suddenly I have a dilemma. You know. (PI6)

I wasn't real sure how people were going to react. When I tell people that I work at XXX, they say, 'Oh what grade do you teach?' I'll say, 'No, I am the cook. I feed them. Then, it's like, 'Oh'. But they don't understand my situation or my life choices. Just like I don't understand theirs. But, I like it. Sometimes I wish I had more time to get things together. Time goes so fast. (PI7)

I really enjoy it. I like to stay busy. You have to stay busy to get your things done, and I've always enjoyed cooking, anything having to do with preparing things and serving the kids. For a lot of years, I didn't actually get on the line, and when I did I really enjoyed it. It took me not even 5 minutes, and I was comfortable with the children. (PI8)

**PI9.** "Oh, I love it."

I love it now, because I have such a great boss. In the beginning, I chose this job for the hours and the months, and I wanted out of the house, but now it's more than a job. It's a career. My boss has given me responsibilities and made me accountable, which I did not have the first 3 to 5 years of this job. I like the variety; it's a great part-time job. I couldn't find anything better. (PI20)

I love it. I love the hours, and it was the perfect mommy job when I first started back in 94. I was 31. Back in California before I moved here. I used to work in the cafeteria handing out straws and napkins. I also used to be on yard duty during recess time. And I always thought, 'Well maybe I will go in the kitchen,' you know growing up I said I'd never work in the cafeteria. We always viewed it as the lunch ladies. (PI10)

**PI12.** "I like it."

**PI13.** "Except for some of the immature problems, yeah, I mean you know I like it. The hours are good."

**PI14.** "I like it; it's the perfect part-time mommy job."

**PI15.** "That's a good question. Yes, I like it. I like this job, yeah."

**PI16.** "I actually like it. I hate the work, but I love the people that I work with and for. I love dealing with the kids but the work is hard."

**PI17.** "I love it. I love my job. I love to cook and I love kids so it's perfect for me."

**PI18.** "I don't know it like has its ups and downs when my child was 6th grade when I started."

I like it. I mean it has its challenges some days, but I mean I like being around children, so it makes my job a little bit easier you know knowing that I am going to get to see a little smiling face when I can't see my kids. I have all these kids that I get to see every day. And when they are sad, it makes me sad. (PI19)

**PI20.** "I love it."

**Interview Question: Have you ever worked in a capacity where you have been able to utilize your other skills?**

*Composite response.* As a follow-up to the previous question asking participants to describe their skills and abilities outside of cafeteria work, the participants were asked to discuss other work experiences. This question intensified the feelings of overqualification in the K-12 dining environment. The participants discussed educational experiences as college graduates or collegiate experiences.

Table 3

*A Prepresentation of Participants' Previous Work Experiences*

<b>Research Participant</b>	<b>Previous Work Experience</b>
PI1	Flight attendant, 5-star hotel manager
PI2	Childcare professional
PI3	Nurse's aide
PI4	Restaurant cook, secretary
PI5	Finance, business Law – Finance in current position as a cafeteria worker
PI6	Community management
PI7	Accounting
PI8	Newspaper ads, secretary
PI9	Snack factory
PI10	Clerical or assistant, political offices, hospitals, research assistant
PI11	Quilter, sold at craft shows
PI12	Accounts payable clerk
PI13	Nurse
PI14	Personnel management specialist
PI15	Fast food manager
PI16	Accounts receivables
PI17	Special education
PI18	Dance teacher, Red Cross volunteer
PI19	Assistant manager
PI20	Purchasing agent

The participants also discussed their other job experiences, which included professional careers in accounting, clerical work, graphic design, nursing, human

resources, restaurant managers, hospitality and tourism, and purchasing. Table 3 shows the participants' responses to this question. Verbatim responses to this interview question follow.

Yes, as a flight attendant. I worked for 7 years as a manager in a four-star hotel; then, I wanted to work as a flight attendant, and I did that for a year. Then, the man I was dating wanted to get married, so I moved here. (PI1)

**PI2.** "Child day care in the afternoon."

**PI3.** "Part-time as a nurse's aide."

**PI4.** "Yes, I worked as a cook in the restaurant industry. I also worked in several other positions. I worked as a secretary in Peru."

I studied math finance and business law. Then, I got pregnant, had complications, then stopped schooling. Here, I have to be able to take a recipe that for 50 and take to 500 or 600, track auto, a lot of math there. Here, placing orders and understanding how to convert case sizes into portions and knowing what to order. (PI5)

**PI6.** "Yes. I have a 4-year college degree. A BS in business management with a concentration in marketing and a secondary in management studies."

**PI7.** "I worked at Cameron and Associates in Alexandria, their CPA firm. It was the same accounting stuff but different people."

Creating ads for a newspaper for Grant City. And I worked as a receptionist; started as a receptionist then I was secretary, and I ended up being a word processor. My boss gave me a book and said, 'Read this and play around with this machine,' and next thing I knew I was doing type setting. (PI8)

**PI9.** “A snack factory.”

**PI10.** “Yes. They have all been clerical or assistant type jobs. Political offices, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies.”

Quilting has been my passion. My mom, she always grew up doing crafts. I was 12, and I went to her quilting guild, and she always got me involved in it. I used to sell at craft shows but not necessarily quilts, but I used to do craft shows all the time in California. (PI11)

**PI12.** “Yes. I worked for community management as an accounts receivables clerk.”

**PI13.** “Yes, 12 years as a nurse, and I worked as a nurse during summer school.”

I ended up as a personal management specialist. I worked a lot. I was at the headquarters for a while. The whole wide world used to report civilian strength to me, and I did strength reports and whenever the Department of Defense, the Pentagon, Congress wanted to know what we were going to have a shortage in in the next three years, I would write the programs. I wouldn't write the programs, but I would write the requirements for the programmers to see what data we had to look at to see career fields and ages and retirements and strengths. (PI14)

Yes. I have been working for 12 years at Burger King. The owner owns 15 stores. He has five here. I have been working at his stores. I worked 4 years as an employee and then the rest of the time as a team leader and manager. (PI15)

**PI16.** “In my previous job, I did some accounts payables and receivables there. Um, so yeah, I found lots of money for them I did that.”

**PI17.** “I worked in special education.”

**PI18.** “Yes.”

**PI19.** “Yes.”

**PI20.** “Oh yeah. I worked for Marriott for 10 years as a purchasing agent.”

**Interview Question: Can you provide examples of items influencing you to choose to work in a school cafeteria?**

*Composite response.* The participants were asked to describe factors influencing their choice to work in a school cafeteria. The majority of interview participants indicated that the schedule was conducive to raising their children. The women indicated that they wanted to be with their kids, desiring to be home before they went to school and when they came home each day. The additional income was also a source of extra spending money for the women and extra support for the home. The convenience of the schedule was a major factor influencing the women to take this type of a position. The low compensation was not a huge detractor since the women were married and the husband provided the main support for the household. The women thought the time gained with children was a good trade-off for the low pay.

**PI1.** “My daughter, scheduling around my daughter. I moved here to Virginia because I married my husband.”

**PI2.** “To have the same schedule with my daughter. I like to work for the kids. I have nice bosses XXX and XXX. I have enough time to spend with my daughters in the afternoons and when they have breaks.”

I am working to support my children who are in college. Because of my kids. I wanted to be with them. I wanted to be at home before they go to school and when they come home. I realized that this is the only job where I can do that. I

start work at 8:30 here, my kids leave at 7:00/7:30 and when I go home at 1:30/2:00, they come home after 2:30. For my kids, there is no change. I am at home for them. Also, I work and make some money to take care of them. (PI3)

**PI4.** “The hours were good. This is a good job for me because I have children.”

**PI5.** “The hours, the benefits.”

**PI6.** No response.

Fun money. When XXX was in 5th grade, and we were using it for vacations and um, we bought a used Expedition. We got rid of the Honda and bought a bigger truck. Then, it became a necessity because the economy tanked, and we lost our retirement. And then XXX, my husband builds, he builds houses. He never lost his job, but we lost all that bonus money. (PI7)

**PI8.** “The schedule, so I could be with my family, you know, with my children.

With my husband, he was off on weekends, so I wasn’t working on weekends when he was home.”

**PI9.** “Because my kids. It’s very good hours working. After the kids are gone, I come here work. And before kids come home, I am home.”

**PI10.** “I just applied for the division, and I got a call from food services.”

My mother-in-law did it for 14 years out in California, so she encouraged me to do it. I said, yeah, that way I can be at home with the girls and for the holidays. Perfect hours. I love having my summer vacations. I’m sure all the ladies would know my work ethic. I love to work and help people. It keeps me busy. It’s just 4 hours, and I can have my time to do other things and other hobbies. (PI10)

**PI12.** “I would be off when the kids were off and still get off early enough to take the kids wherever they needed to go after school.”

