THE ROLE OF LEARNING IN OVERCOMING WORK DISSATISFACTION

by

DEREK B. MACDONALD

(Under the Direction of Robert J. Hill)

ABSTRACT

Underemployment in any of its many forms can cause ill effects for workers, not the least of which is dissatisfaction with work. The Great Recession that occurred during the end of the 2000 decade caused an increase in underemployment. Many workers were forced to find jobs that were below their credential level, were accompanied by insufficient hours or benefits, and paid below the expected level based upon education and experience. The problem is that we do not know how workers overcome work dissatisfaction that has resulted from perceived underemployment.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that takes place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work, informed by the following three research questions. 1. How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment? 2. How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction? 3. What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

Implementing a basic interpretive qualitative design, ten formerly dissatisfied workers spoke about their experiences with underemployment dissatisfaction, and overcoming the dissatisfaction. The major findings of this study were: 1. Workers want to feel safe, valued and free. 2. Workers respond to work dissatisfaction by quitting the dissatisfying work. 3. Workers did not demonstrate the learning skills to turn a dissatisfying work situation into a satisfying one.

One important implication of this study is that we now have a better idea of how to create and maintain a satisfying work environment. A second implication is that adult educators and employment counselors have the potential to help dissatisfied workers keep their jobs and turn their situations satisfying by helping those workers become better learners.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Learning, Constructivism, Dissatisfaction, Qualitative Research, Underemployment, Work

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children. May the wisdom that surrounds it help them to reach all of their goals.

Throughout this process I have come to accept a number of truths about being a father. This program started for me before the birth of my first daughter and has endured the births of all my children. My beliefs about patience and tolerance have developed equally through the processes of parenting and writing this dissertation. I am reminded of things each member of my family has said as I have progressed:

Each time an idea for another project would arise, Tamara would gently remind, "After the Ph.D."

Jane said, "Mom, don't be so hard on Dad."

Emma said, "Ph.D. stands for Perpetual Headache for Dad."

Kate said, "You will never be a squirrel."

The wisdom and humor inherent in these messages has helped me complete this dissertation, and helps me every day to be the best father I can.

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My sincerest thanks go to my wife, Tamara, for her unswerving and relentless support for me through this entire process. In her unique way she helped me understand that this process was not about me, but about our family, and that we all have worked very hard to see it to its end. Thank you to Jane, Emma and Kate.

A sincere thank you to Bob and Bettie for the efforts and sacrifices they made in helping me to achieve the perseverance and skills that were necessary to complete this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Employment and education are inseparable pieces of many people's lives. Many jobs

depend upon educational credentials while many educational programs claim to train, or *qualify*,

a worker for specific work. This balance between the ideal amount or level of education and the

resultant work is also influenced by many factors, not the least of which include resources

available to the worker/student (including time and money), past education and experience,

employment opportunities (present and future), educational program accessibility, and the

worker's educational and employment interests.

In a perfect world, requirements of past education, sociocultural structures, work

experience, time and money are sufficient for people to gain entry into any education program of

their choosing. In this world degree objectives align tightly with career objectives, just as

educational institutions base their programs upon available work at the time of graduation, and

the ideal job is waiting for everyone at the end of every educational program. In our world, on

the other hand, any of these requirements can be insufficient, or educational institutions are

unable to predict available work, preventing workers from securing their ideal jobs. Those

workers who do manage to find the ideal job are then faced with the task of longevity.

American workers are facing gloomy employment circumstances in light of the so-called

Great Recession (BBC News, August 2009), that started in 2007. The unemployment rate in

Canada since 2007 has been higher than previous years, jumping from 6% to over 8% (Statistics

Canada, 2011). The unemployment rate in the United States has jumped from 5% to 10% in the

same period (Tasci, 2010). Many people who have lost their jobs can only find replacement

work that is part-time, doesn't match their credentials or expertise, and comes with a lower wage

than they formerly earned. These people and many others find themselves underemployed for the first time. The problem of underemployment is fundamentally dissatisfaction that leads to anxiety, stress, and debilitating illnesses (AOL Jobs, October 2011). This study investigated the dissatisfaction of ten previously underemployed workers to learn how they made sense of underemployment, what caused their dissatisfaction, and how they eventually overcame.

The dissatisfaction that many people have with their work leads to different problems including unhappiness, discouragement, stress and anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem, loss of confidence, and loss of identity (Dooley & Prawse, 2004; Kessler, Turner & House, 1988). *Dissatisfy* is defined as "make discontented; fail to satisfy" (Oxford American Dictionary of Current English, 1999, p. 225). *Satisfy* is to "meet the expectations or desires of" (p. 713). For this study, dissatisfaction with work was defined as *discontentment from failing to meet expectations or desires of work*. There are many different ways that workers experience dissatisfaction, as are the problems that result from the experience.

According to Berg, "there is no way to determine how much dissatisfaction is too much, and the methods for determining the losses associated with 'alienation' in the workplace are even more obscure" (1971, p. 105). Work dissatisfaction may lead to problems with depression and loss of creativity, one's sense of self-esteem, confidence (Livingstone, 1999b), overall mental health, security, wage stagnation, and eventually loss of job and career identity (Dooley & Prause, 2004). Some people base their sense of identity on their work (Dooley & Prause, 2004) and their ability to obtain appropriate work. Stofferan (2000) admits that "it's harder for those with bad jobs to develop a positive self image." Fitchen (1981) adds that "bad jobs can result in diminished self esteem." The discouraged worker hypothesis states that "people with poor labour market expectations become discouraged in their job search and leave or fail to enter the

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labour force, because the probability of finding a suitable job after a certain period of time is low (van Ham, Mulder & Hooimeijer, 2001). Dissatisfaction with work has clear potential to be harmful.

Work satisfaction for some workers may be concurrently dissatisfying. For example, the health care worker who is satisfied helping people may be dissatisfied when her/his suggestions about patient comfort are ignored. The commercial fisherman who is very satisfied making $200,000 per year may be concurrently very dissatisfied spending 16 hours per day on the boat, away from family and friends. The Wal-Mart greeter who enjoys brightening people's shopping experience may be dissatisfied with part-time work with no benefits. There are many contexts of dissatisfaction with work.

Underemployment: A Key Source of Work Dissatisfaction

Underemployment is a complex phenomenon and has many definitions which all speak to a deficiency with the work itself or the worker's wasted potential. O'Toole defines underemployment as "the underutilization of education, training, skills, intelligence, and other human resources" (1977, p. 36). Some have taken this wasted potential and expressed it as a gap between educational attainment and job entry requirements (Diamond & Bedrosian, 1970; Livingstone, 1999b); or between educational attainment and the actual knowledge and skills required to do a job (Berg, 1970; Collins, 1979; Livingstone, 1999b). It is not difficult to find a worker whose educational attainment is beyond the requirements of his/her work, such as the registered nurse working as a licensed practical nurse while she re-licenses after a break from nursing.

Slack and Jensen (2004) characterize underemployed workers along a work continuum. The term underemployment includes the *subemployed* ("discouraged workers") who are not

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working and not looking but willing to work; the *unemployed* who are not working but actively looking; and *involuntary part-time* workers who work less than full-time but would prefer full-time employment. These categories help to illustrate the mismatch of workers and available work, in particular the perfect balance between worker skill and knowledge and work hours, wage and benefits. Even though it is extremely unlikely that there is work available for everyone with this perfect balance, many workers still believe there is, and thus find they are dissatisfied when they cannot find or secure it.

The emergence of Human Capital Theory in the 1950's was an important economic tool to help explain the value of work, or human capital (Schultz, 1963; Becker, 1993) and has since been written about extensively in the fields of Adult Education and Human Resource Development (see for instance Baptiste, 2001; Jarvis, 2004; Knowles, 1979; Palmer, 1992; Spencer, 2001; St. Clair, 2008). Human capital has been defined as a worker's potential to generate profit for an enterprise based upon his or her productivity which is based on his or her skills and knowledge (Becker, 1993). The theory has been misinterpreted from the relationship of skills and knowledge and their production value into a direct relationship between those skills and knowledge and the *appropriate* wage (assuming all other factors of production are ideal).

This has led to the widespread belief that *more education leads to better wages*. People who assume that there is a legitimate match between one's skills and knowledge and his or her job, become disappointed when they cannot find employment that is the legitimate match to his or her skills and knowledge. The specific circumstance of an individual, his or her qualifications and job-hunting efforts, and available work is a complicated matter. The norm is for businesses to be run with the needs of the business (profit, for example) taking precedence over the needs of the workers (for example, employing workers for the purpose of their salary and security, even

when there may not be work for them at the firm). Workers and people looking for work sometimes overlook this perspective. For example, within the situation known as the casualization of the workplace, businesses tend to hire part-time rather than full-time employees and save money on benefits that can be used to grow the business, expand, and potentially hire more part-time employees. In some cases, management strategies like this are necessary for the firm to survive. In others, management does what it can to maximize profit. Whatever the strategy, workers sometimes cannot see any other perspective on their employment except their own. When a worker becomes dissatisfied with her/his work, sometimes it is difficult to make sense of the situation in any other way.

Underemployment has also been defined in ways not based on educational attainment, credentials, skills and knowledge, and available work. For example, Slack and Jensen (2004) identify low-income workers (the "working poor") as those workers whose earnings are less than 25% more than the poverty threshold. Livingstone (2000) has taken it one step further and defines *subjective underemployment* in reference to underemployed workers who are dissatisfied with being underemployed, regardless of how that underemployment is defined. Bollinger (2003) added examples to illustrate how underemployment can be a result of other factors. Consider the homemaker with high educational attainment, currently a parent-homemaker, who would like to find part time, professional, high paying work but is only able to find low wage retail work. Also consider the "trailing spouse" whose partner secures a very satisfying job in a place where there is no market for his/her special skills. Others value certain lifestyle patterns or community characteristics more than adequate work and settle for local work. In summary, underemployment refers to a gap in which the level of work is somehow *under* that of the worker, and undeniably a reason for some to be dissatisfied with their work.

Underemployment is a reality of today's work landscape. Dooley and Prause report that total underemployment in American never went below 12% between the years 1990 and 2000 (2004, p. 12). According to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Survey of Educational Issues Data Archive (Livingstone, 1999b), 25% of the surveyed Ontario labour force felt it was overqualified for current work; 41% thought they had skills that they would like to, but could not, apply in current work; and 33% agreed that they were entitled to better jobs based upon current levels of schooling. In a study of over 3000 Kentucky households, Bollinger (2003) found that more than a quarter of full-time workers self-identified as underemployed and over ninety percent of respondents cited lack of job opportunities. Forty percent of part-time working males between 25 and 49 years of age reported they would prefer full-time work but were unable to find it.

The problem of underemployment has increased in severity as a result of the so-called "Great Recession" (Wessel, 2010). According to Sum and Khatiwada, "at no time over the past 30 years has underemployment been so big a problem" (2010, p. 3). The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor does not present underemployment explicitly as a category of labor underutilization. It does, however, name the categories U-5 (total unemployed, plus discouraged workers, plus all other persons marginally attached to the labor force) and U-6 (total unemployed, plus all persons marginally attached to the labor force, plus total employed part time for economic reasons) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). In 2006-2007 U-5 was at 5.5% and U-6 at 8.2%. By 2010 both had doubled (U-5 to 11.1% and U-6 to 16.7%).

There is no accurate figure to represent underemployment. Katz (2010) states that "the conventional unemployment rate understates current labor market distress and misses the huge growth in underemployment (involuntary part-time work) and a substantial increase in

discouraged workers no longer counted in the labor force." Unfortunately Katz's use of the term underemployment is limited because it only includes involuntary part-time work, one of many forms of underemployment being experienced by workers. According to Wu & Eamon, "the U.S. official definition of unemployment … fails to acknowledge the common problem of underemployment" (2010, p. 821).

To make the recent underemployment situation bleaker, the majority of literature on underemployment emphasizes the problem and fails to offer solutions. The International Labour Organization makes the following assurance about finding a solution: "The primary objective of measuring underemployment is to improve the analysis of employment problems and contribute towards formulating and evaluating short-term and long-term policies and measures designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment" ("Importance and Applications", n.d.). Many organizations present the problem of underemployment and its solution in this manner. "These negative impacts of employment problems on the well-being of individuals and families have brought unemployment, and to a lesser extent underemployment, to the forefront of scholarly and public concern" (Wu & Eamon, 2010, p. 820).