When we first got here from Massachusetts. We were in the military, so we moved 12 times. We came down here, and he started working with another civilian company. We were in such culture shock. A house in Massachusetts was \$25, and a house here was \$2500. You know, we just could not. It was pure culture shock. So, I did a lot of volunteering at my son’s school down in Burke. They offered me a position. Then, I went to Robinson High School, and they gave me my own school at Clifton. Then, my kids got moved to Round and Hilda. I was there so much, and she said, ‘Why don’t you just work here?’. She was retiring, so she knew I had previous experience because I was still working, and I was pregnant then. She offered me the position. So I took it, thinking I will only be here for 2 years, then I am going back to nursing as soon as my daughter is older enough to stay with the sitter. (PI13)

I could walk to school, and the hours were great. When the kids were out of school, I was out of work. So I didn’t have to worry about daycare and babysitters. I was a little worried about the stigma of cafeteria worker or janitor. I have the perfect part-time mommy job. The hours and the convenience. I could be near my kids. I mean that was the big thing. I was available for my kids. Because I had a job offer to go back and be a GS 12 when I started working here. I passed it up. I didn’t want to deal with the commute. I didn’t want to deal with babysitters. It’s the perfect mommy job. (PI14)

My daughter started college, and she loves school, and she asked me to help her pay her tuition. I have another child in school too. I have my parents in Mexico too you know. Sometimes, when I have money, I send it to my mom and my dad, you know. (PI15)

Because my two kids had diabetes, and I wanted to be in the schools so that the school system knew who I was and take just a little bit of extra care of my kids. And it was the perfect mommy job. (PI16)

I was a prior manager in Mississippi for 2 years. When the job came open last year, the cafeteria manager had been here for 30 years, and I felt like that was my opportunity to take another kitchen. It doesn't come around very often, so I applied and got the job. (PI17)

**PI18.** "Working around my children's schedules influenced me to start working in this environment."

After I had my first child and was looking for a job. I had worked XXX Hospital in the kitchen and um, so I didn't really ever think that that would be something that I would continue the rest of my life working in a hospital because that was a sad a sad position. So when my mom took on a position, she had left the hospital cause she worked there too. She took on a manager's position at the high school, and um they needed help the next year, so I was able to work there for 4 years and just by being there and learning that and being able to be home with my kids in the summer time made the job a little bit more fun to know that I was going to be

able to be home and that I don't have to worry about weekends and summer time and that I get to enjoy my kids for the summer, so. (PI19)

“The kids’ schedule when they were younger and because my husband is very well compensated for his knowledge. You know money wasn’t an issue. The convenience factor was there. That was worth the pay I wasn’t getting.” (PI20)

**Interview Question: Do you believe that this work is mentally stimulating?**

*Composite response.* The participants were asked this question to determine their engagement in the tasks required in the job of a cafeteria worker. The participants noted that the job is never boring, that there is always something new to do, sometimes stressful, sometimes enjoyable with a lot of activity, and that the job is good for the body, promoting exercise, because of the physical requirements. Four participants noted that, compared to what they used to do, the job is not mentally stimulating and at times the tasks become redundant. Verbatim responses from participant interviews follow.

**PI1.** “Every day is something new. It’s not boring. One day I could be doing salads, and another day I could be doing something else. The register, then one day I have to serve.”

**PI2.** “For me it is not hard because I was working before 10 years ago in restaurants, and this cafeteria is easy for me. Everything is very easy,; we have to be on time, that's it.”

**PI3.** “Yes. I like this job because there are a lot of activities. This is kind of good for your body . . . for exercising.”

**PI4.** “Yes. I enjoy it.”

**PI5.** “Not anymore.”

**PI6.** “Yes, if I am empowered to make some decisions.”

Yeah, yes. Cause you you . . . I don’t know about other schools, but if I have to um bake today make 450 servings of chicken and noodles, well the recipes gives you for 50 or 100. You have to know your weights and measures, you know, dry and liquid measurements. If you give me a recipe I have to look at it and say, OK, this says sauté. I don’t have a sauté pan. I have four stockpots. (PI7)

**PI8.** “Yes on a lot of different levels.”

**PI9.** “No. No. Sometimes heavy, but not hard.”

**PI10.** “Yes. Anytime you come from an at home situation, this is definitely stimulating. It wasn’t always; it didn’t always require effort. It does now.”

**PI11.** “Yes.”

**PI12.** “Some days. Very.”

**PI13.** “Yeah. Cause you really gotta think and it keeps you on your toes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. There’s always something to think about. Yeah.”

Mentally stimulating? Um, no. Not compared to what I used to do. I mean the biggest frustrations are the way the kids are dressed, and the administrators don’t do anything. If you have the rules, why are still here at lunch time? (PI14)

**PI15.** “Yes.”

**PI16.** “In the cafeteria, no, because I have done it for so long that it so redundant. It’s something new every day, but it’s basically the same thing.”

**PI17.** “Yes. Sometimes stressful but that’s with any job. I have a very good working crew.”

**PI18.** “There’s a fine line. I would say more mentally challenging.”

**PI19.** “Yes.”

**PI20.** “I’m needed. That’s why I get up every morning because I am needed.

Even if they don’t say ‘thank you,’ I know they appreciate it.”

**Interview Question: Do you believe that you are working with people, who have more education, skills, or experience than you do?**

*Composite response.* In the participants’ opinion, their coworkers have the same set of education, skills, or experience. Each person respects the other’s level of education or skillset because they are all considered the same in their positions as cafeteria workers. The position evens the playing field although the backgrounds in education and work experiences vary. The women do not judge each other based on these areas but understand that they are all working for similar reasons, which are to be readily available for their families. Verbatim responses from interview participants follow.

**PI1.** “I’m not sure. I never ask them. Sometimes you can tell. It’s not the same. I don’t try to ask them anything about it. I just talk to them like another person.”

I respect their level of education, but we work the same in this place. Even though I am the assistant manager, I don't sit in the office; when it's time to work I work. I not sure if the other ladies have different education than me, but in this job, we are all the same. (PI2)

**PI3.** “We are all on the same playing field. If they have more, I don’t feel like they have more or less. No.”

**PI4.** No response.

**PI5.** “Probably one has more experience . . . she’s older.”

I get both because XXX stayed in the workforce. He has never taken a sabbatical. I have skills but they may be rusty because I took some time off. And then I see people who may have the physical labor part down, but you know the intellectual managerial part, no. And not everybody is supposed to have that. It takes all of us to make it work. (PI16)

I think I have more education considering the stories they've told. Two got married at young ages and no college. I'm not sure if another graduated from high school. I have a little bit more. My manager has work experience and street smarts. (PI7)

I think well let's see how do I say this. I think that there are some that are maybe not quite as skilled in but some have more home grown skills than others. Some have where they actually have institutionalized knowledge, so it goes both ways. (PI8)

**PI9.** "Yes."

All types of people. There's some that absolutely don't have any education, some with some. Some that have life experiences that have helped them with their jobs. Um, some that could definitely use some education (laugh) but you have all types. (PI10)

**PI11.** "I'm not sure."

**PI12.** "Yes, one. XXX has been cooking for a long time. Look at XXX, she seems to pick up things very quickly. And of course, Mrs. XXX."

**PI13.** “It depends. Education-wise I have more than some of them. Some of them have much more other skills like Spanish, patience, and um education-wise maybe not but life-wise they can teach me so much more.”

It’s a hodge-podge. I don’t have a college education. Like I said I’ve taken several college classes. I think I have more professional work experience than the others. I mean, I used to listen to them rant and rave about why at Christmas our dinners should be paid for us. I’m like really, when you work for the government, you pay for any event you go to. (PI14)

**PI15.** “I’m not sure.”

Some have less, uh, in the kitchen I would say that everybody has less knowledge of that place than I do. Education-wise, I would say there is one that has more so than I do. Don’t underestimate people. People look down on us because we are cafeteria people. (PI16)

**PI17.** “Yes. Sometimes stressful but that’s with any job. I have a very good working crew.”

**PI18.** “The same.”

I think there’s probably a few that I think that have less skills and are able to do their job, because this is a demanding job, but it is not something that takes a lot of reading and stuff so somebody that really cannot read a recipe as well is really able to do other jobs that doesn’t require that. (PI19)

The teachers the school staff are more educated. They always complain about their education. You know it used to be teachers would get a 5% raise; support

staff would get 1%. I mean some of these younger kids don't realize. Or we wouldn't get anything. (PI20)

**Interview Question: What is your husband's level of education, technical training, or work experiences? Can you provide examples of this?**

*Composite response.* When asked about their spouse's education and work experience, the interview participants provided information that supports Frank's (1978) theory of differential overqualification in that each husband had found work more fitting for his education and experiences and provided the primary support for the family. Eight spouses only completed high school but had found positions in lucrative fields like the food service industry as a restaurant manager, a mechanic, a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service for 25 years, maintenance and storm water management, and in construction. The spouses who had college experience held positions like assistant chief engineer, logistics planner for the civil service, and bartender.

Spouses who were college graduates held the following positions: gym manager, IT technician, home builder, federal government worker, senior contract administrator, air traffic control oversight, wild land firefighter, business owner, and consultant. Table 4 shows education and work experience of the 20 interview participants' spouses.

Verbatim responses to the interview questions follow.

Table 4

*A list of Spousal Education, Technical Training, or Work Experience*

<b>Interview Participant</b>	<b>Spouse's Education</b>	<b>Spouse's Work Experience</b>
PI1	Bachelor's in Language Development	Indoor soccer gym manager
PI2	High school	Fast food manager
PI3	High school	Mechanic, carpet installer, taxi driver
PI4	High school	Construction
PI5	Associate's	IT technician
PI6	College experience	Assistant chief engineer
PI7	Bachelor's in Science	Home builder
PI8	High school	Car parts, prison manager
PI9	West Point graduate	Pilot-FAA
PI10	Bachelor's in Business	Federal Government
PI11	College experience	Logistics planner for the Civil Service
PI12	High school	U.S. Postal Service-25 Years
PI13	Master's in Contract Administration	Senior contract administrator
PI14	Two master's degrees in Chemistry	Air Force, Air traffic control, Computer data management
PI15	High school	Construction
PI16	College experience	Bartender
PI17	Bachelor's	Wild land fire fighter-25 years
PI18	High school	Construction
PI19	High school	Maintenance and storm water management
PI20	Bachelor's	Business owner, consultant, engineer

He is a manager of an indoor place. It's a place where people play soccer and Lacrosse, any kind of sport. He's a manager there and a soccer coach. He went to school for language development. He played soccer in college. He got a scholarship to go to school for playing soccer. (PI1)

**PI2.** “He graduated from high school. He is a manager for Burger King.”

**PI3.** “My husband right now is a taxi driver, um, but before he was working in a mechanics shop. And before that he was working as a carpet installer.”

**PI4.** “High school graduate. No college degree. My husband went to school to become a machine operator. Construction.”

**PI5.** “IT Technician, completed high school, did 2 years of college. He works for World-Wide Environmental Corporation. They are the ones that do the mission machines now.”

He completed high school. He has a couple years of college. He has a 3rd class steam engineer’s license. So that’s the trade portion of that question. And his last known job is assistant chief engineer for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

(PI6)

**PI7.** “A BS in science, um, business from George Mason. My husband builds, he builds houses.”

**PI8.** “His education, he graduated high school and he got married while he was in high school to his first wife and started a family. And his, um, I guess you would just call him a blue collar worker.”

**PI9.** “West Point Graduate, a pilot. He works for the FAA in DC.”

**PI10.** “Four years of college. Many years in government. He has a business degree.”

**PI11.** “He had some college, but definitely high school. Never got a college degree. He is a logistics planner working for the civil service.”

**PI12.** “High School; he is a letter carrier. He has been doing that for, I don’t know, 25 years.”

Master’s in Contract Administration. He works for Northrop Gruman, and he is a senior contract administrator, and I can’t talk to him. He tells me all this lingo, and I’m like . . . I don’t know what you are talking about. Let’s go back to the flowers and the grass growing. (PI13)

**PI14.** “He has two master’s degrees. Chemistry. He’s retired air force. His thing was. He was going to be a chemist in the air force. Vietnam trained him for air traffic control. He is in computer data management.”

**PI15.** “Construction.”

**PI16.** “Some college. He’s a bartender.”

**PI17.** “Completed 4 years of college, and he is currently a wild land firefighter with the U.S. forest service. He loves it. 25 years. So yes he loves his job.”

**PI18.** “11th grade; he worked in construction all his life.”

He graduated high school, but his level of experience through XXX County is whatever training. He’s got a lot of training in the computer field and stuff. He’s a supervisor over he works at maintenance and storm water management, and he helps with dry ponds and the contractors and stuff. Um, with the bus shelters and stuff like that with the snow removal they have to keep the bus shelters open. But his education is that they are constantly training down there for different things for things like Excel and things like that. They are getting ready to do a new payroll system, and he had to go and learn all that. (PI19)

College. He owns his own business. He's getting ready to sell it. He'll still work there, but they are selling it to an investment firm. He's pretty smart. He's a registered engineer; he's a professional engineer. He's an expert in his field. He is a consultant. He is one of the more knowledgeable men in the country on building code. (I20)

### **Overarching Theme**

Recurring themes were as follows:

1. Although the majority of interview participants had specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying them to do work outside a K-12 dining environment, they indicated that they believed they had made a good decision to work in the school cafeteria.
2. The women indicated that they enjoyed the cafeteria work and believed it is a good, part-time, family-friendly job.
3. The work schedule of a cafeteria worker is a good trade-off for not working in a different industry.
4. Everyone is on the same playing field when working in a K-12 dining environment; past education or work experiences do not play a significant role in the work requirements.
5. Spouses work in industries and positions where their income provides the primary support for the family. The meaning of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry is insignificant when it comes to gaining more time with children and having a spouse who is able to provide the primary financial support for the family.

## **Summary**

Chapter 4 included the study findings from the interviews with 20 K-12 cafeteria workers living in Northern Virginia. The interviews involved exploring the overqualification of women cafeteria workers who have chosen to work in part-time positions based on familial obligations. The data presented in Chapter 4 represent the perspectives and opinions about working in situations where the women believed they were underemployed. Through the interpretive phenomenological analysis of transcribed interviews, three thematic categories were developed to represent the lived experiences and perceptions of study participants.

The transcribed interviews were analyzed and used to create composite responses that are descriptions of the lived experiences of the interview participants. The composite responses described how the participants perceived their experiences along with verbatim responses used to provide a combined analysis of the meaning and essences of the data. Chapter 5 addresses the research limitations, summary of findings and implications, significance of findings to leadership, recommendations, and recommendations for future research and actions.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Many of the women who work in K-12 dining departments have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations (Covelli, 2011). The job searches for these women were based on their spouses finding work, making the women's job searches secondary (Frank, 1978). Frank's (1978) theory of differential overqualification was instrumental in forming a framework for the current study. The purpose of the qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study was to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and to determine what leadership strategies can be employed to alleviate feelings of deprivation from feeling underemployed.

Throughout this study, disconfirming evidence, counterexamples, and viable alternatives were considered by ensuring that the procedures and techniques used for analysis were described throughout the study. The presentation of the outcomes, support the conclusions drawn from the research and provide valuable insight into the lived experiences of subjects experiencing the phenomenon of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry. The interpretations address the research problem of overqualification and the resulting research questions concerning the level of worker engagement, effect on job longevity, and the meaning of overqualification in the hospitality industry. The conclusions challenge scholarship because although overqualified the women included in this study preferred the exchange in time spent with family over working in positions more closely tied to their work experiences or education. The study produced practical implications for leaders in the hospitality industry for retaining overqualified workers who may fit this demographic.

Classifications were created by using nodes and interpretative analyses were used to confirm what was known through research about overqualified individuals. The nodes were helpful in disconfirming the idea that these workers were unhappy with their employment. The evidence was re-reviewed and alternative interpretations were uncovered based on the responses from interview participants.

Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with women to obtain their perspectives and opinions about working in a situation where they believe they are underemployed. The data revealed the following three themes:

1. Overqualified workers are engaged when the work hours are conducive to their lifestyles and when they are given opportunities to utilize education, skills, or past work experiences in the job.
2. Overqualification adversely affects job longevity for cafeteria workers because they feel frustrated, stuck, and mismatched, but factors preventing the women from leaving to pursue other goals include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and being out of school for too long.
3. The meaning of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry is insignificant when it comes to gaining more time with children and having a spouse who is able to provide the primary financial support for the family.

This chapter concludes the report on the research about overqualification for women who work in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments. The chapter includes a review of the study, a restatement of the research limitations, a summary of findings and implications, and a statement about the significance of the findings for leadership.

Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for leaders and recommendations for future research.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the study included the small number of school divisions allowing the research to be conducted. Staff in several school divisions received the letter to school divisions (see Appendix B), but only one responded. Follow-up telephone calls had to be made along with face-to-face meetings to secure permission to recruit research participants and use the premises. Another limitation pertained to the food service directors' and participants' understandings of the prerequisite requirements for participation.

The participants had not previously identified themselves as being overqualified until other individuals identified them through the snowballing method as possessing skills or education outside the work requirements of their cafeteria position. Other limitations included the scheduling constraints for the interviews before or after the participants' work shift, Mondays through Fridays only, and only during the school year. Recruiting outside the school year time frame would have made it difficult to find willing participants.

A typical cafeteria worker works Monday through Friday, and recruiting participants who were willing to interview outside of the work week proved to be a difficulty. A final limitation was getting buy-in from food service directors to use their offices for the interviews. Schools are busy environments, and the willingness of the directors and managers to allow their office spaces to be used was much appreciated.

## Summary of Findings and Implications

Chapter 4 contained an analysis of the responses to interview questions by 20 female cafeteria workers living in the Northern Virginia area. To qualify for participation in the study, the women had to confirm four prerequisite demographic-related statements. The participants had to (a) live in Northern Virginia; (b) be married women and have at least one child living in the home; (c) work as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area; (d) have education, skills, or experience that they perceive qualify them to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria.

The interpretive phenomenological data analysis of the interview responses led to the identification of three themes. The use of Nvivo 10 software facilitated the analysis. Coding is an essential part of the interpretive qualitative research process (Gibbs, 2002). For the purpose of extracting thematic information, coding was used to identify and record the participants' interviews. The Nvivo 10 software was used to connect interview themes to nodes. Nodes were created by using different themes that emerged during the interview process.

The identified themes provided valuable insight about the lived experiences of women working in the K-12 dining environment. A discussion of each theme and its relationship to the literature outlined in Chapter 2 follows. The themes described in Chapter 4 are synthesized to provide a discussion regarding the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used as foundation for this study.

**Theme 1.** Overqualified workers are engaged when the work hours are conducive to their lifestyles and when they are given opportunities to utilize education, skills, or past work experience on the job. The first theme concerning engagement is

important with regard to women working in the K-12 dining environment because women in dual-career family situations are flexible in their choice of positions, which may result in underemployment (Feldman, 1996). According to Feldman (1996), one of the dimensions of underemployment is whether the person possesses more skills and experience than the job requires.

Being underemployed can lead to negative outcomes like poor job attitudes, decrease in job satisfaction, decrease in organizational commitment, poor physical and psychological health, lower job performance and organizational citizenship, withdrawal behaviors, absenteeism, and turnover (Feldman, 1990, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 2000). Workers who find careers consistent with their work values and preferences experience an increase of positive organizational outcomes (Edwards, 1991). Women experience feelings of overqualification and form a minority group of individuals who experience this phenomenon (Feldman, 1996).

Perceptions of underemployment are related to job satisfaction when workers feel empowered. Empowerment decreases negative feelings regarding overqualification and intentions to remain on the job (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Women's participation in the workforce is a source of empowerment in male-dominated fields, but most women have found work in traditional female jobs that include jobs in the service sectors (Council on Women and Girls, n.d.; Eitzen & Baca-Zinn, 1989).

Women often accept positions that do not require the amount of education they possess because women often give top priority to their familial obligations (Weitzman, 1985). Jobs with greater flexibility give women an increased amount of time to spend on

domestic work. When women work outside the home, they have two jobs, one at home and the other at their place of employment (Holmstrom, 1972; Walker, 1977).

According to the Working Mother Research Institute (2011), mothers struggle with the decision to stay at home or go back to work after having a baby. When returning to work, moms prefer to scale the hours back to a condensed day so they are home when children leave for school and are home by the time the children return at the end of the school day (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011). The most important benefits for moms include having flexible hours, the ability to use sick leave to care for children, having paid maternity leave, having health insurance, having the option to telecommute, and finding meaningful, part-time work (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011). Once moms find meaningful work, they remain engaged because of confidence in leadership, trust with work companions, feeling needed, and feeling a sense of accomplishment in their work (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011).

The current research yielded new information regarding job engagement in the K-12 dining environment. The wages are fair for the type of job, but engagement is based mostly on the return on investment of more time spent with children. The participants were encouraged about being able to utilize their past work and educational experiences or skills acquired in the current job. When the supervisor acknowledges other skills and experience and offers the workers the ability to incorporate such skills in the current position, workers feel motivated. Working in the cafeteria is like being a part of a sisterhood, and the sisterhood makes the work easier to engage.