According to Livingstone (1999b) underemployment could be reduced with a better system of matching people's skills and knowledge to their work. In particular, expanding on the recognition of work-related skills and knowledge to include those obtained through informal and tacit learning. The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) movement is exactly this. Within PLAR "the conventional student ascends the educational ladder accepting, usually uncritically, Education's requirements, eventually achieving the goal of possessing *public* knowledge and skill. The PLAR candidate undertakes the additional process of seeking to transform essentially *private* knowledge and skill, acquired through undetermined experience,

into *public* learning in order to, eventually, benefit from the advantages associated with the latter" (Thomas, Collins & Plett, 2001, p. 6). Rather than tearing down the credential system we should expand it to recognize more sources of knowledge and skills.

A common criticism of responses to underemployment is they address the aggregate, as a "one solution fits every worker" approach, and not a productive approach for the individual. It is not uncommon for workers who seek to overcome dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment to turn to educational institutions to be educated or trained for different work. Not only it is common for educational institutions to advertise placement rates for their graduates, they are likely to inflate them to attract new students. These "guarantees" by the educational institutions can be misleading to workers looking for an escape from underemployment. To illustrate, an overwhelmingly high proportion of Internet forums and blogs were found during a literature search for examples of educational institutions that promise work at the end of their programs and their students who cannot seem to find that work. One 2005 Seton Hall University School of Law graduate who, with more than $100,000 in debt, was initially attracted to the school because of its placement rate, but was unable to find a job (Kwoh, 2010). This graduate was promised a placement rate of 90%. In 2010 the unemployment rate for new law school grads was 10%. Among the 90% who were not unemployed, one-in-four were temporary, one-in-ten were part-time, and one-fifth of those with jobs were actively searching for another job (National Association for Law Placement, 2011) resulting in less than one-half of that 90% with permanent, full-time work and not concurrently looking for better work.

In the U.S. the situation has become so severe, the federal government instituted on October 29, 2010, a "gainful employment" regulation that requires colleges and universities to

report information about students who enroll in programs that lead to gainful employment in a recognized occupation. The rules also require institutions to disclose to prospective students certain information about the institutions track record regarding gainful employment ("Federal Register", 2010).

According to Livingstone, "the underemployed have been at least as likely as other employees to be planning on further education (1999, p. 120). In my pilot study of three people self-identified as underemployed and dissatisfied with the situation, each of them returned to post-secondary educational programs as a response to their underemployment. A common context for learning that people turn to in their attempts to overcome work dissatisfaction is formal education, which is defined as "the hierarchical structured educational system … from primary schools to graduate programs in universities" (Jarvis, 1999, p. 72) as well as specialized programs, technical and professional training (Coombs, Prosser & Ahmed, 1973). Courses taken through university, college, community college, and private training firms are all grouped into the category of formal education. In these situations there is typically an instructor, a curriculum, preset behavioral objectives and outcomes, and a credential earned at successful completion, which is among the most common reason for participating.

Meaning and Work Dissatisfaction

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a common belief among underemployed and dissatisfied workers is that they *deserve* better work. For example, some people believe that completing a university degree should yield a salary better than that of those who have finished trade school, and even better than people who completed only high school. Unfortunately, with this conviction, satisfaction may only come with the acquisition of what that person believes is appropriate work and pay. Satisfying, defined as *accepted as adequate; equal to a*

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preconception, depends upon the meaning of *adequate*. Can this be changed, thus changing the meaning of *satisfying*?

The determination of *satisfying* is subjective and thus different for everyone. Determining if work as a whole is satisfying involves a complicated web of factors. Many contexts include norms to which we can refer to start to make sense of satisfaction. For example, a 12-hour workday on a fishing boat is relatively short and would be quite satisfying for someone who expects to be out to sea for 24 hours at a time. On the other hand, a 12 hour workday for someone engaged in unionized shift work at the auto plant is a very long day, and potentially dissatisfying if that person went to work planning for 8 hours on the job. Satisfaction, thus, is relative to the context.

The Uniqueness of Workers and Work Dissatisfaction

A worker makes meaning around all aspects of work, not limited to requirements of work, how to acquire work, and what is appropriate in his/her work situation. In some cases that worker will decide that the conditions of work are below what is appropriate, or what he/she deserves (based on experience, credentials, preferences, and other subjective interpretations). The term deserve is defined as "rightfully merited or earned" (The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English, 1999, p. 211). The term "rightfully" describes legitimacy. In other words, workers feel they are legitimately lacking something that should accompany work (i.e., benefits, more hours, better pay, more opportunity to apply skills and knowledge, or even work that requires his/her educational attainment for entry). The difficulty is sorting through these incommensurable conditions of work. Employers need specific tasks completed. Ideally, someone attempts to describe these tasks in terms of educational attainment and work experience. People apply for this work and assume the *most suitable* candidate is hired (although

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suitability may be in terms of minority and under-represented hires, for example, rather than a judgment of productivity). That worker is trained and starts to learn not only about the work itself but the context. Each worker is unique in previous experience and his/her ability to make sense of that experience. And somewhere along the way the worker begins to view the work as dissatisfying. The reasons are as numerous as workers themselves. Work dissatisfaction is unique to each worker. To understand the dissatisfaction and how its solution came about it is first necessary to understand the unique qualities of each learner. To better understand dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment we must understand each worker's beliefs about adequate and legitimate work.

Individuals make sense of work and dissatisfaction in unique ways. An individual's life is full of specific choices and circumstances that, collectively, are unique. The way an individual learns and makes meaning is as unique, having been refined through a lifetime of experiences. The last piece of this puzzle is to explore how some workers who were dissatisfied with their work have successfully overcome it, and to discover what roles learning and meaning making played to this end.

Statement of the Problem

Work dissatisfaction, specifically dissatisfaction resulting from underemployment, can have a considerable negative effect on workers at many levels. *Change through learning* is a common strategy that is found in numerous learning and organizational theories and commonly used in some form as a slogan for educational and lifelong learning programs. No data was found that describes how dissatisfied workers, for reasons of underemployment, overcome their dissatisfaction. Nor do learning and organizational theories that describe change through

learning show how this works with underemployed workers. How do these workers overcome their dissatisfaction and what role does learning play?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that takes place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work. The research questions driving this study were:

1. How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment?

2. How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction?

3. What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

Significance

This study is significant because it brings together making sense of perceived underemployment, dissatisfaction, and the learning in which workers engage as they face dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. Both the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and Statistics Canada define underemployment in terms of involuntarily working part-time as opposed to fulltime and wanting work but not having it and being discouraged about prospects. Not only are these definitions narrow, they apply to populations not individuals. This study viewed underemployment and the dissatisfaction that it caused from the perspective of the individual, in his/her terms, in the context of his/her reality. This enables a better understanding of the phenomenon, its effects on individual workers, and the potential to find solutions for that individual.

The exploration of an individual's journey though perceived underemployment and dissatisfaction, culminating in the resolution of the dissatisfaction is a story that counselors,

teachers and practitioners of all types could use as they teach and help people at all stages of their careers. This journey not only shows what work can be, but how workers respond and the implications of those responses. For example, a worker who quits when faced with dissatisfaction, but repeatedly works and the same type of job offers different lessons than another worker who, when faced with dissatisfaction, is unable to quit because of financial security issues.

Counselors and teachers will be better equipped to help their clients and learners if they better understand how beliefs are acquired and changed. Human Resources and Organizational Development practitioners will be better prepared to work with dissatisfied workers knowing not only some of the factors that may lead to work dissatisfaction, but to make sense of dissatisfaction as meaning that has can be dissected and changed. Ultimately and most importantly, workers themselves will benefit from the results of this study, first by finding out that dissatisfaction with work because of perceived underemployment is a common problem, and second by showing that the meaning we ascribe to work is not as unyielding as it may at times seem. Thinking about work differently may be all that is needed to overcome work dissatisfaction.

Definition of Terms

This study brings together different ideas about learning and reality. As ideas come together in the attempt to make sense of the world, we create something new. Although there are plenty of terms to express these ideas, each term has multiple meanings and usages that must be clarified for the purposes of this study. According to Lather, "any effort at definition is not so much description as inscription" (1991, p. 19). To be clear, the following list of definitions is provided only to clarify the meanings that are intended in this study.

Deserve

"Rightfully merited or earned" (Oxford American Dictionary of Current English, 1999, p. 211).

Dissatisfaction

Discontentment from failing to meet expectations or desires.

Formal education

"The hierarchical structured educational system … from primary schools to graduate programs in universities" (Jarvis, 1999, p. 72) as well as specialized programs, technical and professional training (Coombs, Prosser & Ahmed, 1973).

Human Capital Theory

An economic theory that treats humans and their productivity at work as capital (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1963) in the production process.

Informal learning

"[T]he lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play: from the example and attitude of families and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally informal education is unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning – including that of a highly 'schooled' person." (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8).

Meaning-Making

A term to describe learning, or creating knowledge, that illustrates that learners construct (or "make") meaning as opposed to passively receive it. This term is consistent with constructivism.

Perceived Underemployment

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A worker's sense that his/her employment is deficient in comparison to that worker's sense of what appropriate work should be and include.

Subjective Underemployment

A negative sentiment felt by a worker towards his or her current underemployment (Livingstone, 1999b).

Underemployment

"The underutilization of education, training, skills, intelligence, and other human resources" in the current labor force (O'Toole, 1977, p. 36).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown the lack of understanding regarding how underemployed workers who are dissatisfied with their work are able to overcome the dissatisfaction,. Additionally, sparse literature relates to the role that learning plays in overcoming dissatisfaction for these workers. The purpose of this study was therefore to better understand the role of learning for workers as they overcome work dissatisfaction. The key questions informing the study were: How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment? How do participants make sense of their dissatisfaction? What was the role of learning as they overcame their perceived dissatisfaction?

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that takes place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work. The research questions driving this study were:

1. How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment?

2. How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction?

3. What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

The first step in understanding the role of learning in overcoming work dissatisfaction was to perform a comprehensive review of the literature to discover what was already known. Sources of this literature review included the University of Georgia and Mount Saint Vincent University's adult learning publication collections. Academic Search Premier was the main electronic database. Keywords used for these searches were initially "underemployment," "dissatisfaction" and "learning," and then numerous synonyms and related terms for each of these keywords (i.e., "underemployment" led to "work," "job," "employment," "unemployment," "employer," "employee;" "dissatisfaction" (and "satisfaction") led to "displeasure," "disappointment," "unhappy" and "unhappiness," and "discontent;" and "learning" led to "learn," "self-directed, training," "apprenticeship," and "education." After the first core publications were identified and reviewed, reference lists for these publications were consulted to identify more sources that spoke to the research purpose and questions. The literature searches were mainly online through UGA's Ebsco Host, using the Academic Search Premier database. Many sources that were found were retrieved through this portal.

Numerous publications were discovered that addressed learning in general and more specifically how learning takes place with a specific goal or purpose in mind (such as overcoming dissatisfaction). There is an evident gap in the learning literature addressing learning for the purpose of overcoming dissatisfaction of any type, not limited to dissatisfaction with work.

Theoretical works were largely published books, primarily within the learning literature. The search words "unemployment" and "underemployment" led to a few books which were written from an economic point-of-view. There were no theoretical sources addressing dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment or learning to overcome dissatisfaction. There were numerous research studies found which mainly addressed learning and self-directed learning projects but not in regards to overcoming work dissatisfaction.

The literature that was discovered formed two distinct groups: underemployment and learning. There were no publications discovered that addressed both of these groups simultaneously. No literature was found the directly speaks to this purpose. The review has shown that theoretically learning to overcome subjective underemployment is possible. It is with this in mind that the study was carried out

This chapter is presented starting with Human Capital Theory as the introduction into underemployment, transitioning from it to constructivism which provides the epistemological and ontological framework from which to discuss learning and knowledge construction. Underemployment and constructivism will be discussed in parallel with the rungs of this metaphorical ladder being the intervening topics of human capital theory, dissatisfaction, and features and contingencies of learning, including experience, reflection, context, the social dimension of learning, transformation, formal vs. informal learning, learning as change, and the

learner. These intervening topics all contribute to the understanding of underemployment and the subjective learning of each worker in making sense of perceived underemployment and dissatisfaction, and to eventually overcoming the dissatisfaction. This approach will allow the reader to stay focused on underemployment, constructivism and this study which relating them to more specific areas that warrant attention.