The women are engaged in their positions as cafeteria workers because the hours are conducive to raising a family. Satisfaction, despite the low wages, can be achieved if

the women are considered for positions that give them greater responsibilities and when kitchen coworkers, teachers, and other school division employees respect them.

Overqualified workers are engaged when the work hours are conducive to their lifestyles and when they are given opportunities to utilize education, skills, or past work experience in the job.

**Theme 2.** Overqualification adversely affects job longevity for cafeteria workers because they feel frustrated, stuck, and mismatched, but factors preventing the women from leaving to pursue other goals include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and being out of school for too long. The second theme concerning job longevity is important to women working in the K-12 dining environment because workers experiencing underemployment also exhibit little commitment to the organization (Feldman, 1996). The situation of underemployment leads to skill underutilization (Feldman, 1996). These workers report greater intentions to leave their jobs and often engage in job search behaviors (Burris, 1983; Feldman & Turnley, 1995).

In situations of overqualification, little opportunities for advancement exist, leading to long-term negative personal consequences and negative organizational problems (Johnson et al., 2002). The majority of workers experiencing the phenomenon of underemployment also experience higher levels of turnover, but not women working in the K-12 dining environment. Of the women interviewed, most acknowledged that their time could be better spent engaging in other more meaningful work, but the trade-off of getting to take care of their families outweighed any intention they may have to leave their current positions as cafeteria workers.

Having a spouse who provides the majority of the income to support the household prevents the women from seeking employment in fields where they have had previous training or education. The women would like to incorporate skills and education in their current job but recognize that is unlikely. The women seemed to accept that situation.

The research yielded new information regarding job longevity in the K-12 dining environment. A few interview participants had achieved higher levels of education, completing all or some of college or having technical training. The majority of interview participants who had college experience had regrets about not completing their degrees.

The interview participants who had not completed their college degrees and were working in the cafeteria solely based on the convenient schedule were saddened that they had not completed their education and felt stuck in their positions. Working in the cafeteria is not a long-term goal, and feelings regarding retiring from the school division are split. Time, money, other interests, and being out of school for too long are factors influencing the women to remain in their positions as cafeteria workers.

Overqualification adversely affects job longevity for cafeteria workers because they feel frustrated, stuck, and mismatched, but factors preventing the women from leaving to pursue other goals include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and being out of school for too long.

**Theme 3.** The meaning of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry is negligible because of the advantages of more time with children and having a spouse who is able to provide the primary financial support for the family. The third theme concerning the importance of overqualification for women working in

the K-12 dining environment pertains to women having in the latter parts of the 20th century increased their roles in the workplace, which has been a source of empowerment in areas where women have taken on traditional male jobs (Council on Women and Girls, n.d.; Coventry & Morrissey, 1998). Most women have found work in traditional female jobs, which include jobs in the service sectors (Eitzen & Baca-Zinn, 1989). Women have increased their roles in the job market, but their main focus has continued to be on family, family networks, church groups, and other familial duties (Coventry & Morrissey, 1998; Gray, 1993; Roby & Uttal, 1993).

Women spend time on household activities and the care of families. Women often accept work in positions that do not require the amount of education they possess because they often do not have the work experience, having given top priority to familial obligations (Weitzman, 1985). The women working in the K-12 dining environment have given up unselfishly career aspirations that they are more suited for to give top priority to their families, which is why the meaning of overqualification is negligible for this segment of hospitality workers. Women in the service industry feel the *interrole conflict* that Hall and Gordon (1973) described, but being able to nurture and care for their families is more important than fulfilling career aspirations.

The research yielded new information about the meaning of overqualification in the K-12 dining environment. The majority of interview participants had specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying them to do work outside a K-12 dining environment, but they believed they had made a good decision when choosing to work in the school cafeteria. The women indicated they enjoyed the cafeteria work that they considered a good, part-time, family-friendly job.

The work schedule of a cafeteria worker is a good trade-off for not working in a different industry. Everyone is on the *same playing field* when working in a K-12 dining environment; past education or work experience does not play a significant role in the work requirements. Spouses work in industries and positions where their income provides the primary support for the family. The meaning of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry is negligible with regard to gaining more time with children and having a spouse who is able to provide the primary financial support for the family.

### **Significance of Findings to Leaders**

The findings from this phenomenological study include three themes that emerged from the women's narratives of their experience working in school cafeterias. Most of the participants were qualified to work in different positions and in different industries. The themes provide a basis for leaders in the hospitality industry as they recruit workers who may have skills and education outside that which is required in a food service position. The recommendations are designed to decrease the high rates of turnover in the hospitality industry and suggest strategies to retain a diverse workforce.

The theoretical framework guiding this study included McGregor's (2006) theory concerning workers' attitudes. McGregor theorized about the existence of two types of workers, theory X workers and theory Y workers. The theory applies to the hospitality industry because the work required lacks glamour and is often tedious (Lim, 2008).

According to McGregor (2006), theory X workers do not like to work and must be controlled and threatened with punishment. Theory Y workers are self-directed and view their work as natural. According to Lim (2008), hospitality employees are a unique

group of workers because they are paid low wages but are among the hardest of workers in the service sectors. The industry is known for employing individuals who need more guidance and structure (Hersey et al., 2000). Based on the nature of the work, leaders in the hospitality industry should seek to hire theory Y workers.

Another theory guiding this research project was Herzberg's (1966) theory of job satisfaction based on physical needs and psychological needs. Physical needs are in place to avoid pain and discomfort; psychological needs are found in people striving to grow in knowledge and achievement while in a specific position. Herzberg theorized about the possibility to be both satisfied and dissatisfied with different areas of the same position. The results of this study confirm that cafeteria workers feel both satisfied and dissatisfied with their position.

Hiring managers and human resource managers need to have an understanding of the type of work required in the positions offered and of the type of workers who perform the tasks needed in the jobs. The positions must meet certain physical and psychological needs, especially for workers who have more skills, abilities, or education than the job requires. The findings in the current study have significance for leadership because strategies can be utilized that support McGregor's (2006) and Herzberg's (1966) theories for workers in the K-12 dining environment who experience overqualification. Frank's (1978) theory of differential overqualification specifically describes the phenomenon of overqualification, and McGregor's and Herzberg's theories describe ways in which to lead underemployed workers.

## **Recommendations**

I Although the research concentrated on women working in the K-12 dining environment, the research results and implications are applicable not only to other segments of the hospitality industry but also to a wide variety of industries that hire women who are married, have children, and are impacted by the phenomenon, differential overqualification. The current economic setting will require more women to work outside of the home, and employers in all industries need to understand how to lead in situations where women impact a large part of the workforce.

In an uncertain and volatile economic environment, women need to be a part of a workforce that includes flexibility and options that meet the needs of dual-earner households. Organizational leaders must recognize the competitive advantages that emerge from motivating women to engage in the work they do, remain in their positions, and experience job satisfaction when they are in positions of underemployment (Poelmans & Chenoy, 2008). Such advantages may enhance the ability to recruit, retain, and enhance positions in the K-12 segment of hospitality as well as in other industries, so that women workers become a valuable asset to the future growth of organizations. To such end, organizational leaders should focus on providing more flexibility on the job, creating advancement opportunities, creating training opportunities, increasing responsibilities, allowing workers to incorporate skills, education, and experience in the work they do, and increasing compensation and benefits for women workers.

Women and job flexibility. Men and women value job satisfaction differently, and flexibility plays a major role in determining job satisfaction for women (Bender, Donohue, & Heywood, 2005). Organizational leaders must be flexible in creating work

schedules so that women can hold a job and also meet the needs of their families.

Women have increased their roles in the workforce, but they are still largely responsible for the home and the care of their families resulting in a *second shift* of work that includes on average 25 more hours of work per week. To close the gap between the demands of work and family responsibilities, women seek flexible jobs. To meet the needs of women, leaders should provide flextime or flexible work schedules.

To accommodate the needs of women workforce participants, employers need to offer flexible fringe benefits, shift work, varying work hours, and the option to telecommute (Silver & Goldscheider, 1994). For women working in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry, organizational leaders need to engage and retain workers by promoting the benefits of working in the part-time positions that offer flexibility in hours at work. The findings in the current study indicate that promoting the benefit of flextime is a motivator that will keep workers engaged and content to be a participant in the K-12 dining workforce.

**Women and advancement opportunities.** Women are motivated by the intrinsic benefits of a job well done and opportunities for promotion (Bender et al., 2005). Stead (1974) explained,

The well-run company realizes that planning is necessary for continued success. A manpower plan that identifies positions that will be open during the next five years provides the company with an effective tool for implementing the 'developmental manpower' concept. This concept encourages employees to identify their levels of aspiration with the company. For example, an employee would be asked to put in writing what she sees as her next two jobs with the

company. A program is tailored to help the employee prepare herself for her desired future. (p. 87)

Organizational leaders need to show commitment by getting to know the strengths of each worker and utilizing those strengths as part of each worker's position in the organization. The support of top management is fundamental in implementing a plan that includes recognizing the competencies of workers and offering specific promotion opportunities. Support involves interviewing workers to determine their interests in working in more responsible positions and providing those workers with the training and development needed to be successful in current and future positions (Stead, 1974). Evidenced by many studies on the attrition of women, women's strong intentions to leave an organization are highly correlated with dissatisfaction through limited leadership support, limited advancement opportunities, and the inability to freely express ideas (Xu, 2008).

For women working in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry, leaders must establish individual plans with workers, noting past work experiences and education and incorporating the strengths of each worker. This strategy will preserve engagement and motivate workers who find enjoyment in their jobs. Programs to support the promotion of workers benefit the organization when all stakeholders are engaged in the organizational process (Kim, 2012).

**Women and compensation and benefits.** Factors like earnings, fringe benefits, and working conditions determine satisfaction in a position (Bender et al., 2005). Traditionally, organizations have assumed the majority of responsibility in determining employee benefit offerings. In the last decade, a shift to increase worker engagement in

the benefits selection process has occurred. Employers are now paying more attention to the individual needs of their employees rather than offering one type of benefit package, common to all organizations.