Underemployment

Underemployment has been defined generally as,

A measure of employment and labor utilization in the economy that looks at how well the labor force is being utilized in terms of skills, experience and availability to work. Labor that falls under the underemployment classification includes those workers that are highly skilled but working in low paying jobs, workers that are highly skilled but work in low skill jobs and part-time workers that would prefer to be full-time. ("Underemployment", n.d.)

The feature of employment that is of particular importance within this definition is *deficiency*. All underemployment has in common some form of deficiency (insufficiency or limitation), be it in skill or experience utilization, availability of work, level of pay or hours per week of work. For example, the International Labour Organization defines "two types of underemployment: *time related underemployment*, which is due to insufficient hours of work, and *inadequate employment situations*, which are due to other limitations in the labour market which limit the capacities and well being [sic] of workers" (2011).

The difference between underemployment (deficient work) and employment (work with no deficiencies) was largely attributed to the conception and growth of Human Capital Theory over the past 50 years. Human Capital Theory, although only ever a description of the economic

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value of people, has led to the widespread belief that the better a person's credentials and/or skills and knowledge, the better work they will perform. In spite of Schied's (1995) assertion that "there is little evidence that increased education leads directly to increased productivity and economic growth," the belief persists.

Belief, a fundamental quality of being human, is powerful in guiding our decisions and experiences. A necessary component of this research is thus how people create meaning. To better explore the subjective meaning making for workers overcoming the dissatisfaction that accompanies perceived underemployment, *constructivism* will serve as the lens through which to view meaning and its construction.

In part, constructivism is a theory of learning that regards "the [learner] as actively engaged in the creation of their own phenomenal world" (Burr, 2003, p. 19). Learners are creating the phenomena of their own world *subjectively*. Terms used to describe that which is being created, the building blocks of phenomena, include *meaning*, *knowledge*, *belief*, and *truth* to a lesser extent (truth tends to be used in reference to objective, external meaning). As this study is concerned with the how underemployed workers learning the process of overcoming dissatisfaction, the terms knowledge and meaning will be used interchangeable to refer to that which is constructed when they learn.

Constructivism is also an epistemology as it makes assertions of what counts as knowledge and from whence that knowledge comes. Jonassen writes that, with constructivism, "reality is constructed by the knower based upon mental activity. … What the mind produces are mental models that explain to the knower what he or she has perceived" (1991, p. 10). Belief, a part of reality, is constructed by resolving what we experience with reality (all of those beliefs we currently hold). Radical constructivists hold that objective reality, the idea of an external

world independent of any single person, is of no consequence (von Glaserfeld, 1985). The

collection of all knowledge a person has constructed is the best representation of reality that we

have, regardless of its accuracy in representing objective reality. Reality can thus be considered

the sum total of a person's belief, meaning and truth, all of which are constructed subjectively by

the individual.

Underemployment: Human Capital Theory

As the purpose of this study was to better understand the role of learning in overcoming

work dissatisfaction, a review of Human Capital Theory is essential because it represents the

source of the belief that more education leads to better work. Human capital theory is an

economic theory that considers humans and their productivity at work as capital (Becker, 1993;

Schultz, 1963). The term was first used in Jacob Mincer's article "Investment in Human Capital

and Personal Income Distribution" in *The Journal of Political Economy* in 1958. Sullivan,

Steven and Sheffrin (2003) define it as "the stock of competences, knowledge and personality

attributes embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value" although, as

with underemployment, there are numerous approaches and definitions. Economics, like work,

has assumptions, truths, and language that act as a lens through which it can be used to make

sense of the world. Human capital theory supports the idea that rather than spending capital to

buy products, firms can produce those products themselves with investment in raw materials and

productive workers who will make the products. If these firms can produce the new products

cheaper than it will cost to buy the same products, it will consume less capital to acquire these

products. Therefore, worker productivity is seen as capital: human capital.

The contribution of human capital to the prosperity of the economy has been explained in

terms of supply and demand. Supply-side theories of human capital assume that the drive of

workers to pursue education and become more productive, thus increasing the supply of productive workers, will lead to a more prosperous economy. Advocates of this position believe that productivity is the driving force of industry and that the education and training choices made by workers determine what industry will look like. Failure of this approach is due to industry not leveraging the potential of the available productive workforce. Demand-side theories of human capital work from the assumption that industry is responsible for the prosperous economy by creating the industrial needs for productive workers, and education must respond to this demand by training workers appropriately (Livingstone, 2001b). Advocates of this position believe the education-to-work track is certain because the programs a school offers are in direct response to the needs of industry. In other words, students should take what they prefer in school, choosing from what is currently offered, because when you graduate the resultant job will be waiting. The failure of this approach lies in the education system not responding appropriately to the demands of industry, not to mention educational institutions generating profit in the best interest of shareholders rather than generating productive workers to fill existing or forthcoming work opportunities.

Human capital theory assumes that its investors are rational, informed people (Becker, 1993) who choose to invest in their own productivity (Johnston, 1997) based on profitability and rate of return in the form of, for example, increased wages (Becker, 1993). As people invest more in human capital those investment skills improve and they become more productive at investing in human capital (Becker, 1993). By this approach, a person who has no post-secondary experience would have little or no skills to select further training to increase his/her human capital. As further investment (such as education, other training, work experience) is made the worker becomes more informed and can make more successful decisions about further

investment as well as finding satisfying work. In response to the Great Recession that started in 2007 in which satisfying work is harder to find, some workers' investment choices become that of work and no work, regardless of the extent of their underemployment as a result.

Anything that improves the worker's productivity is an investment in human capital (Schultz, 1963). There are many ways to invest in human capital. The most commonly articulated approach is investment in formal education. The focus of human capital theory is not education but productivity: education is just one way to invest for the purpose of increasing productivity. According to Schied (1995), human capital theory states that an individual's return on investment from education outweighs that from other forms of investment. Investment in human capital, which includes investment in nutrition, emotional health, and physical health (Becker, 1993; Sweetland, 1996; Schultz, 1963), increases the ability to be productive. Human capital theory recognizes that there is an economic value to education through an increase in productivity. It does not make a direct link between education and wage.

The choice to invest in human capital can be stated in terms of cost and return. As with any investment, there are costs required for investment in human capital such as the costs of training and educational programs, as well as the earnings foregone by those who attend school (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1963). Younger people have more time to recoup their investments in human capital and thus are capable of recovering from a higher investment (Becker, 1993). If the expected rate of return was less than the costs, a rational and informed person would not invest in human capital (Becker, 1993). Those people who make the investment in human capital without receiving the expected returns (for example, receiving increased wage or better work) perhaps made bad investments in their human capital. As a result of having higher knowledge and skills than their work requires, they can be called *underemployed*.

Human capital theory attempts to explain underemployment in a number of different ways. Demand-side human capital theory states that our educational institutions have misrepresented the demand by industry and are responsible for underemployment (Becker, 1993), and, as a result, the cheated feelings of the students who graduate to find that their expected jobs do not exist. Supply-side theorists would make the argument that education creates jobs, but the process does not happen overnight. The natural cycle of work is long-term and is based on general tendencies in the labor force, not a single person graduating.

Another explanation of underemployment given by human capital theorists is that people who invest in their own human capital, through education or other means, to increase productivity, should be informed and rational, which includes having a sense of where the highest rate of return on investment in human capital will be. Someone who invests in a medical education, knowing that there will be a *surplus* of medical school graduates by the time of graduation, thereby reducing the demand, is making a risky investment and should not expect a high rate of return.

Becker's (1993) egalitarian approach would characterize a worker's underemployment as a result of not making the appropriate investment to increase his/her productivity. Within this approach everyone has the same capacity to benefit from human capital, but the type of investment made and the resulting increase in productivity is the difference. Any person that completes any vocational training course has the potential to work in that vocation, but productivity does not flow logically from credentials alone. It is difficult to work in a job that involves something a person does not like or cannot tolerate (i.e., chemicals, small spaces, weather, noise, isolation). Also, workers with higher responsibilities require work that can satisfy those needs. For example a single parent with multiple children needs to care for his/her

children in terms of food, shelter, and supervision. A worthy human capital investment would be one that would lead to work that either pays for food, shelter and supervision, or pays for food and shelter while allowing the parent to supervise the children him or herself. It should also have the least investment of time and cost so that debt does not become unmanageable. The situation is very complicated because there are numerous other factors that influence this decision (for example, proximity of family or free supervision for the children, vocational programs available, work available, educational attainment of parent).

Human Capital Theory: Beliefs

The initial idea of human capital theory, that worker productivity can be treated as capital, has influenced beliefs including: people should work to their educational attainment; people should be able to apply all of their work-related knowledge and skills at work; and people should identify themselves by their job. It appears that human capital theory, starting as an attempt by economists using empirical research to explain the relationship between increases in productivity and economic benefit, has become an explanation of the cause-and-effect relationship between formal educational attainment and economic benefit. Once policy makers correlated education to employment and brought it into the realm of public policy the belief that *better education leads to higher wages* became legitimate. From this point it has influenced how countless people think about education and work, culminating in the beliefs stated above.

As a result of human capital theory influencing many facets of our lives, its assumptions pervade education. Many people now speak of education in terms of work, degree programs in terms of salary, and jobs as appropriate if not legitimate goals of education. Workers are led to believe that the main obstacle to their success is a lack of credentialed education (Coffield, 1999).

This focus on the educational attainment of workers has misled firms away from competitive strategies and caused them to up-skill and up-credential their workforces under the assumption that this will make them more productive and thus make the company more competitive (Coffield, 1999). One byproduct is credential inflation which causes the level of educational credentials required for a specific job to inflate over time (Coffield, 1999). The end result is that education serves as a screening function perhaps more than serving to give workers the appropriate amount and types of skills and knowledge to do the job.

The benefits of education extend far beyond wages. Human capital theory does not talk of happiness, security, or satisfaction: just the increased productivity from investment in education. According to Schultz, "[it] will not suffice to treat the total costs of schooling as if the only benefit from schooling were increases in future earnings" (1963, p. 68).

Human Capital Theory: Criticisms

A major critique of human capital theory is directed at its treatment of the worker/investor. The assumption is that people who invest in human capital do it consciously, rationally, informed, and based on rates of return. Students and workers are generally unable to say what the rate of return on investment in human capital will be. "There is no convincing evidence … to show that students are informed of the patterns of earnings in the labor market, much less that they use this information in making educational decisions" (Blaug, 1976, p. 836). According to Becker, "there is much uncertainty about the return to human capital" (1993, pp. 91-92).

Another problem with human capital theory, according to Livingstone (1999b), relates to what he terms the *Education-Jobs Gap* which refers to the persistent gap between peoples' knowledge and skills and the number of jobs in which they can apply their knowledge and skills.

Livingstone notes the tendency for people to learn more without the available work increasing in spite of human capital theory's assertion that regardless of supply side or demand side approaches, education and jobs increase concurrently (1999b). Worker knowledge and skills should be applied on the job, and terms like "wasted" (Livingstone, 1999a) and "useless" (Aronowitz, 2000) have been used to characterize this knowledge and these skills. In some cases workers are not permitted to apply what they know in the workplace, many times because their knowledge and skills remain unacknowledged by employers (Livingstone, 2001c). Over 40 percent of employed workers in North America in the 1990s had work-related skills that they were not permitted to use in their jobs (Livingstone, 1999b).

Schied (1995) writes that the relationship between increased education and increased productivity, and thus economic growth, has weak support. Economic growth may be influenced by education, but that influence is not as significant as Human capital theory purports (Schied, 1995). Human capital theory was articulated initially as a term to encapsulate the economic value of human knowledge, skills and experience in production. Human capital theory does not explain underemployment: it makes no claims about appropriate or deficient work. It does, however, recognize that the long-term benefits from an individual's investment in education are higher than other forms of investment (Schied, 1995).

Only with the emergence of industrial capitalism did most people begin to live for their productive work (Livingstone, 1999b). "Our socialization through the family, church and school, as well as government policies and employment and welfare agendas, have continued to emphasize a necessary link between paid work, human dignity and the possibility of self-fulfillment" (Livingstone, 1999b, p. 228). Work is an important part of life, contributing greatly

to welfare, security, and identity. The problem of perceived underemployment, therefore, deserves attention as well.

Human capital theory was born at a time in which empirical support was required to provide legitimacy, particularly in social and educational policy. At this time the principal support given for human capital theory was empirical education research, the easiest human capital investment to measure (Sweetland, 1996). Unfortunately, the data upon which human capital theory was initially based, from the 1940 and 1950 U.S. Censuses (Becker, 1964) was limited. For example, education was expressed in years, ranging from 8 to 16+. Income was expressed as averages from the same Censuses. Using Census data Becker found a relationship between years of education and average salary. As informal learning, or learning which is not formal learning (what many people refer to as *education*, that includes for example teachers, curriculum and evaluation) counts for 90% of an individual's learning activities (Livingstone, 1999b), Becker was only referring to credentials in terms of years spent in formal educational settings, not learning in general. Policy makers and politicians in the mid-twentieth century made connections between the value of learning in formal educational programs and the resulting increase in worker productivity, which would be accompanied by an increase in wages, and thus formed the seed from which grew the popular view that more education leads to better work and higher pay.

Sweetland (1996) states that salary differences are actually attributable to employers holding out for workers with higher educational attainment, rather than higher performance. Wage rates are not determined solely by worker productivity: wage is not a prize for being productive. Many factors including profits and union relations determine wage rates. "Wages … bear no rational relation to one's work and what one produces but to one's place within the

system" (Kellner, 2002, p.51). There is no simple formula to determine wage rates as they are built on history, the changing demands of the market, the availability of workers, unions, and costs to name just a few. Bowles and Gintis (1975) tell us that "the structure of wage rates is not exogenous to the firm, but rather one of the instruments used to maximize profits" (p. 75).

Wage Rates

This section was included in the literature review to show that the calculation of wage rates is a more complex process than negotiations between workers and their employers. Ashenfelter and Layard (1986) discuss the factors involved in setting wage rates as follows. Wage contributes to a balance between the costs of production and revenue (which includes profit). In other words, determining what type and how many workers to hire requires a balance between the costs to employ the workers (including but not limited to wages and benefits) and the capital benefits that the skills and knowledge of the workers (human capital) bring to the firm (contributions to production which increases the firm's ability to generate profit). If revenue covers all costs and wages, and the employer still garners a satisfactory profit, that employer will likely continue to employ those workers. There are many factors that more directly influence workers' wage.

Higher worker costs (higher wages) generally result in lower profit, whether revenue is higher or not. In other words, even though hiring more workers will increase production, the revenue from that extra production has to cover the costs of those extra workers and still result in a satisfactory profit. For example, a restaurant can serve all tables at capacity with a 10 member wait staff. By adding more people to the wait staff the burden is noticeably lessened on the initial 10, but there is no increase in revenue. As a result, the wait staff is more content for not having to work as hard, but profits decrease. The employer could increase profits by either

reducing costs (firing a waiter or reducing wages) or increasing production (adding tables or making people eat faster). Every worker who is paid to do a job is involved in such a situation in which their productivity directly affects their ability to keep their job. If a worker that is dissatisfied becomes less productive as a result, lowering revenue and profits, he/she might be in danger of being fired and replaced by a worker that is more productive.

Workplaces employ workers with different skill sets and knowledge, all contributing to production in different ways. For example, a hospital employs physicians and cooks, all necessary for the appropriate functioning of the hospital. The physicians spend much more time and resources becoming physicians, so the barriers to becoming a physician are much greater than those to becoming a cook. The supply of physicians therefore would be much smaller than the supply of cooks. Employers will pay higher wages to attract workers that are in low supply.

As the demands of hospitals, clinics and the general public for physicians are high, employers would, again, pay higher wages to attract those workers. Employers would not hire a physician to do a cook's work for 2 main reasons: the physician would demand a higher wage than the employer would pay (based on the physician's investment in human capital); and the physician would likely not be productive as a cook, as compared to the worker trained as a cook. Both the physician and the cook contribute to the generation of revenue through their skills and knowledge (human capital). Setting wage rates depend upon many interrelated factors, and ultimately contribute to the generation of revenue, profit, and the sustainability of the firm.

Awe to the worker in a situation of high demand and low supply, in which the employer pays a high wage to secure him/her. Unfortunately, as evidenced by existing rates of underemployment and fallout from the Great Recession, this situation has become less common. According to Tasci (2010), one result of the Great Recession was the enduring higher

unemployment rate, which means that people are unemployed longer, and are thus losing their industry-specific skills and becoming less productive, making them productive. Many of these workers face low demand and high supply conditions in their industry and are likely to face joblessness for a long time (Tasci, 2010) or the same work at a reduced wage (Orley, Ashenfelter & Layard, 1986).

Types of Underemployment

The literature regarding underemployment reveals varied definitions and meanings. "Most economists instinctively dismiss the term underemployment when they first encounter it. The conventional wisdom is that someone is either: working, seeking work, or voluntarily out of the labor force (and possibly discouraged)" (Bollinger, Coomes & Berger, 2003, p. 2). Simpson's view (1992) is that underemployment can result from a mismatch between supply and demand conditions on the local labour market. Neither of these definitions provides consideration for the worker beyond discussion of the labor force in general.

Underemployment also refers to a "gap" although that gap can be in a variety of different aspects of work. Livingstone (1999c) uses the gap metaphor to describe underemployment with respect to credentials, performance, and opportunity. The *credential gap* is the difference between credentials held by the worker and those currently required for entry into the job. The *performance gap* is the difference between the skills and knowledge held by workers and the skills and knowledge required to do the work. The *talent-use gap* refers to missed educational opportunities required to gain entry into higher paying, higher responsibility, and/or higher productivity work. Livingstone (1999c) also discusses two other categories of underemployment: *involuntary reduced employment* and *structural unemployment*. Involuntary reduced employment is experienced by those workers with part-time jobs preferring full-time

and seasonal workers preferring year-round work. Structural unemployment refers to the persistent gap between the number of jobs and the surplus of job seekers.

Slack and Jensen (2004) refer to the Labor Utilization Framework's six-state variable to measure employment hardship. Of the six states, only the middle four are considered underemployment. The states are: *not in the labor force* which refers to adults who are not working and do not wish to be working; the *subunemployed* (''discouraged workers'') who are adults not working, not looking for work, but would accept work if available; *unemployed* referring to adults who are not working but actively looking for work; *involuntary part-time workers* who are adults working less than full-time (35 hours per week) because they are unable to find full-time work; *low-income workers* (the ''working poor'') who are adults whose labor market earnings are within 25% higher than the poverty threshold; and *adequately employed* workers who are working full-time (or part-time voluntarily) at jobs that pay more than 25% above the poverty level. Note that Slack and Jensen's definitions consider wage whereas Livingstone's do not.

"Unlike other important labor market variables, there is no official U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics definition or measure of underemployment" (Bollinger, Coomes & Berger, 2003, p. 4).The six-state variable currently used by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics only includes the following populations in its statistics: unemployed 15 weeks or longer; job losers and those who have completed temporary jobs; total unemployed; discouraged workers; workers employed part-time for economic reasons; and workers marginally attached to the civilian labor force. It's representation of underemployment only includes discouraged workers and those employed part-time for economic reasons (i.e., cannot find full-time work).

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There are a number of studies that have explored the extent of underemployment. Pre-Great Recession studies include the following. Slack and Jensen (2004) in their analysis of data from 1974 through 1998found 6.6% unemployment, 6.5% working poor, 4.0% working part-time involuntary, and 50% discouraged workers. Stofferan, in his study of rural American workers, found that underemployment was "a common, pervasive, and natural condition in rural North Dakota" (2000, p. 321). In their study of 3285 Kentucky households, Bollinger, Coomes and Berger (2003) found that 58% were employed; 15% of those worked part time; more than 25% reported underemployment; and ½ of those who reported underemployment said it was by choice. Of those underemployed not by choice, 90% cited lack of job opportunities. Child care issues were a reason for underemployment by 12-29% of workers, and 24% of all part time workers would prefer fulltime work. Underemployment is a chronic condition in rural America (Stofferahn, 2000). This data resulted from research designed to explore underemployment specifically. The International Labour Organization (ILO), in 1964, defined underemployment in terms of workers not attaining their full employment level (ILO, accessed Sept 14, 2011), recognizing underemployment as a subset of employed persons, not unemployed persons. In 1982 the ILO set the standards to classify persons as employed, unemployed, and economically inactive to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive of a country's population. In 1998 the measurement of underemployment was adopted in two forms: time related (due to insufficient hours of work); and inadequate employment (due to other limitations in the labour market which limit the capacities of workers) although the ILO does not present statistics on "inadequate employment" for the workforces of participating countries. Canada and the U.S. both publish statistics on time related underemployment. For the U.S., as of August 2011, 16.1% of the labor force was unemployed, marginally attached to the labor force, or employed part time for

economic reasons (as a percentage of the total labor force plus all persons marginally attached). Statistics Canada does not publish a current underemployment rate for Canada's labour force.

There are other examples of underemployment. One is the so-called "trailing spouse" (Bollinger, Coomes & Berger, 2003, p. 3) who, after relocating to what would be a very satisfying job for the other spouse, finds no opportunities for his/her special skills and knowledge. Another example is the worker who is forced to choose being living in a place that s/he finds very satisfying, with no opportunity for adequate work, and working in a very satisfying job in an unsatisfying community. By choosing community, that worker ends up with a satisfying lifestyle and potentially unsatisfying work. Underemployment is by choice in both of these examples (Bollinger, Coomes and Berger, 2003), and work is clearly one part of life. Although underemployment appears frequently in the literature as an unfortunate circumstance, it is not necessarily a problem. Many workers are satisfied if not grateful for the work they have, for personal reasons. These may include the provision by work of money for food, shelter and security. In places where structural unemployment is high it is extremely unlikely for every worker to obtain work, let alone credentially-appropriate work. The term "underemployment" itself assumes inadequacy and workers who perceive themselves as underemployed may be predisposed to dissatisfaction as a result.

The term *underemployment* refers to employment that *under*-utilizes the potentials of workers, such as work that is below the productivity potential or educational credentials of the worker. It also refers to other levels as internal to the worker such as the amount of respect, value, or morale the worker feels at work. Workers can feel dissatisfied because they believe that they are underemployed. Those who are not working and cannot find work are not precluded from being unhappy about it. Unemployed workers become "discouraged workers"

when they stop looking because they are deficient in individual qualifications or are unable to secure any offers for adequate work (van Ham, Mulder & Hooimeijer, 2001, p. 1748).

In addition to Livingstone's categories of underemployment (credential gap, performance gap, talent-use gap, involuntary reduced employment, and structural unemployment) Livingstone (1999b) offers the sixth category *subjective underemployment* characterized by a negative sentiment towards perceived underemployment. Each of his five other categories can be accompanied by the feeling that the worker deserves more or has skills and knowledge that are underutilized or wasted. Subjective underemployment is defined as "[the] perceptions of the fit of your qualifications to the job; feelings of opportunity to use your knowledge and skills on the job; and sense of entitlement to a better job" (p. 85). Livingstone (1999b) found that workers experiencing involuntary reduced employment are 20% more likely to feel that they are entitled to better work, although this figure is masked by seasonal workers who take advantage of employment assistance programs to supplement their income between working seasons.

Credentially underemployed people are likely to feel entitled to work that better fits their educational credentials. Any form of underemployment can be accompanied by a bitterness or dissatisfaction, resulting in subjective underemployment, or dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. The latter term will be used for the remainder of this study.

Ill-Effects of Underemployment

There are a number of ill-effects that have been associated with perceived underemployment. Stofferahn (2000), in his study of workers in work they defined as "good" or "bad," found that "[m]ost workers in 'bad' jobs find little chance to develop a positive self-image; all they can do to maintain their self-esteem is to refuse to accept bad treatment and to seek different jobs when conditions become intolerable" (p. 313). Further, "bad" jobs and loss of

employment has been shown to reduce self-esteem (Fitchen, 1981; Stofferahn, 2000). Nelson and Smith (1999) found that for workers who lose their jobs and the ability to afford an acceptable life, not only is self-esteem at risk, but they lose self-respect and stability in their well-being. The consequences of underemployment can be devastating for those workers who lose the ability to sustain a minimum quality of life. Dooley and Prawse (2004) found that "people who fall from adequate to economically inadequate employment resembled those who become unemployed altogether" (p. 214).

"[P]eople have come to base their sense of identity and security on their jobs" (Dooley &Prawse, 2004, p. 7), so it stands to reason that inadequate work and the inability to gain adequate work would have a negative effect on identity and security. Other ill-effects of underemployment include alienation at work (Berg, 1971), declining well-being including mental health (Kessler, Turner & House, 1988), decreased income and the resulting reduction in one's standard of living, sense of control, increased alcohol abuse, elevated depression, and lower birth rate (Dooley & Prawse, 2004).