Franklin International, a manufacturer of adhesives, has been innovative by providing excellent benefit packages for workers. Franklin has a low turnover rate of 4.6% for pioneering programs like an all-inclusive tuition reimbursement package for workers (Vandermillen, 2012). Not only does the organization offer a tuition reimbursement plan for the employee but also offers a 529 plan as well as a textbook plan to help older workers set aside the finances to pay for their children's college expenses. Other nontraditional benefits include employers allowing part-time workers to maintain full-time health benefits after working for the organization for a certain amount of time and after reaching a certain age.

Other organizations provide nontraditional benefits such as a focus on health and wellness for workers. The benefit includes adding competitions and contests that encourage employees to increase their personal wellness. Employers hold onsite wellness screenings for employees and their families, offering health coaches, and providing financial incentives for participation in wellness activities (Vandermillen, 2012).

For women working in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry, leaders must incorporate nontraditional benefit incentives for workers. The compensation for K-12 dining workers is not adequate for the types of work employees are required to do. Costs to increase wages could be passed down to patrons and the government that subsidizes the meal programs (SNA, 2011). In this segment of the industry, leaders need to find

creative, cost-effective ways to increase traditional and nontraditional benefit packages for workers, such as employers providing education incentives for workers.

Many of the interview participants in the current study stated they wanted to go back to school. Hospitality organizational leaders need to focus on supporting workers who have dreams and aspirations to further their educations and careers. Leaders should provide an education plan and compensation incentives based on increasing knowledge and education. An increase in education and opportunities for hospitality workers could produce positive outcomes in leadership for the industry, and a more educated workforce could mean better leadership.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings from this research project, several recommendations for future research are made. Because the findings may not be generalizable to the entire population of food service workers experiencing overqualification, more comprehensive studies examining overqualification in the different segments of hospitality are warranted. The segments include (a) lodging, (b) conferences and event-planning, (c) restaurants, (d) travel and tourism, (e) the medical field, (f) corporate dining, and (g) postsecondary education dining.

Another avenue for examining overqualification is examining the phenomenon of overqualification based on the reasons why individuals are in a situation of underemployment, (e.g., underemployment due to the economy). A quantitative analysis of the current data could provide a complete representation of overqualification in the K-12 dining segment of the hospitality industry. The quantitative data would provide

leaders with additional information about factors these workers consider important, to be used to increase retention.

Another area for future study is women working in a wide variety of industries to understand a mother's feelings of working in professional positions as opposed to raising her own children. The feelings of deprivation as they relate to working mothers who miss out on mother-child activities would be an important aspect for leaders to understand and strategize on ways to increase retention of working moms. Leaders would be able to determine what benefits they could provide to mothers to retain this part of the workforce (Working Mother Research Institute, 2011).

Another area for future study is job mismatch in the hospitality industry. Many people desire to work in the hospitality industry as chefs or sommeliers because these positions appear glamorous, but they do not realize what it needed to be successful in such positions. The long hours, the low pay, and disgruntled workers are examples of factors in the job that the glamour of the industry does not portray (Lim, 2008). Researching burnout and job mismatch in the industry is important for leaders who select, hire, and hope to retain an appropriate workforce.

A final recommendation for future study is to research the dynamics of women-only work environments. Very few men consider the K-12 environment for a job. Other industries and work environments might have the same characteristics. Examining these environments from the perspective of research participants' lived experiences would be a worthwhile study for leaders who select, hire, and strategize to retain a female workforce.

## **Closing Remarks**

Phenomenology pertains to the exploration of a person's perception, feelings, and understanding of a lived experience and its effect on their lives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation focusing on the interviewer as the interpreter (Smith & Flowers, 2009). The approach involves conducting in-depth interviews, allowing participants to share their accounts, and probing emerging themes and ideas.

As participants reveal their lived experiences through interviews, themes emerge, and the researcher records, analyzes, and interprets the themes (Smith & Flowers, 2009). The interpretive phenomenological approach was used in the current study to understand the lived experiences of married women living in Northern Virginia and working in the K-12 dining segment of the hospitality industry. The 20 participants in the study were women with a wide array of backgrounds in education and work experience, but their commonality was that they were mothers whose primary objective was to care for and nurture her family.

The study produced three emergent themes. Overqualified workers are engaged when the work hours are conducive to their lifestyles and when they are given opportunities to utilize education, skills, or past work experience in the job. Overqualification adversely affects job longevity for cafeteria workers because they feel frustrated, stuck, and mismatched, but factors preventing the women from leaving to pursue other goals include not having time, not having the extra money, having other interests taking up that time, and being out of school for too long. The meaning of overqualification in the K-12 segment of the hospitality industry is negligible because of

the benefit of having more time with children and having a spouse who is able to provide the primary financial support for the family.

Several recommendations derived from the phenomenological research. First, organizational leaders must assist women in closing the gap between the demands of work and of family responsibilities by providing flextime or flexible work schedules, shift work, varying work hours, and the option to telecommute. Promoting the benefit of flextime is a motivator that will keep workers engaged and content to be a participant in the K-12 dining workforce as exhibited in the findings of this study.

Second, organizational leaders need to show commitment by getting to know the strengths of each worker and utilizing those strengths as a part of each worker's job in the organization. The support of top management is fundamental in implementing a plan for each worker based on competencies and the potential for promotions. Programs that support the promotion of workers help increase organizational success because stakeholders are engaged in the process.

Finally, because the compensation for K-12 dining workers is not adequate for the types of jobs these workers are required to do, leaders in the industry need to find other nontraditional and creative ways to compensate workers, such as providing an education plan for the workers desiring to increase their knowledge and their job level in the organization. Deprivation and frustration associated with the phenomenon of underemployment can be decreased when hospitality organizations and leaders in the K-12 segment promote the flextime offered in this type of position, show commitment to engaging the strengths of their workforce, and assist workers in this segment with

advancement opportunities. This research is an *Ode to the Cafeteria Lady*, America's *Hidden Jewels*, and unsung heroes.

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## Appendix A: Permission to Use the Premises

### UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

#### PERMISSION TO USE PREMISES, NAME, AND/OR SUBJECTS

(Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association)

Manassas City Public Schools

**Name of Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association**

Check any that apply:

I hereby authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to use the premises (facility identified above) to conduct a study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

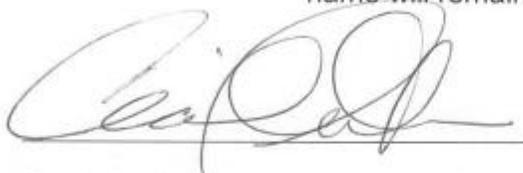
I hereby authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to recruit subjects for participation in and conduct a study entitled:

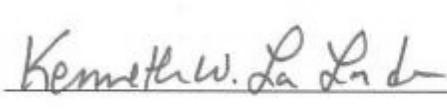
“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

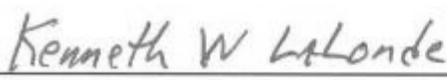
I do not authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to use the name of the facility, organization, university, institution, or association identified above when publishing results from the study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

\*Participants will be selected voluntarily. The names of participants and the division name will remain confidential.

 \_\_\_\_\_ 9/14/11 \_\_\_\_\_  
Cecily Anthony Date

 \_\_\_\_\_ 9/14/11 \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Division Representative) Date

 \_\_\_\_\_  
Name

 \_\_\_\_\_  
Title

Manassas City Public Schools  
9000 Tudor Lane  
Manassas, VA 20110

## UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

## PERMISSION TO USE PREMISES, NAME, AND/OR SUBJECTS

(Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association)

Manassas Park City Public Schools

Name of Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association

Check any that apply:

I hereby authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to use the premises (facility identified above) to conduct a study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

I hereby authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to recruit subjects for participation in and conduct a study entitled:

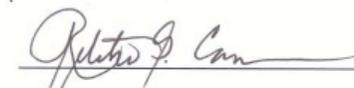
“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

I do not authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to use the name of the facility, organization, university, institution, or association identified above when publishing results from the study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

\*Participants will be selected voluntarily. The names of participants and the division name will remain confidential.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cecily Anthony Date 11/17/11

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Division Representative) Date 11/21/11

Ritchie G. Carroll

Name

Deputy Superintendent

Title

Manassas Park City Public Schools

One Park Center Ct., Suite A

Manassas, VA 20111

**UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX****PERMISSION TO USE PREMISES, NAME, AND/OR SUBJECTS****(Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association)****Falls Church City Public Schools****Name of Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association**

Check any that apply:

I hereby authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to use the premises (facility identified above) to conduct a study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

I hereby authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to recruit subjects for participation in and conduct a study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

I do not authorize Cecily Anthony, student of University of Phoenix, to use the name of the facility, organization, university, institution, or association identified above when publishing results from the study entitled:

“Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.”

\*Participants will be selected voluntarily. The names of participants and the division name will remain confidential.

*Cecily Anthony* 11/4/11  
Cecily Anthony Date

*Richard Krave* 11/4/11  
Signature (Division Representative) Date

Richard Krave  
Name

Foodservice Director  
Title

Fall Church City Public Schools  
800 West Broad Street  
Falls Church, VA 22046

## Appendix B: Letter to School Divisions

Date  
Division Representative  
Address  
Phone Number

Dear School Division Representative:

I will be conducting a research study titled, “Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive They are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.” I am writing to request your permission to use the premises and participants for interviewing purposes.

I would like to interview women cafeteria workers who fit the following descriptions: (1) Participants must live in Northern Virginia, (2) Participants must be married women and have at least one child living in the home, (3) Participants must work as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area, and (4) Participants must answer positively to having education, skill/s, or experiences that they perceive qualify them to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria. I will interview participants before or after their regularly scheduled shifts.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological hermeneutical study is to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and to determine what leadership strategies can be employed to alleviate the feelings of deprivation that may arise from them feeling underemployed. Many of the employees working in K-12 dining departments are women who have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations. The job searches for these women were based on spouses finding work; thus, their job search became secondary to their spouses’ search for employment.