The range of problems related to underemployment is as wide as the definitions of underemployment. Although theorists may not agree on what it means to be underemployed, they cannot deny that its ill effects can be serious. The focus on underemployment, for the purposes of this study, will be around workers' expressed dissatisfaction with it. This approach concentrates on those beliefs and that knowledge that contribute to the worker's sentiments of dissatisfaction toward his/her perceived underemployment situation. As an example of a belief that would likely contribute to dissatisfaction at work, O'Toole (1977) offers, "employers and society are no longer concerned with how much one learns in school, but with whether or not one

has the proper credentials" (p. 64). The foundation upon which to build understanding of why

people believe what they do, for the purposes of this study, is constructivism.

Solutions to Underemployment

Livingstone's suggested solution to the education jobs gap, which is to reduce or

eliminate dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, includes the redistribution of paid

work and the democratization of the workplace (Livingstone, 1997). With the redistribution of

paid work comes a closer match between the work that needs to be done and the knowledge and

skills of the workers who can do it. By democratizing the workplace, the workers would have

the voice to find and articulate ways in which they could utilize their knowledge and skills more

fully in the design and functioning of the workplace. These changes to work are intended to

make the workplace more inclusive of individual worker needs, where worker skills and

knowledge can be applied more completely.

Livingstone (1999b) defines subjective underemployment as the perception of

overqualification in one's work and the sense of entitlement to better work. His views focus on

the worker's individually held truths and assumptions. People make monumental decisions and

take high-investment action based on their perceptions of dissatisfaction with perceived

underemployment and their beliefs about what work they *should* have. Keeping these beliefs is

dangerous because the likelihood that an individual would always have a job that matched

his/her educational attainment, skills, and abilities is highly unlikely, therefore that individual

would be either perpetually or eventually dissatisfied with his/her job and ultimately

dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. On the other hand, to change it would be

difficult. What difficulties would one face as s/he attempts to convince someone with a Ph.D.

that they should work as a bartender, or that a credentialed nurse should work as a Person Care

Worker? In some cases these workers are forced into these situations, but people tend to want to work in a job that they are most qualified to do (likely accompanied by a higher wage). The person that is forced to work underemployed may experience dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction with Perceived Underemployment

Dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, including frustration, disappointment and resentment, may result from work not meeting expectations. People expect to receive wages fitting with their educational attainments and levels of productivity (Hyde, 2003). The reward for achieving a specific educational credential is the expected work. The reward for being productive at a certain level is the corresponding job and wage. Sometimes this reward does not come at the end of the educational program. As a result, people can feel they are employed beneath their capabilities, or just deserves.

This is just one area of dissatisfaction with work. Many people experience some sort of shortfall when looking for and having work. Consider, for example, that person who would prefer to work full-time but can only acquire part-time work, or he/she who was unable to enter into an educational program that should have resulted in desirable work. People can offer many different reasons to explain their dissatisfaction with work, while other people can remain dissatisfied and not know why.

People in seemingly identical work situations, with very similar credential and productivity levels, can have extremely different views about their satisfaction with work. People are different, having lived different lives, having been surrounded by different people, having lived in different places and through different experiences. People from similar cultural backgrounds are more likely to have similar meaning-making than those from different cultures

(Taylor, 1990; Kuhn, 1996). Ultimately people make sense of the world in their own way, just as they make sense of work and perceived underemployment.

The most common response to perceived underemployment is to seek more education and training (Livingstone, 1999c). Many workers will take the credentialing route in attempting to overcome dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment by making themselves more appealing to employers, under the assumption that employers are more interested in educational credentials than any other information on a resume. This assumption is most likely highly influenced by an assumption of human capital theory that educational credentials are a predictor of worker productivity.

Learning, Meaning Making and Work

In the relationship between learning and meaning, consider the term "meaning" as referring to the product of learning. Definitions of the term *learning* are varied and inconsistent, but to some extent clarified when viewed as *meaning making* in reference to the creation or construction of meaning accomplished internally and subjectively by individuals. This approach to learning and meaning is consistent with constructivism.

A body of literature shows that we are compelled to make sense of everything (Vagle, 2007) further clarifying the idea that meaning is created regardless of the support that we have for it. There are a wide variety of approaches to make sense of meaning making which have been explained in adult education using terms such as experience, reflection, perspective (and its transformation), context and the learner. These terms relate to different components or foci on meaning making and together clarify the act of meaning making.

John Dewey and others focus on experience when they discuss learning. Although experience (Dewey, 1938; Knowles, 1980; Kolb, 1984) seems to refer to a transparent view of

the world, experience requires making sense. Experience can be thought of not only as the direct

sensations we have about the world as we interact with it, but also how we make sense of those

sensations. In a sense, experience is both the sensation and perception of the world. We are

constantly experiencing the world around us, and making sense of it (Baker, Jensen & Kolb,

2002). When we are young we experience work through the discussions of our parents and

caregivers. Later we hold part-time jobs after school for pocket money, and eventually work to

provide an acceptable quality of life for ourselves and our families. These experiences all

contribute in different ways to the meaning we create and test about work.

Reflection (Mezirow& Associates, 1999; Watkins & Marsick, 1990) is introspection

upon our experience: upon how we remember having made sense of something. Reflection, in

this sense, counts as more experience, and supports the idea that we can experience, make sense,

and learn. One example of this is learning through dreaming and altered states of consciousness.

Closely related to reflection is *reflexivity*. *Personal reflexivity* is "reflecting upon the ways in

which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life

and social identities have shaped [what we do]" (Willig, 2001, p. 10). Reflexivity is a subset of

reflection: a deeper reflection that focuses on the assumptions we have about the world.

Together, reflection and reflexivity allow learners to question the influence of our assumptions

on new meaning as well as the influence of the world on our assumptions. The assumptions

surrounding dissatisfying work can be discovered and evaluated through the use of reflection and

reflexivity.

Perspective transformation (Mezirow& Associates, 1999; Watkins & Marsick, 1990) and

conscientization (Freire, 1970) occur when current beliefs are challenged, evaluated and

replaced, or new beliefs are created. For this study, the value of these learning perspectives is in

the learner's critical assessment of her/his current knowledge and the recognition of a

dissatisfying belief. Perspective transformation assumes that learning is a rational and conscious

process that starts with a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow & Associates, 1999). This is another

way of describing a new experience that didn't automatically fit with the meaning we currently

held about a situation that required some critical and reflective work to make it fit.

Conscientization (Freire, 1970) focuses on becoming aware of one's oppressive

condition. Mezirow equated his perspective transformation to conscientization. In some cases

perspective transformation comes swiftly and leads to new knowledge. In others, such as the

realization that one is underemployed and thus dissatisfied with work, the perspective

transformation may never be reached and the worker will never overcome the feelings of

dissatisfaction associated with that job. Quitting dissatisfying work to take on a new job relieves

the worker of dissatisfaction, but may not lead to that worker discovering and overcoming the

reasons for that perceived underemployment.

Context, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), is necessary in learning. According to

their ideas of Limited Peripheral Participation, learning best occurs with a master in the context

in which the knowledge or skills are normally used. By this theory, for example, learning auto

mechanics would be best learned in a garage with tools, manuals, and a mechanic fixing cars. In

spite of this authentic learning context, the learner ultimately makes sense differently than the

seasoned mechanic, based on unique past experiences. Sometimes this approach to learning may

lead to the learner taking on not only the skills involved with fixing cars, but the attitudes toward

the job and the employer. Also, in some cases, good habits are learned along with bad habits.

The learner does not have the experience to figure out on his or her own which skills and

knowledge are best for being productive at the job, just as he or she would not have the

experience to decide what aspects of the work are dissatisfying and might initially accept the master's sense of satisfaction about work and then later realize through future experiences that this way of making sense of work is not consistent with experience.

There are countless ways to view the learner (Fevre, Gorard & Rees, 2000; Knowles, 1975; Lior, Martin & Morais, 2001). Each learner is unique through the combination of her/his experiences and how s/he has made sense of them. A useful practice in studying learning is recognizing that each learner is unique in how they make meaning based on their unique experiences and unique ways of making sense of those experiences, just as dissatisfied workers have become so through a repetitive process of experience and meaning making. In other words, dissatisfaction can be thought of as meaning created by the worker about some aspect of work. In terms of work dissatisfaction, in order for this sentiment to persist, the learner has experiences that verify it is the case.

Learning

The second component of this study, building upon the condition of dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, is the role that learning played as workers overcame their dissatisfaction. To overcome this dissatisfaction, workers have to change in some way and thus minimize or eliminate this dissatisfaction. The following discussion will illuminate the learning, contingencies and components of learning, and the learner in order to better understand both the power of learning to help us affect change and the potential of the learner to change, and thus overcome dissatisfaction with work. This study draws mainly on the ideas of radical constructivism and other adult learning theories to make better sense of how people construct meaning to both become unhappy with reality and also to change meaning and thus reality.

In constructivism, according to von Glaserfeld (1990), the learner actively constructs knowledge (as opposed to passively receiving it from his/her environment). Radical constructivism, to take this definition further, does not assume that the constructed knowledge matches an objective world. The knowledge, rather, is constructed to fit with experience (von Glaserfeld, 1990). In either case, the existence of an objective world is neither supported nor denied, and radical constructivists prefer a world that is based on the subjective interpretation of experience. Both of these views are valuable in this discussion of overcoming dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. The remainder of this section will consist of a discussion of common adult education learning components and contingencies (including experience, reflection, context and reflexivity), relating these ideas to constructivism, dissatisfaction and perceived underemployment. The argument here is that relating adult learning to constructivism will situate meaning making and the understanding of reality as appropriate for a study focusing on workers' knowledge and beliefs around work, perceived underemployment, and dissatisfaction.

There are many approaches to learning. Within adult education there are many views of learning, prominent among these are transformative learning (Mezirow, 1999), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), and self-directed learning (Knowles, 1974). Rather than committing to just one of these views, or among any of the options in adult education, I proceed to review the common components of adult learning models, starting with experience, reflection and context. Research in the area of learning and work tells us that 90% of our learning is informal (Livingstone, 1999). I will thus discuss informal learning as well.

This study is about adult learning. I am interested in people's learning that has allowed them to overcome their dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment: what did they learn and

what were the changes that occurred. Anecdotal evidence shows that many people believe that more education leads to better work. Personally, when my father spoke about his coworkers he always mentioned their education, stating that the engineers made more than he but did the same job. The Service Canada Job Bank website (www.jobbank.gc.ca), a popular website for Canadians looking for (better) work, states, "Lifelong learning is key. Research shows that the more you're willing to learn, the more likely you are to prosper and thrive at work, at home, and in your community. But there are many ways of learning today besides in a classroom. Where do you start?" (Service Canada, 2011) and lists Online Learning, Continuing Education, CEGEPs and Co-operative Education (all of which are offered through educational institutions) as the top four starting places for learning. Another example is the panel discussion that was held September 14 at Dalhousie University hosted by Michael Enright of CBC Radio on the value of a university education. After listening to this broadcast it was clear that the underlying topic of discussion was how university is foremost the preparation for a career. It is no surprise that many people believe that more education leads to better work, equating learning and education to this end with formal educational institutions. Constructivism helps us to make sense of how we create and sustain meaning, whether that meaning pertains to acquiring better work, or to what makes work appropriate, deficient, and/or dissatisfying.

Human capital theory, with its focus on educational attainment, has ignored informal, non-formal and tacit learning (Cunningham, 1993) which contribute more to what a person knows and can do than formal learning. More than 80% of knowledge acquired for our jobs is through informal means (Tough, 2002). How, then, can formal educational credentials predict a worker's productivity if they count for such a small portion of the knowledge workers need to do their jobs?

According to Livingstone (1999b), informal learning is necessary to master a new job. Human capital theory in its original form was based on any investment that increased worker productivity, not just formal education. According to Livingstone (2001b, p.41), "over half of those in the employed labour force [take] some form of course or workshop [and] nearly 90 percent [are] involved in some significant job-related informal learning."

Workplace learning has traditionally been through apprenticeship models that workplaces rely on for institutional memory (Marsick, Volpe & Watkins, 1999). People with expertise are an important source for passing on how things are done in the workplace through mentoring, one of the many forms of informal learning in the workplace. When those experts leave the institution, those opportunities to sustain workplace skills and knowledge decrease.

There is a strong relationship between employment hours and job-related informal learning hours (Livingstone, 2001b). Also, control over what a specific job requires (different than what the worker is willing to do or capable of doing within those requirements) is a negotiation process. Workers do have some control in regards to what knowledge and skills they apply at work. Skill use in the workplace is a function of the constant negotiations between employers and employees (Livingstone, 1999a).

We now live in a knowledge society (Information Society Commission, 2002; Jérôme, 2005; Livingstone, 1999b). Over 95% of Canadians are involved in informal learning activities that they identify as significant (Livingstone, 2001b; Tough, 1979). Unfortunately, we are not yet living in a knowledge economy (Livingstone, 1999c) that can support the knowledge society. One of the effects of human capital theory, based on formal education, is the equating of education levels to certain types of work. Livingstone (1999c) finds that the knowledge society is greater than the knowledge economy. In other words, people are educated past the capabilities

of society and the economy to employ them. Inevitably, some people will be dissatisfied with perceived underemployment. Constructivism is valuable for understanding how workers become dissatisfied with their work, and eventually overcome that dissatisfaction.

Constructivism

Objectivism and subjectivism are epistemological claims about the relationship between subjects and objects. In objectivism, objects exist independent of the subject's perception of them. Subjectivism holds that objects only exist within the subject's perception of them, but the degree to which objects are subjective varies. In his explanation of the difference between constructivism and radical constructivism, von Glaserfeld (1985) explains that "constructivism of the radical kind … does not require building blocks that are parts of ontological reality, but builds … with elements that are accessible to the knower, that is, elements found in, and belonging to, the knower's own experiential world" (p. 26). Constructivism, or trivial constructivism (von Glasersfeld, 1990), focuses on the construction of knowledge by the learner rather than its transfer to the learner without making assertions about the underlying reality of the constructed knowledge. Radical constructivism recognizes that the underlying reality of constructed knowledge is the consistency and viability of the knowledge itself within the context of all of the learner's constructed knowledge. The difference is in the source of reality: external (in which the goal of meaning making is to match it) or internal (in which reality is the product of internal meaning making). In other words, objectivity supplies reality and meaning follows, whereas subjectivity supplies reality as a product of meaning making.

Constructivism asserts that "there is no real world, no objective reality that is independent of human mental activity" (Jonasses, 1991, p. 10). Jonasses refers to the "real world" as the meaningful external world. All of these meanings are assigned, and exist, subjectively.

Constructivists do not deny the existence of the objective world, if it exists; they just cannot

prove it (Duffy &Jonassen, 1992). Constructivists believe that there are "multiple realities

constructed by individuals" (Bichelmeyer& Hsu, 1999, p. 3).

Constructivists do not believe that there is a verifiable "objective reality that is

independent of human mental activity" (Jonassen, 1991, p. 10). Reality is constructed by

individuals; we do not directly copy external reality but construct it (Bichelmeyer& Hsu, 1999).

Truth, also constructed this way, is therefore also internal and subjective. Boghossian (2006)

asserts that "[c]onstructivist learning theory is about the process of learning and helping people

discover *their* truths" (p. 719).

Each person's constructed truth and knowledge are no less valid than any other. Nobody

has an epistemically privileged viewpoint. As a result, there can be no objective criteria for what

constitutes knowledge (Poerksen, 2004a). von Glaserfeld clarifies that "constructivism …

merely asserts the fact that there is no rational way of knowing anything else outside the domain

of our experience and that what we experience is constructed by us" (Springer, 2006, p. 179).

This supports Swoyer's (1982) idea that meaning is non-transferable. The reason is

straightforward: we only construct truth and knowledge subjectively (and thus so would the

person to whom we attempt to transfer knowledge). The person who claims a shared truth only

receives the sensation of the message, written symbols or audible sound, and constructs (or

recalls) the meaning his or herself. In addition, this claim of shared truth may make sense to

them subjectively, but when they attempt to communicate it they suffer the same problem of

having to reduce it to language, trusting that the receiver will decode and re-represent the idea as

it was intended. As the receiver has his/her own set of experiences and meaning, the message

will likely be misinterpreted. What we "know" (i.e., how we've constructed) the context of a

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situation will help us to make sense of it, regardless of accuracy. "How someone construes the world, their existing metaphors, is at least as powerful a factor influencing what is learned as any characteristic of that world (Cunningham, 1992, p. 36).

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), arguably the first constructivist, cried *Verumipsum factum*, meaning the truth is the same as the made (*factum* and "fact" both come from the Latin *facere*, to make!) (von Glaserfeld, 1984a). "Made" here refers to subjectively constructed meaning, and Vico is telling us that the most objective knowledge we have, "truth" is as subjectively constructed as the rest. Further, humans can know only those things that they have made (Vico quoted in von Glaserfeld, 1989) and nothing else. Logically, then, to check the objective truth of knowledge would only be possible through another subjective act of knowing. The objective world, if it exists at all, is inaccessible. This is the central idea of radical constructivism. "Constructivism of the radical kind, then, does not require building blocks that are parts of ontological reality, but builds, as Vico suggested, with elements that are accessible to the knower, that is, elements found in, and belonging to, the knower's own experiential world" (von Glaserfeld, 1985). "The substitution of the concept of fit (and its dynamic corollary, *viability*) for the traditional concept of truth as a matching, isomorphic, or iconic representation of reality, is the central feature of the theory of knowledge I call *Radical Constructivism*" (von Glaserfeld, 1980, 1981).

The key is in the difference between the terms *match* and *fit*. To match requires a focus on that which is to be matched. With knowledge, only that which is exactly the same as objective reality counts. To fit involves negotiating between possibilities in order to find the best alternative. With knowledge there is always a best fit, and as more knowledge is amassed, the knowledge that is a best fit evolves and changes. Matching involves finding the one thing,

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whereas fitting is a process of constant testing, validating, and replacing. As a person's entirety of experience grows, fitting draws from a larger pool.

In everyday English, that conceptual opposition can be brought out quite clearly by pitting the words "match" and "fit" against one another in certain contexts. The metaphysical realist looks for knowledge that *matches* reality in the same sense as you might look for paint to match the color that is already on the wall that you have to repair. In the epistemologist's case it is, of course, not color that concerns him, but he is, nevertheless, concerned with some kind of "homomorphism," which is to say, an equivalence of relations, sequence, or characteristic structure -- something, in other words, that he can consider *the same*, because only then could he say that his knowledge is *of* the world. If, on the other hand, we say that something *fits*, we have in mind a different relation. A key fits if it opens the lock. The fit describes a capacity of the key, not of the lock. Thanks to professional burglars, we know only too well that there are many keys that are shaped quite differently from ours but nevertheless unlock our doors. The metaphor is crude, but it serves quite well to bring into relief the difference I want to explicate. (von Glaserfeld, 1984b)

For example, scientists work towards unveiling the secrets of the universe: discovering objectivity. Kant (1783), on the other hand, wrote that "our mind does not derive laws from nature, but imposes them on it" (p. 294). Consistent with the radical constructivist tradition, reality is constructed to be consistent with our perpetual interpretation and meaning making of experience. "Radical constructivism, thus, is *radical* because it breaks with convention and develops a theory of knowledge in which knowledge does not reflect an "objective" ontological reality, but exclusively an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience" (von Glaserfeld, 1984a, p. 21). According to Riegler (2001), coherence and consistency of

beliefs is emphasized. He also adds that cognition is implemented as a collection of mutual interdependencies, forcing knowledge to be consistent with itself rather than a set of detached pieces, and thus introducing the idea of consistency in meaning making, which will be expanded upon within the discussion of Piaget's Assimilation and Accommodation.

von Glaserfeld draws parallels between constructivism and the theory of evolution in terms of adaptation and survival. In the theory of evolution, adaptation, or *natural selection*, refers to the ability of an animal to survive, reproduce, and evolve . Our environment and the experiences we have within in perpetually involve something new, ranging from new things in the environment, new ways to experience them, and new meaning through which to interpret them. In constructivism, survival refers to a person's ability to create meaning within this constant change (adapting to the changing environment). Von Glaserfeld (1985) characterizes cognition as an adaptive process. Take, for example, work as a teacher. As students learn they change (you can't teach the end-of-year curriculum at the beginning of the year), not to mention that each new year brings a new set of unique students. Thus, the "same" work is actually not the same at all, which is further compounded by the fact that this all occurs internally to the teacher. An outsider might view a teacher as doing the same thing year in and year out because that is how the observer makes sense of it from his/her perspective.

Constructivists recognize that "things that are said are said from within a perspective that cannot claim to be all-knowing and all-encompassing" (Larochelle, 2007, p. xiv). It might seem straightforward to understand that a teacher's work is full of constant change, but take, as another example, the functioning of a manufacturing firm. Each level is complicated, and everyone has a limited perspective on it. Outsiders and new employees have little or no perspective aside from a high level understanding of the work that goes on there. Every

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employee works at a specific level relative to their expertise, and at which their experience there

has led to deeper understanding (at that level). Those employees may have minimal knowledge

of the rest of the firm. It is common for employees to not understand the decision-making

process of management, and become dissatisfied as a result. It is also common for employers to

think of employees in terms of their human capital as opposed to their lives, family, needs and

problems.

Assimilation and Accommodation

According to Piaget (1977) and supported by constructivism (von Glaserfeld, 1995),

learning is a process of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. Assimilation is the

process of constructing new knowledge with no change to existing knowledge – the new

knowledge just makes sense with existing knowledge. Accommodation involves changing

existing knowledge for consistency so that the newly constructed knowledge fits. Lastly,

equilibration is the idea of consistency and harmony between and among meanings. Take the

example of a waitress who believes that she should be allowed to keep all of the tips given to her,

but is told that tips will be distributed on the basis of a tip pool whereby each member of the wait

staff received the same amount. Assimilation would only work if this makes sense to her.

Perhaps she already decided that this was a fair solution, from past waitressing work. The new

pay structure would be accepted with no effort. On the other hand, if she believes that a person's

own hard work should be rewarded, and that tip pools were unfair to those who work the hardest,

she would have to make some changes. To reach equilibrium she may have to come to believe

that her own success is only possible with the help of the support staff who do not have the

opportunity to receive tips. Or, in her resistance to accommodating the new knowledge, she may

just quit and find another waitressing job in which she can keep her tips. In this last case she

either did not try to re-evaluate her beliefs, or she could not. Ultimately, equilibration is the resolution of new experience.

Experience

Experience is the resource of highest value in learning. According to Lindeman, "if education is life, then life is also education" (1926, p. 6). We learn by doing (Lankard, 1995) and make sense of what we learn. We tell our experience and inscribe our own lives because learning is relentless (Eraut, 2000). We are "being continuously (and discursively) shaped" (Garrick, 1998, p. 5). We have been students all of our lives (Blacker, 2001). Experience is probably the most valued and most appealed-to element of models and theories of learning in adult education.

Experience, according to much of the literature on adult learning, is essential to learning (see, for example, Knowles, 1980; Kolb, 1984). According to Garrick, "there are indeed rich sources of learning in day-to-day practice situations" (1998, p. 1). With informal learning "every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment" (Wain cited in Garrick, 1998, p. 11). According to Tough changes from learning "result from experience - from what a person sees, hears, feels, thinks, or does" (1979, p. 9). What surrounds us is what we learn from. It follows then, that if we are surrounded by people dissatisfied with their work, we learn how to be dissatisfied by work.

According to Hein (1991), all knowledge has experience as an ancestor. Constructivism shifts the center of learning from the teacher to the learner. Each learner's subjective experiences have a special and unique meaning. "It is both the student's learning experience and [his/her] perceptions of those experiences that have educational value (Boghossian, 2006, p.

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715). von Glaserfeld said that knowledge does not emerge directly from experience but is created as we consider those experiences. We assimilate those experiences that fit our knowledge, and we accommodate those that do not fit by re-evaluating that knowledge that would be inconsistent with that derived from the new experiences. In the end, saying that we have learned means that we have constructed meaning which explains experience and also makes sense with other meanings that persist (von Glaserfeld, 1983a)

The Experiential approach to learning is built upon these ideas. In this approach, "[learning] begins with experience and transforms it into knowledge, skill, attitude, emotions, values, beliefs, senses" (Jarvis, 1999a, p. 65). The emphasis is on doing the task: experiencing it in order to learn it (Hansman, 2001). Kolb (1984) offers a diagrammatic representation of the learning cycle with experience as the first stage, moving through reflection and generalization to experimentation, which leads back into experience. Experience, the beginning of the learning cycle, is also the object of learning. Informing future experience is one goal of learning. In Dewey's words, "knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow" (1938, p. 44). Dewey's thoughts on educating to enhance future experience have had a monumental influence on future approaches to learning and teaching (Garrick, 1998).