The three industries with the largest numbers of overqualified workers are the wholesale/retail trade, hotel and catering, and transportation industries—all service sectors. K-12 dining is a segment in the hospitality service sector. The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (31%) when compared to other industries. Analyzing overqualification is significant for the hospitality industry and the negative outcomes can affect individual productivity as well as organizational productivity. This study will produce recommendations for managers and owners/operators

of hospitality organizations for improving employee retention and reducing intentions to quit. This study may produce leadership strategies for recruiting, managing, and retaining women workers employed in the K-12 segment of hospitality.

I have attached a copy of the *Permission to Use the Premises or Participants* form. If you consent to my moving forward with this study utilizing your cafeteria workers as my participants, please complete the form and return it to me at the mailing address listed above. Please respond with the permission form by ---.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cecily Anthony, MBA, CDM, CFPP  
Director of Food & Nutrition Services  
Manassas City Public Schools

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity** Participant responses will be maintained in confidential files only accessible by the researcher. Participant's individual names will remain anonymous. Only a summary of the data from all interview participants will be published in a report.
- **Risks for participation:** No known risks are anticipated or foreseeable by participating in this research.
- **How this information will be used:** Results of this study will serve as a resource for industry leaders and stakeholders to possibly create strategies to improve leadership practices by providing information on increasing organizational productivity.
- **Informed consent for voluntary participation:** For purposes of the interview only, participant's willingness to participate in the interview will indicate that she voluntarily agrees to participate in the study.
- **Incentive:** All participants in the study will receive a complimentary gift card to a retail location of the researcher's choosing.

## Appendix C: Letter to Food Service Directors

Date  
School Food Director  
Address  
Phone

Dear School Food Director:

I will be conducting a research study titled, “Women Who Choose to Work in Positions they Perceive They are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.” I am writing to ask your assistance in identifying potential participants for this study.

I would like to interview women cafeteria workers who fit the following descriptions: (1) Participants must live in Northern Virginia, (2) Participants must be married women and have at least one child living in the home, (3) Participants must work as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area, and (4) Participants must answer positively to having education, skill/s, or experiences that they perceive qualify them to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria. I will interview participants before or after their regularly scheduled shifts.

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological hermeneutical study is to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and to determine what leadership strategies that can be employed to alleviate the feelings of deprivation that may arise from them feeling underemployed. Many of the employees working in K-12 dining departments are women who have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations. The job searches for these women were based primarily on their spouses finding work; thus their job searches, based on their own qualifications, became secondary to their spouses’ search for employment.

The three industries with the largest numbers of overqualified workers are the wholesale/retail trade, hotel and catering, and transportation industries—all service sectors. K-12 dining is a segment in the hospitality service sector. The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (31%) when compared to other industries. Analyzing overqualification is significant for the hospitality industry. Negative outcomes such as turnover can affect individual as well as organizational productivity. This study will produce recommendations for managers and owners/operators of hospitality organizations for improving employee retention and reducing intentions to quit. This study may produce





## Appendix D: Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

### INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS 18 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Cecily Anthony and I am a student at the University of Phoenix working on a doctoral degree. I am conducting a research study entitled "Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia." . The purpose of the research study is to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and to determine what leadership strategies can be employed to alleviate feelings of deprivation that may arise from feeling underemployed.

Your participation will involve a short interview. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. You may contact me at 703-953-5521, cecilycollins@hotmail.com, or 9000 Tudor Lane, Manassas, Virginia, 20110 to withdraw from the study. The results of the research study will be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party.

In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation may produce recommendations for managers and owners/operators of hospitality organizations for improving employee retention and morale, as well as recommendations aimed at reducing intentions to quit. This study may produce leadership strategies for recruiting, managing, and retaining women workers employed in the K-12 segment of hospitality.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 703-953-5521 or email me at cecilycollins@hotmail.com.

As a participant in this study, you should understand the following:

1. You may decline to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without consequences.
2. Your identity will be kept confidential.  
Cecily Anthony, the researcher, has thoroughly explained the parameters of the research study and all of your questions and concerns have been addressed.
3. If the interviews are recorded, you must grant permission for the researcher, Cecily Anthony, to digitally record the interview. You understand that the information from the recorded interviews may be transcribed. The researcher will structure a coding process to assure that anonymity of your name is protected.
4. Data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for a period of three years, and then destroyed.
5. The research results will be used for publication.

"By signing this form you acknowledge that you understand the nature of the study, the potential risks to you as a participant, and the means by which your identity will be kept confidential. Your signature on this form also indicates that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission to voluntarily serve as a participant in the study described."

Signature of the interviewee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Interview Instrument

Why Some Women Choose to Work in Positions they Perceive they are  
Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in  
Northern Virginia

### Interview Instrument

- (1) Do you live in Northern Virginia? \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) Are you married and do you have at least one child living in the home? \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Do you work as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area? \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Do you have education, skill/s, or experiences that you perceive qualify you to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria? \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Study Code #: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

(1) What are your feelings regarding your current wages?

**Response:**

(2) What is your husband's level of education, technical training, or work experiences? Can you provide examples of this?

**Response:**

(3) What is your level of education?

**Response:**

(4) What are your feelings regarding your level of education?

**Response:**

(5) Do you have specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying you to do different work? Can you provide examples of this?

**Response:**

(6) Have you ever worked in a capacity where you have been able to utilize your other skills?

**Response:**

(7) How do you feel about working in a school cafeteria?

**Response:**

(8) Can you provide examples of items influencing you to choose to work in a school cafeteria?

**Response:**

(9) How do you feel about your decision to work in a cafeteria?

**Response:**

(10) Are you currently taking classes to gain more education or another skill?

**Response:**

(11) What other interests are you pursuing or would you pursue if you were not working here?

**Response:**

(12) Do you plan to work in the school cafeteria environment until you retire?

**Response:**

(13) Do you have any long-term goals?

**Response:**

(14) Have you discussed your long-term goals with your supervisor?

**Response:**

(15) Do you believe that this work is mentally stimulating?

**Response:**

(16) Do you believe that you are working with people who have more or less education, skills, or experiences than you do?

**Response:**

(17) How would you feel if you were given the opportunity to utilize some of your other skills, education, hobbies, interests or experiences while in your current position?

**Response:**

(18) How would you describe the nature of your relationships with co-workers and your supervisor?

**Response:**

(19) How would you describe the nature of your annual evaluations?

**Response:**

(20) What could your supervisor do to increase your satisfaction of your job?

**Response:**

**Other Comments:**

Would you recommend anyone else who might be fitting for this study? \_\_\_\_\_

May I have that person's name and contact information?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: CITI Certification

Completion Report

Page 1 of 1

### CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

#### Human Research Curriculum Completion Report

Printed on 5/8/2012

**Learner:** Cecily Anthony (username: cdanthy@mail.phoenix.edu)

**Institution:** University of Phoenix

**Contact Information** 16320 Eagle Flight Circle  
Woodbridge, Virginia 22191 United States

Department: School of Advanced Studies

Phone: 703-953-5521

Email: cdanthy@email.phoenix.edu

#### Group 1.Social / Behavioral Research Investigator and Key Personnel.:

Complete all required modules. Complete optional modules if they pertain to your research activities.

#### Stage 2. Refresher Course Passed on 05/06/12 (Ref # 7643867)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
SBR 101 REFRESHER MODULE 1 - History and Ethics	05/05/12	5/5 (100%)
SBR 101 REFRESHER MODULE 2 - Regulatory Overview	05/05/12	5/5 (100%)
SBR 101 REFRESHER MODULE 3 - Risk, Informed Consent, and Privacy and Confidentiality	05/05/12	5/5 (100%)
SBR 101 REFRESHER MODULE 4 - Vulnerable Subjects	05/05/12	4/4 (100%)
SBR 101 REFRESHER MODULE 5 - Education, International, and Internet Research	05/06/12	5/5 (100%)
How to Complete The CITI Refresher Course and Receive the Completion Report	05/06/12	no quiz

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.**

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Miami  
Director Office of Research Education  
CITI Course Coordinator

[Return](#)

## Appendix G: Confidentiality Agreement



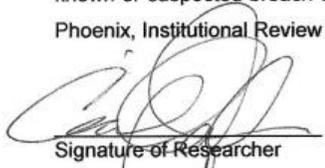
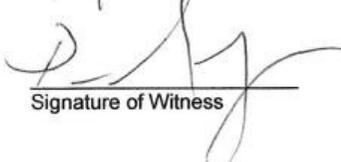
Women Who Choose to Work in Positions they Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12

Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia

Cecily Anthony

### CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

As a researcher working on the above research study at the University of Phoenix, I understand that I must maintain the confidentiality of all information concerning all research participants as required by law. Only the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board may have access to this information. "Confidential Information" of participants includes but is not limited to: names, characteristics, or other identifying information, questionnaire scores, ratings, incidental comments, other information accrued either directly or indirectly through contact with any participant, and/or any other information that by its nature would be considered confidential. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the information, I hereby agree to refrain from discussing or disclosing any Confidential Information regarding research participants, to any individual who is not part of the above research study or in need of the information for the expressed purposes on the research program. This includes having a conversation regarding the research project or its participants in a place where such a discussion might be overheard; or discussing any Confidential Information in a way that would allow an unauthorized person to associate (either correctly or incorrectly) an identity with such information. I further agree to store research records whether paper, electronic or otherwise in a secure locked location under my direct control or with appropriate safe guards. I hereby further agree that if I have to use the services of a third party to assist in the research study, who will potentially have access to any Confidential Information of participants, that I will enter into an agreement with said third party prior to using any of the services, which shall provide at a minimum the confidential obligations set forth herein. I agree that I will immediately report any known or suspected breach of this confidentiality statement regarding the above research project to the University of Phoenix, Institutional Review Board.

 _____ Signature of Researcher	<i>Cecily Anthony</i> _____ Printed Name	<i>9/29/11</i> _____ Date
 _____ Signature of Witness	<i>Darren Anthony</i> _____ Printed Name	<i>9/29/11</i> _____ Date

## Appendix H: Letter to Participants

Date

Dear Interview Participant:

I am conducting a research study titled, “Women Who Choose to Work in Positions They Perceive they are Overqualified to Work: A Phenomenological Study of K-12 Cafeteria Workers in Northern Virginia.” I would like to interview you concerning your feelings about working as a cafeteria worker.