Another approach that values hands-on experience is constructionism. This constructionism is not to be confused with social constructionism which is concerned with the construction of reality, much the same as constructivism, but through social interactions (Burr, 2003). Although the two are related through the ideas of constructing, one is a teaching method and the other is an epistemology. To distinguish between the two, "social constructionism" will henceforth refer to the epistemology and "constructionism" the teaching method.

Constructionists believe in the necessity of creating and experimenting with artifacts to help learn about abstract concepts (Harel & Papert, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) would respond that the experimentation with artifacts puts focus on the context of the new knowledge. "Abstract representations are meaningless unless they can be made specific to the situation at hand" (p. 33). Dewey(1938) wrote that learning from experience requires two principles: continuity and interaction. Each experience influences the next one (continuity) through the interaction of the learner with his/her experience, and the interaction between past and current experiences.

Experience is not the raw sensation from which we can make new and brilliant sense of the world, but rather an application of the truth and knowledge that we already hold that reproduces the knowledge and truth that subjects us. Reflection is not the process by which to become aware of the world, but to continue to inscribe it. Some theorists use the term reflection with the assumption that people have objective access into how they experience the world and make sense of it (Marsick& Watkins, 1990; Mezirow and Associates, 1999), but reflection makes sense of the world the only way we know how to. Just as our knowledge grows the more we experience the world and make sense of it, our ability to reflect increases likewise. Fry (1996) recognizes that "[t]he mind does not have an unmediated knowledge of itself" (p. 19). Just as there is no tool to find universal knowledge, there is also no tool to find the knowledge that one person holds, although some people believe that reflection is this tool.

Reflection and reflexivity

Reflective learning is learning "by thoughtful review and analysis of experience" (Jarvis, 1999a, p. 157). von Glaserfeld (1983a) refers to reflection as the mind's ability to observe its own functioning. Reflection is a core component of at least two popular models of learning:

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transformative learning and reflective practice. In transformative learning, Mezirow and

Associates (1999) suggest that individuals' meaning perspectives are transformed through the

reinterpretation of the meaning of experiences. Reflection gives us access to existing

interpretations to critically evaluate and change them. One critique of reflection in learning is

that learning must be a conscious process, as reflection is a conscious activity. Garrick (1998)

tells us, "[t]o use reflection for learning, one must consciously become aware that one is actually

learning" (p. 21). Leveraging reflection and reflexivity the learner becomes aware of other

knowledge and forces influencing the creation of new knowledge and to some extent acquires the

ability to choose among these influences.

In order to learn from the interpretation of experience, we must use reflection (von

Glaserfeld, 1983a). Some learning requires a re-evaluation of the interpretations we make of the

world, but when we reflect to make sense of new experience (see, for example, Mezirow&

Associates, 1999; Marsick& Watkins, 1990), we only reflect upon that which we are aware.

Reflection only allows us to make sense by recycling our knowledge, what we have already

made sense of, as opposed to creating new knowledge. Reflection is not the essential tool to use

in finding new ways for us to see and interpret the world. To find out what a learner is making

sense of, just ask them and the answer will be about their reflection. It will not be a clear,

objective statement of their learning, but it is a readily available source of the learner's ideas of

his/her own learning. To help the learner, he/she can be supplied with different language, and

evidence of their own behavior. Although this is further inscription of their reflection, it may

contribute in making sense of the learner's learning. Reflection depends upon the truths from

within which it exists: the context within which it exists. Ultimately, reflection serves well as

evidence of how a person makes sense of the world.

People from similar contextual backgrounds are more likely to construct similar knowledge that those from different backgrounds (Taylor, 1990; Kuhn, 1996). Many ideas about the context of adult learning build upon the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and their ideas of *communities of practice*, *situated learning*, and *legitimate peripheral participation*. Situated learning makes the point that what we learn depends upon the context to provide the reality of the circumstance within which learning occurs. For example learning to work as a plumber is different sitting at a desk in a quiet classroom than it would be squeezed under a sink with water dripping on your head.

Legitimate peripheral participation suggests learning is improved when occurring in an authentic context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For example, learning to work a certain industrial machine through legitimate peripheral participation involves the use of that machine by an expert while the learning is taking place. It is a more authentic view of what is being learned because the expert is using the machine in the most appropriate manner for the work. Even though the expert may not be able to articulate all parts of the work, as he/she may attempt in a lecture setting for example, being able to see what he is doing helps the learner to learn. The professional contributes to the context, but unfortunately the context will change when the professional is no longer there. The truth of doing that work with that machine includes knowing the difference between what is perfect and what is adequate, knowing what is expected of workers using that machine by managers and coworkers, and anticipating faults in the equipment. These are all things that may have been learned incidentally, without being conscious of them (Marsick & Watkins, 1990), that the learner would not acquire through legitimate peripheral participation. Also, legitimate peripheral participation is still not authentic because the learner cannot use the machine exactly like the professional, although he/she now

knows how expert use *looks*. The learner has made sense of his/her experience differently, is in a different subject position at work, and does not have the knowledge the professional has of using the machine. As learners make sense of using the machine they will make sense of it differently. It may be as noticeable as operating it completely different for the same result, or as subtle as slight changes in timing or hand position. When the learner becomes an expert and shows another novice how to use the machine, the worker and his/her initial expert may or may not look identical in using the machine, but they would have made sense of the machine and the work differently. According to von Glaserfeld 1983), this process requires the marriage of meaning into a specific context. This approach to learning allows the expert to better evaluate and teach the learner as s/he brings together meaning and context. Regardless of who shows the novice how to operate the machine, that novice will still have to make sense of the machine on his/her own, relating it to previous experiences, overcoming dilemmas that arise, and making sense of the context within which that machine exists. Learning to a large part involves the learner making sense internally of what is being learned, on his/her own.

Learning ecology (Cairns, 2000) and learning architecture (Wenger, quoted in Cairns, 2000) refer to space that is conducive to learning, which may be a classroom, on-the-job, in a casual conversation with coworkers or friends, a library, or their kitchen tables. Legitimate peripheral participation, learning ecologies and learning architectures are not infallible due to the nature of learners. Hiring a worker based on credentialed knowledge gives little indication of how the new worker will start to make sense of the workplace, and says less about how that meaning making will change as the worker continues in that work. It is much easier, and misleading, for employers to assume that all workers make sense of the work the same way, and become predictably productive based upon credentialed knowledge.

Observing learners perform in a context, then having them describe it, will most likely elicit two different accounts: your observation and the learner's description. The differences contribute to making sense of how you and the learner inscribe the context differently and make sense of subjection within it. This is what takes place when people learn in contact with other people. Teachers and mentors have already made sense of the thing being learned and incorporated it into their existing truth and knowledge. Learners have not yet performed this incorporation, which is required for learning. That which is being learned has to make sense with what the learner already knows. Teachers and mentors who expect the learner to blindly accept the truth and knowledge, without incorporating it with existing truth and knowledge, are not allowing learning to take place.

The first interaction most people have with learning in a social setting is the education system, a formal learning context. Formal learning approaches include some form of an expert, whether he/she is a teacher, instructor, mentor, journeyman, or facilitator. Informally, contact with other people offers plenty of opportunity for learning. People make sense of the world differently, and thus will tend to explain things differently. Kolb describe knowledge as "socially acquired comprehensions used to explain experience and guide actions" (cited in Matthews & Candy, 1999, p. 52). Legitimate peripheral participation has the element of social interaction with a knower. A common idea in adult education is that learning is a social activity.

Although many adult learning theories claim social interaction as a necessity of learning, constructivism clarifies the value of this interaction. Meaning derived from social interaction is constructed internally by the individual: constructivism accepts that there is no "transfer" of meaning. But experience from a social situation is rich nonetheless. The continuous interactions that humans have with each other form a comprehensive collection of experiences about

language and community, and a common (not shared but similar) way of seeing the world results (von Glaserfeld, 1999). Communicated meaning is no more than our interpretation of the apparent intentions of the speaker. This is what we call *understanding* in communication (von Glaserfeld, 1999). The more often our interpretations *fit*, the more we believe we have *the* conventional meaning. There is always the chance that the next interpretation will be contrary to this meaning (von Glaserfeld, 1983b). Meaning, thus, is never stable, and the interpretation of social experiences is both based upon a lifetime of previous experience and meaning, but also necessary to anticipate new experiences that may lead to new interpretations and new meaning.

The social constructivists believe that knowledge is socially constructed (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997). Some social constructivists argue that both the nature and extent of learning are highly affected by historical developments and symbol systems (Gredler, 1997; Wertsch, 1991). Gredler and Wertsch also recognize the importance of interaction with more knowledgeable others for certain learning tasks. Although Lave and Wenger would include this in their description of context, an important distinction should be made here with respect to "interaction." Interaction can be for at least two purposes: for immediate feedback on legitimate knowledge and behavior in a specific context; and to aid in the process of learning. In the first place the interaction is about context, and in the second place the other person is able to give the learner input and observation about him/herself, and possibly enhance learning based on the characteristics (as constructed by the other person) of the learner. In other words, the other person can either tell the learner about the context, or about the learner him/herself.

Certain types of learning include the participation in social practice (Billett, 2002) occurring through social networks (Quigley cited in Kerka, 2000) and "involving engagement among persons and between persons" (Garrick, 1998, p. 1). Situated Learning asserts that

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learning "cannot be understood as an individualized act" (Sawchuk, Livingstone & Roth, 1998, p. 8). Social cognition asserts that learning is social in nature (Hansman, 2001). Social learning theory defines the learner as a social construction in terms of identity formation and how the learner is perceived and self-perceives (Burgoyne, 2002). In one sense, interaction with other people can be thought of as expanded context: they represent, reproduce and help one clarify the context. In another sense, people are sources of new information to help test and make new meaning. Any learning situation is not just the context but a multitude of overlapping contexts.

For example, while learning to operate a forklift the context is a warehouse full of hard working grocery assemblers. The learner has taken the training course (at a different location) and now has to apply what he/she learned in that context in the warehouse – the context in which the work will actually take place. In the warehouse are other workers well-experienced with operating the forklift, some of which are open to questions while others attempt to impose their knowledge of forklift operation on the worker verbatim as "the way to do it." In addition, the learning worker wants to be seen as competent and a fast learner not only among workers who are also friends, but supervisors and management who might offer better shifts if they see the learner is competent. It may be impossible for the worker to separate learning how to operate the forklift from his/her identity and his/her relationships with other workers and management.

Transformative Learning

Mezirow's transformation theory describes issues of change and transformation. It has entertained a healthy dialogue of criticism, response, and transformation itself for over twenty years. The title itself of the Mezirow and Associates book (2000) refers to transformative learning as a "theory in progress." Perspective transformation is the phrase commonly used to refer to the particular kind of learning that transformative learning addresses.

Perspective transformation explains the transformation of meaning structures, or frames

of reference, which are built from a person's experiences and influence how he or she behaves

and experience future events (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor cited in Imel, 1998). It is a "conscious and

intentional" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 148) process that makes meaning perspectives "more inclusive,

discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate

beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2000, pp.

7-8). It is not surprising to know that perspective transformation is informed by Jürgen

Habermas's form of critical theory and refers to what Freire calls *conscientization* and

Habermas calls *emancipatory learning* (Connelly, 1996), liberating the learner from limiting

meaning schemes and frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformative learning normally takes place with the following components (Mezirow,

1991; Mezirow, 2000) found in the following order:

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame

3. A critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others

have negotiated a similar change

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6. Planning of a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisional testing of new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow, 1991).

Learning in this way does not always include all steps, nor do they have to be in this order. Mezirow (1997) summarizes the response to a disorienting dilemma in three phases: critically reflecting upon one's assumptions; engaging in conversation to test and validate insights; and action.

Perspective transformation explains overcoming dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment as a conscious and rational activity that helps people overcome their negative sentiments towards their work situations. At the risk of oversimplification, take the example of Miss Smith, a bartender with a Ph.D. who feels that she should have a better job, and after rationalizing and discussing with friends, realizes that her salary pays for a sufficient quality of life while the work schedule of her particular position allows for more time to spend on activities that are personally satisfying. She has replaced an oppressing assumption about the importance of working to her credentials with a more liberating one about the benefits of working for lower pay with more free time. Realizing and overcoming one's oppressing assumptions is the power of transformative learning. Overcoming dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment constitutes a transformation, with the dissatisfaction as the dilemma that triggers the transformative process. The perspective that is transformed could be anything: the worker's identity; knowledge of how to be productive at work; or any one of a number of expectations for work. Transformative learning assumes a framework whereas constructivism focuses on meaning construction in any form, regardless of steps, dilemmas or experiences. Fortunately, transformative learning can also be viewed in terms of constructivism. The disorienting dilemma is evidence that current knowledge is insufficient to interpret a recent experience. Planning and

acquiring potential meaning, two early steps in transformative learning, refer to the construction

of new meaning. Testing and reintegrating, two later steps in transformative learning, allow for

the verification of consistency and coherence of the new knowledge with existing knowledge.