You have been selected to potentially be a part of this study because you may fit the following descriptions: (1) You live in Northern Virginia, (2) You are married and have at least one child living in the home or under your care, (3) You work as a cafeteria worker in the Northern Virginia area, and (4) You perceive yourself or others perceive you as having education, skill/s, or experiences that qualify you to work in a different capacity other than a school cafeteria.

The purpose of this study is to explore the overqualification of hospitality employees working in Northern Virginia K-12 dining departments and to determine what leadership strategies can be employed to alleviate feelings of deprivation that may arise from feeling underemployed. Many K-12 workers are women who have chosen to work in part-time or temporary positions based on familial obligations. Many women choose to work in cafeterias because their job search was also based on a spouse finding work; thus, their own job search became secondary to their spouses search for employment.

The three industries with the largest numbers of overqualified workers are the wholesale/retail trade, hotel and catering, and transportation industries—all service sectors. K-12 dining is a segment in the hospitality service sector. The hospitality industry has the largest percentage of voluntary turnover (19%) and total turnover (31%) when compared to other industries. This study will produce recommendations for managers and owners/operators of hospitality organizations for improving employee retention and morale, as well as recommendations aimed at reducing intentions to quit. This study may produce leadership strategies for recruiting, managing, and retaining women workers employed in the K-12 segment of hospitality.

The information you provide in this study will not be released without prior written approval from you. Data will be concealed to prevent readers from determining your identity. Data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for a period of three years, and then destroyed. Digital files will be permanently deleted and paper files will be shredded.

Thank you for participating in this research study.  
Cecily Anthony, MBA, CDM, CFPP  
Director of Food & Nutrition Services  
Manassas City Public Schools

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity** Participant responses will be maintained in confidential files only accessible by the researcher. Participant's individual names will remain anonymous. Only a summary of the data from all interview participants will be published in a report.
- **Risks for participation:** No known risks are anticipated or foreseeable by participating in this research.
- **How this information will be used:** Results of this study will serve as a resource for industry leaders and stakeholders to possibly create strategies to improve leadership practices by providing information on increasing organizational productivity.
- **Informed consent for voluntary participation:** For purposes of the interview only, participant's willingness to participate in the interview will indicate that she voluntarily agrees to participate in the study.
- **Incentive:** All participants in the study will receive a complimentary gift card to a retail location of the researcher's choosing.

**Appendix I: Sample Interview Participant Transcript Nvivo 10 Format****PI137032168893*****Prerequisites***

Interviewer: Do you live in Northern Virginia?

PI137032168893: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have at least one child living in your home?

PI137032168893: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you work in a cafeteria?

PI137032168893: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you believe that you have education, skills or experiences, other than cafeteria work qualifying you to do other work?

PI137032168893: Yes.

**Q.1.**

What are your feelings regarding your current wages?

PI137032168893: I am thrilled with them. I am ok with them I mean you know we work hard. It would be nice to...but I am happy with them. Yeah I mean you're always going to want more, but...

**Q.2.**

What is your husband's level of education, technical training, or work experiences? Can you provide examples of this?

PI137032168893: Masters in Contract Administration.

Interviewer: Wow.

PI137032168893: He works for Northrop Gruman and he is a senior contract administrator. And I can't talk to him He tells me all this lingo and I'm like...I don't know what you are talking about. Let's go back to the glowers and the grass growing.

**Q.3.**

What is your level of education?

PI137032168893: I have my LPN my nursing degree – I got it in Pennsylvania. I am licensed in South Dakota and Virginia.

Interviewer: Does it last a lifetime?

PI137032168893: Oh no you have to pay for it - \$90 every three years.

**Q.4.**

What are your feelings regarding your level of education?

PI137032168893: I've always wanted to go back to become – I've always wanted to be a flight nurse. I'm too old to do it. I put my rotten kids first. My son flies now so that's good.

Interviewer: So, what do they do fly on missions?

PI137032168893: Yeah you know there's always two on board. I always wanted to do that, but I never got a chance. I also wanted to become a paramedic.

**Q.5.**

Do you have specialized training, technical skills, hobbies, or talents qualifying you to do different work? Can you provide examples of this?

PI137032168893: Yes, I am an LPN.

**Q.6.**

Have you ever worked in a capacity where you have been able to utilize your other skills?

PI137032168893: Yes, 12 years as a nurse and I worked as a nurse during summer school.

**Q.7.**

How do you feel about working in a school cafeteria?

PI137032168893: Except for some of the immature problems, yeah I mean you know I like it. The hours are good.

**Q.8.**

Can you provide examples of items influencing you to choose to work in a school cafeteria?

PI137032168893: When we first got here from Massachusetts. We were in the military so we moved 12 times. We came down here and he started working with another civilian company.

We were in such culture shock. A house in Massachusetts was \$25 and a house here was \$2500. You now we just could not. It was pure culture shock. So, I did a lot of volunteering at my sons school down in burke. They offered me a position. Then I went to Robinson High School and they gave me my own school at Clifton. Then my kids got moved to Round and Hilda. I was there so much and she said why don't you just work here. She was retiring so she knew I had previous experience because I was still working and un I was pregnant then. She offered me the position. So I took it thinking I will only be here for two years then I am going back to nursing as soon as my daughter is older enough to stay with the sitter.

Interviewer: Um hmm

PI137032168893: 23 years later I am still here. But I truly believe in my heart that this is where I am supposed to be. I knew where the kids were I was here with them. I knew the teachers. You know they really got you know. I don't know. I just think it was really a blessing in disguise because I could keep an eye on the kids. The teachers knew me and I knew them and I could help in any situation. Even extra activities. All in all I think it benefited the kids the best. They all got really good educations and are doing well in life.

### **Q.9.**

How do you feel about your decision to work in a cafeteria?

PI137032168893: Family-wise it was good. It was the best decision I made. I do miss nursing I can't lie but family-wise and my kids it was the best decision. And I'm still with kids and you know I worked pediatrics for 12 years and OB. And you know I got to deliver babies.

### **Q.10.**

Are you currently taking classes to gain more education or another skill?

PI137032168893: No.

### **Q.11.**

What other interests are you pursuing or would you pursue if you were not working here?

PI137032168893: I took four years of sign language, but it's like any language. If you don't use it you will lose it. I was an interpreter for the church for a while til we moved. I wouldn't mid going back. Just recreational classes. You know sign language. Pottery making.

Interviewer: Is there anything you can't do?

PI137032168893: Yeah I can't paint, but I'd love to do scrapbooking. It can be expensive though too.

**Q.12.**

Do you plan to work in a school cafeteria environment until you retire?

PI137032168893: Yes.

**Q.13.**

Do you have any long-term goals?

PI137032168893: Um, I don't know. See my daughter get married. See my kids be happy. Visit my grandchildren more. It's funny at home I have this chest that's filled with all kinds of crafts that I have been buying throughout the year and my goal is to finish every craft in that chest before I die.

Interviewer: That's a great goal. That means that you have peace and time to do that kind of stuff.

**Q.14.**

Have you discussed your long-term goals with your supervisor?

PI137032168893: Yes.

**Q.15.**

Do you believe that this work is mentally stimulating?

PI137032168893: Yeah. Cause you really gotta think and it keeps you on your toes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's always something to think about. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think you are working with people who have more or less education skills or experiences than you?

PI137032168893: Oh it depends. Education-wise I have more than some of them. Some of them have much more other skills like Spanish, patience, and um education-wise maybe not but life-wise they can teach me so much more.

**Q.16.**

How would you feel if you were given the opportunity to utilize some of your other skills, education, hobbies, interests or experiences while in your current position?

PI137032168893: I kinds do. There was a little boy choking. I used my education for that. One of our teachers got taken out of here yesterday by ambulance. I got to help some of the other kids while the nurse was dealing with the paramedics. And you know a lot of the teachers say I

understand you do wedding cakes? They ask me to do wedding cakes. I guess I do use it – not full time but often enough.

### **Q.17.**

How would you describe the nature of your relationships with co-workers and your supervisor?

PI137032168893: Up to this year – I thought it was pretty good. I work with them. I don't ask anybody to do anything I wouldn't do. I thought it was really good, but I question it this year. I love my supervisor. I respect my supervisor as much as I give her a hard time.

### **Q.18.**

How would you describe the nature of your annual evaluations?

PI137032168893: I think I always strive to do better and to improve – if you are not going to improve then why? There's always something you could improve on.

### **Q.19.**

What could your supervisor do to increase your satisfaction of your job?

PI137032168893: Um, I'd like to knock down that wall and I really could use another serving line. Sometimes there's so much food out there. We need more space.

### **Q.20.**

Would you like to add any other comments?

PI137032168893: No response.

## **Snowball Sampling**

XXX XXX

## Appendix J: Sample Node Reports

### Ability to incorporate skills, abilities, and experience into current position

<Internals\PI107033287744> - § 1 reference coded [0.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

I would be very excited, Yes.

<Internals\PI117033695551> - § 2 references coded [1.42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.28% Coverage

It keeps me busy.

Reference 2 - 1.14% Coverage

I'd like to but I am not sure that I could that that in my current job

<Internals\PI12162728199> - § 2 references coded [2.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.65% Coverage

I like it because I want to work and have some money, but at the same time, it's like so many years studying and working in a good position and everything and now I am here.

Reference 2 - 0.95% Coverage

Everything is different everywhere. I may need to take classes to learn more. I'd like to do it.

<Internals\PI127033306457> - § 1 reference coded [100.00% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 100.00% Coverage

### **Feelings regarding decision to work in a school cafeteria**

<Internals\PI107033287744> - § 3 references coded [5.87% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.09% Coverage

Good.

Reference 2 - 4.42% Coverage

I am pretty content where I am. Even with the degree I don't – I am probably one of the unusual ones. I am fine where I am because I see retirement in 15 years and um I like my job. I like to think on both sides of my brain and I don't really have any plans. Unless someone has plans for me.

Reference 3 - 1.36% Coverage

My boss is fabulous. It is because of her that I like my job. It's only because of her.

<Internals\PI117033695551> - § 6 references coded [3.80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.15% Coverage

I love it

Reference 2 - 1.16% Coverage

I love the hours and it was the perfect mommy job when I first started

Reference 3 - 0.82% Coverage

growing up I said I'd never work in the cafeteria

Reference 4 - 0.65% Coverage

We always viewed it as the lunch ladies.

Reference 5 - 0.51% Coverage

I love to work and help people.

Reference 6 - 0.52% Coverage

I think I made a wise decision.

<Internals\\PI12162728199> - § 11 references coded [10.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.49% Coverage

this is a good job for me – the hours and everything

Reference 2 - 0.65% Coverage

It's not too many hours so I can go home and take care of my baby.

Reference 3 - 0.27% Coverage

There's a lot of work here.

Reference 4 - 0.83% Coverage

so when people are rude to me, they don't know that I am educated and have more career.

Reference 5 - 0.10% Coverage

I want more

Reference 6 - 0.64% Coverage

I am hoping that maybe in the future I can do more than work here.

Reference 7 - 1.62% Coverage

I think it's perfect for me and for her. I can use the money for me if I want something or for her if I want to get her something. I don't have to ask him. I love that.

Reference 8 - 1.65% Coverage

I like it because I want to work and have some money, but at the same time, it's like so many years studying and working in a good position and everything and now I am here.

Reference 9 - 1.26% Coverage

Sometimes it's frustrating, but I think it's a sacrifice for my daughter. She needs me so I can do it it. But, sometimes it's hard.

## Reference 10 - 1.39% Coverage

I am the manager in my department, but I feel that people don't have the level of respect for me that they should because I work in food service.

## Reference 11 - 1.67% Coverage

I know that when working in the cafeteria that when people are over you and because you are Spanish the level of respect is not there. They think I don't know what I am doing.

<Internals\PI127033306457> - § 1 reference coded [100.00% Coverage]

## Reference 1 - 100.00% Coverage

## Appendix K: Node Structure Report

7/15/2012 2:29 PM

# Node Structure

## K-12 Study

7/15/2012 2:29 PM

Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
<b>Node</b>			
<b>Nodes</b>			
Nodes\\Ability to incorporate skills, education, and abilities into current position.		No	None
Nodes\\Accounts receivable clerk in Reston		No	None
Nodes\\Feelings regarding decision to work in a school cafeteria.		No	None
Nodes\\Feelings regarding wages.		No	None
Nodes\\Feelings regarding working in a school cafeteria.		No	None
Nodes\\Husband's Level of Education		No	None
Nodes\\Husband's work experiences.		No	None
Nodes\\Improving satisfaction.		No	None
Nodes\\Nature of relationships with co-workers.		No	None
Nodes\\Other Work Experiences		No	None
Nodes\\Outcomes of annual evaluations.		No	None
Nodes\\Reason for choosing to work in a school cafeteria.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject currently furthering education.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject discussed long-term goals with supervisor.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject finds the work mentally stimulating.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject having worked in a capacity where she was able to use other skills.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject work with people who have more or less education or skills.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's feelings regarding being a stay at home mom.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's feelings regarding level of education.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's level of education.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's long-term goals.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's other careers.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's other interests.		No	None
Nodes\\Subject's plan to work in school cafeteria until retirement.		No	None

---

Nodes\\What would you be doing

No

None

---

## Appendix L: Coding Summary by Source

7/15/2012 2:20 PM

# Coding Summary By Source

## K-12 Study

7/15/2012 2:20 PM

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
----------------	-----------	----------	-----------------------------	------------------	-------------------	-------------

### Document

Internals\\PI107033287744

#### Node

#### Nodes\\Ability to incorporate skills, education, and abilities into current position.

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
No	0.0046	1	1	CDA	7/2/2012 6:11 PM	

I would be very excited, Yes.

#### Nodes\\Feelings regarding decision to work in a school cafeteria.

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
No	0.0587	3	1	CDA	7/2/2012 6:04 PM	

Good.

			2	CDA	7/2/2012 6:08 PM
--	--	--	---	-----	------------------

I am pretty content where I am. Even with the degree I don't – I am probably one of the unusual ones. I am fine where I am because I see retirement in 15 years and um I like my job. I like to think on both sides of my brain and I don't really have any plans. Unless someone has plans for me.

			3	CDA	7/2/2012 6:13 PM
--	--	--	---	-----	------------------

My boss is fabulous. It is because of her that I like my job. It's only because of her.

#### Nodes\\Feelings regarding wages.

No 0.0336 5

1 CDA 7/2/2012 5:49 PM

No complaints

2 CDA 7/2/2012 5:50 PM

I don't know any different

Reports\\Coding Summary By Source Report

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7/15/2012 2:20 PM

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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3 CDA 7/2/2012 6:02 PM

It's a career.

4 CDA 7/2/2012 6:03 PM

I like the variety it's a great part-time job. I couldn't find anything better.

5 CDA 7/2/2012 6:13 PM

My boss is fabulous. It is because of her that I like my job. It's only because of her.

**Nodes\\Feelings regarding working in a school cafeteria.**

No 0.1163 9

1 CDA 7/2/2012 6:00 PM

I love it now.

2 CDA 7/2/2012 6:00 PM

I have such a great boss.

3 CDA 7/2/2012 6:01 PM

In the beginning I chose this job for the hours and the months and I wanted out of the house but now it's more than a job.

4 CDA 7/2/2012 6:02 PM  
 It's a career.

5 CDA 7/2/2012 6:02 PM  
 My boss has given me responsibilities and made me accountable. Which I did not have the first three to five years of this job.

6 CDA 7/2/2012 6:03 PM  
 I like the variety it's a great part-time job. I couldn't find anything better.

7 CDA 7/2/2012 6:04 PM  
 Good.

8 CDA 7/2/2012 6:08 PM  
 I am pretty content where I am. Even with the degree I don't – I am probably one of the unusual ones. I am fine where I am because I see retirement in 15 years and um I like my job. I like to think on both sides of my brain and I don't really have any plans. Unless someone has plans for me.

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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9 CDA 7/2/2012 6:13 PM  
 My boss is fabulous. It is because of her that I like my job. It's only because of her.

**Nodes\\Husband's Level of Education**

No	0.0054	2
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1 CDA 7/2/2012 5:50 PM  
 Four years of college

2 CDA 7/2/2012 5:52 PM  
 business degree

**Nodes\\Husband's work experiences.**

No	0.0036	1			
			1	CDA	7/2/2012 5:51 PM

Many years in government

**Nodes\\Improving satisfaction.**

No	0.0057	1			
			1	CDA	7/2/2012 6:14 PM

She gives me a little more every year.

**Nodes\\Nature of relationships with co-workers.**

No	0.0300	3			
			1	CDA	7/2/2012 6:11 PM
			2	CDA	7/2/2012 6:12 PM

Everybody's good.

I have a good relationship with everybody as far as I know or they are good at lying to me.

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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			3	CDA	7/2/2012 6:13 PM
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My boss is fabulous. It is because of her that I like my job. It's only because of her.

**Nodes\\Other Work Experiences**

No	0.0372	5			
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	1	CDA	7/2/2012 5:49 PM
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clerical

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	2	CDA	7/2/2012 5:57 PM
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I don't know – just experience

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	3	CDA	7/2/2012 5:58 PM
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The variety of jobs I've had. The governor's office – the hospital.

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	4	CDA	7/2/2012 5:58 PM
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clerical or assistant type jobs

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	5	CDA	7/2/2012 5:58 PM
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Political offices, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies. Glaxo as a research assistant but not for long.

### Nodes\\Outcomes of annual evaluations.

	No	0.0007	1
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	1	CDA	7/2/2012 6:13 PM
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Good.

### Nodes\\Reason for choosing to work in a school cafeteria.

	No	0.0517	4
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	1	CDA	7/2/2012 6:01 PM
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In the beginning I chose this job for the hours and the months and I wanted out of the house but now it's more than a job.

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	2	CDA	7/2/2012 6:02 PM
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It's a career.

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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3 CDA 7/2/2012 6:02 PM

My boss has given me responsibilities and made me accountable. Which I did not have the first three to five years of this job.

4 CDA 7/2/2012 6:03 PM

I like the variety it's a great part-time job. I couldn't find anything better.

### Nodes\\Subject currently furthering education.

No 0.0501 4

1 CDA 7/2/2012 5:54 PM

67 credit hours under my belt

2 CDA 7/2/2012 5:53 PM

sporadically take classes

3 CDA 7/2/2012 6:05 PM

BA in psychology.

4 CDA 7/2/2012 6:08 PM

Even with the degree I don't – I am probably one of the unusual ones. I am fine where I am because I see retirement in 15 years and um I like my job. I like to think on both sides of my brain and I don't really have any plans. Unless someone has plans for me.

### Nodes\\Subject discussed long-term goals with supervisor.

No 0.0006 1

1 CDA 7/2/2012 6:08 PM

Yes.

### Nodes\\Subject finds the work mentally stimulating.

No 0.0356 2

1 CDA 7/2/2012 6:09 PM

Yes. Anytime you come from an at home situation, this is definitely stimulating. It wasn't always, it didn't always require effort. It does now.

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## Appendix M: Coding Summary by Node

7/15/2012 2:16 PM

# Coding Summary By Node

## K-12 Study

7/15/2012 2:16 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials
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### Node

Nodes\\Ability to incorporate skills, education, and abilities into current position.

#### Document

#### Internals\\PI107033287744

No		0.0046	1		
				1	CDA
I would be very excited, Yes.					

#### Internals\\PI117033695551

No		0.0142	2		
				1	CDA
It keeps me busy.					
				2	CDA
I'd like to but I am not sure that I could that that in my current job					

#### Internals\\PI12162728199

No		0.0259	2		
				1	CDA

I like it because I want to work and have some money, but at the same time, it's like so many years studying and working in a good position and everything and now I am here.

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Everything is different everywhere. I may need to take classes to learn more. I'd like to do it.

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