Formal, Informal and Incidental Learning

Learning occurs all the time, around many different people, within many different

contexts. Formal learning is learning that occurs in a formal setting, with curriculum and

generally involves a teacher. Opposed to this semantically, contextually, and residually is

informal learning, which has been characterized as the submerged part of the learning iceberg

(Tough, 1979) and thus makes up the majority of people's learning. The social component of

learning is much the same as the context. As learners construct their knowledge as they make

sense of the world, context and social interaction constitute parts of the world. The meaning

attached to people is done so in terms of what they look like, what they do and what they say.

Informal learning recognizes the most freedom for the learner to learn on her/his own

terms. The term informal, in regards to learning, has been used since the middle of the twentieth

century, starting with the work of Brew (1946) and Malcolm Knowles (1950). Since this time,

informal and incidental learning have been given various definitions. "There is no single

definition of informal learning. It is a broad and loose concept that incorporates very diverse

kinds of learning, learning styles and learning arrangements" (McGivney, 1999, p. 1).

The most common approach is based on the informal context. In this approach, informal

learning is defined as not formal learning (Eraut, 2000) although separating informal and formal

learning is problematic because informal learning "may occur in each of these contexts [which]

are not mutually exclusive" (Garrick, 1998, p. 12). Perhaps Garrick's (1998, p. 13) approach,

"the discursive practice of informal learning," is more appropriate. The major centers of

informal learning include informal as not formal and learning on one's own. Ultimately, informal learning is just the way we talk about it (Garrick, 1998). Informal learning has been commonly defined as a residual category of formal learning (Cairns, 2000; Eraut, 2000; Schurgurensky, 2000), although informal learning is the most significant (Cairns, 2000; Fevre, Gorard& Rees, 2000; Schurgurensky, 2000). In fact, informal learning is reported to be necessary, while formal learning is dispensable (Coffield, 2000; Fevre, Gorard& Rees, 2000).

Tough (2002) found that 20% of major learning efforts were organized by institutions (i.e., formal learning) leaving the other 80% as informal learning. Workplace learning is a combination of formal and informal learning. In one sense, formal learning will not prepare workers to do their jobs: they need opportunities to learn informally through networking, reflection, and mentoring, to fill those gaps (Day, 1998). Formal education can be restrictive as well because it addresses general needs as opposed to specific ones, it tends to be delayed and thus not used immediately, it is scheduled rather than spontaneous, and it has specific outcomes whereas informal learning does not. Bell terms the relationship between informal and formal learning "brick and mortar" (cited in Cofer, 2000), a metaphor for the necessity of each concurrently. Informal learning not only fills the gaps missed by formal learning but it can prepare individuals for formal learning (Coffield, 2000). There is no shortage of definitions for informal learning.

Assumptions about formal learning tend to reduce the recognized value of informal learning. One such assumption is that formal learning is superior to informal learning. In the world of credentialed knowledge, it is. Although adult educators and learning-at-work theorists recognize the value of informal learning, this recognition may be the only legitimate context in which informal learning is a legitimate producer of valuable knowledge. This universalization

pervades society, and is perhaps responsible for the tendency of some people to be faintly self-directed and hardly motivated to learn on their own: those people who believe that the best and most appropriate way to learn is through formal, credentialed learning.

Those who conform to the belief that there is an informal-formal binary not only reproduce the value of credentialed knowledge, but also deny the extensiveness and value of informally acquired knowledge. This binary asserts that there is a difference between the knowledge gained from informal and formal knowledge, evidenced by the credentials that follow formal learning. There are no credentials, no proof for informal learning. The difference is that formal learning is organized, planned and led or facilitated by instructors and teachers with evaluation, while informal learning is organized to a lesser or nonexistent extent, and is led by the learner, although it may involve a mentor, but with no formal evaluation. In formal learning, learners are forced to accept the truth and knowledge of the instructor rather than to seek it on their own. The curriculum of formal learning guides the learner to that knowledge and truth, whereas the curriculum-free informal learning is a relationship between the learner and his/her search for truth and knowledge.

A widely known and used model of informal and incidental learning is that of Marsick and Watkins (1990). It is one of the most inclusive models of learning, and an appropriate model to view the learning needs and activities of people dissatisfied with their underemployment because it recognizes that learning is wider than educational credentials imply, and it is so inclusive of popular ideas within adult learning.

Marsick and Watkins present their model of informal and incidental learning to make sense of the "natural opportunities for learning that occur every day in a person's working life" (Cseh, Watkins & Marsick, 1999, p. 350). The model includes both the intentional informal

learning and the unintentional incidental learning, characterized as a by-product of some other activity (Marsick, Watkins & Wilson, 2002). Incidental learning is learning that we are not aware of until we examine our assumptions through reflection.

Marsick and Watkins model of informal and incidental learning brings together what works in other models to form a comprehensive model of informal and incidental learning, building upon learning en passant, social modeling, experiential learning, self-directed learning, action science, reflection in action, critical reflection, transformative learning, tacit knowing, situated cognition, and communities of practice (Marsick& Watkins, 2001). In particular, this model of informal learning is based on action science as articulated by Argyris and Schön (1977), learning from experience as articulated by Dewey (1938), transforming assumptions through critical reflection as articulated by Mezirow & Associates (1999) and has recently been re-conceptualized by Cseh, Marsick and Watkins (1999) in terms of its emphasis on context.

The process of informal learning, according to Marsick and Watkins (1990), starts with an experience that the learner does not have the knowledge of which to make sense. This experience triggers a need to make sense of the experience, which leads to possible courses of action, which are tested through the context. When a viable solution is found it is tested and the learner makes assumptions about the success of the testing, creating meaning of the experience. The model itself, as stated earlier, is influenced by transformative learning, evidenced by the trigger to start the process, also referred to as the disorienting dilemma (Mezirow& Associates, 1999). The trigger is "an internal or external stimulus that signals dissatisfaction with current ways of thinking or being" (Marsick& Watkins, 2001, p. 29). When people encounter a new experience they assess it, determine what is problematic, compare the new experience to previous experience, and identify similarities or differences (Marsick& Watkins, 2001). In the

case that the differences lay in the learner's assumptions, reflection is used to find those differences. This reflection can occur at two different levels of profoundness, analogous to the single and double loop learning of Argyris and Schön (1977). The shallower reflection, single loop learning, is basically a different way of looking at the situation without changing underlying tacit assumptions and values. The deeper reflection of double loop learning reproduces the values and assumptions that form the foundation at the point of difficulty that resulted from the experience.

The assumptions held by people dissatisfied with their underemployment, including the idea that people should work to their credential level, when attended to in this manner, should become resolved and therefore help in overcoming dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. These assumptions lie deep and much of what we know and do is based upon this level of assumption. To use reflection to evaluate and possibly change these assumptions is to use thoughts and ideas of which many grew out of the same collection of meanings from which these assumptions were created. Reflection does not give us an objective look at our assumptions. The values behind our reflection are likely to be influenced by the assumptions we are reflecting upon. The addition of action to the reflective process opens up the closed system of reflection by allowing the learner to incorporate new ideas through action into the testing of assumptions in the learning process.

This model enforces Dewey's ideas that learning is a result of "an ongoing, dialectical process of action and reflection" (Marsick& Watkins, 1990, p. 8). Action is the path to the problem's solution and to making new meaning. It is through action that learners test their solutions and evaluate the results (Marsick, Volpe & Watkins, 1999). With single loop learning there is a danger of inaccurate underlying values and assumptions. If these assumptions are not

critically met the learning process and the action that follows may be problematic as well. Action in the form of becoming aware of assumptions is a step in the direction of learning: the changing nature of truth, and knowledge.

The learner's assumptions and values constitute an important barrier in learning. Assumptions and values guide how we frame situations and what our needs are (Marsick& Watkins, 2001). Awareness of assumptions is not only about taking stock of ourselves, but is compounded by contextual factors that foster the truths of the context and where we fit within it.

Marsick and Watkins have found that learners were able to critically reflect and challenge norms through asking questions (Cseh, Marsick& Watkins, 1999, p. 351), thus reinforcing the value of social interaction (Mezirow& Associates, 1999) in the process of learning. By ensuring access to other people to help with the reflection and understanding of one's learning we can enhance the learning process. Of course, access to other people, observationally or dialectically, results in further experience. Experience, as discussed earlier, is not a window into objective reality, but something else we inscribe in order to make sense of it. Even with reflection and social interaction, we are still constrained by our own abilities to make sense of the world. We make sense of the world in the ways that we have already made sense of the world. Changing assumptions is slow and gradual.

There are different types of knowledge described in the adult education literature. Eraut (cited in Baron, Wilson and Riddell, 2000) refers to prepositional knowledge, which is not grounded in context, as opposed to knowledge in action, which is grounded in context and does not have meaning across contexts. More education leading to better work is prepositional knowledge, whereas what someone has actually done to get better work is knowledge in action. Ryle's dichotomy of knowing how and knowing that (cited in Hager, 2000) distinguishes

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between practical knowledge about what we do every day, such as operating a machine or sending memos to colleagues, and factual or theoretical knowledge such as the mechanical and electronic principles that enable the machine to work. Oakeshott wrote that technical knowledge is reflective and can be learned from books, while practical knowledge cannot be taught or learned as it exists in practice, in continuous contact with one who practices it perpetually (Hager, 2000), for example, learning to do a job by reading about it, or engaging in on-the-job training. Many approaches to learning make no assertions about what changes as a result of learning, or what the difference is between life before and after learning.

Dewey wrote: "Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time" (1938, p. 48). With informal learning and its unexpected and spontaneous tendencies, there is no way to control the effects of learning. The task of connecting the process of learning to the results is a difficult one. Those people who are good at learning may be more effective at connecting these processes with the products.

As with informal learning, incidental learning has been defined in various ways. In one sense incidental learning is accidental and occurs "when the learner did not have any previous intention of learning something" (Schurgurensky, 2000, p. 4). According to Lankard (1995) there is little or no reflection involved in incidental learning. It is learning that happens without intention, and thus without attention towards the learning process. Incidental learning is learning without reflection or an awareness of what is being learned and how. The knowledge which we are not aware of is known in adult education as tacit knowledge. Von Glaserfeld (1983a) writes that the knowledge of athletes (1983a) tends to be to a large part tacit, as a result of massive amounts of time spent practicing. The result is that the mind is freed to focus on more precise levels of control. The disadvantage comes when the athlete needs to correct or change

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something. Tacit knowledge has to become conscious knowledge in order to evaluate and change it.

Tacit knowledge, socialization, and habit all refer to those things we know and can do without having to give attention to them. A common argument to the existence of tacit knowledge is "the requirement of practice to learn something, or the inability of a textbook to explain something in such a way that we can do it in a masterful way" (Polanyi, 1966, p. 20). Polanyi explains the structure of tacit knowledge using his example of the probe and the cave. As we walk through the dark cave using a stick to "feel" our way, the end of the stick bounces off rocks, causing the handle to jolt our hand. Eventually the stick is our hand and we actually feel the rocks in the cave. The meaningless jolts from the stick become a meaningful sensation, via the hand, of the floor of the cave.

According to Molander (cited in Eraut, 2000), "there is no knowledge which is totally tacit and none without at least some tacit aspect" (p. 17). In terms of learning to kick a soccer ball, there are aspects that we can explain, and others that we cannot. Those we cannot are tacit. Appropriately, the idea of tacit knowledge is not without its critiques. For one, it appears to do nothing but rename the problem of our inability to explain the difference between doing things, like kicking a soccer ball, and our description of kicking it (Hager, 2000). For Hager, tacit knowledge illustrates the limitations of language and how it is deficient in the communication and articulation of meaning. In a similar fashion, socialization is "the internalization of values, attitudes, behaviors, skills, etc. that occur during everyday life" (Schurgurensky, 2000, p. 4). We replace sounds with words, actions with gestures, and words and gestures with meaning. We come to believe that particular combinations of sounds and actions that people make take on specific and complex meanings. Eraut (2000) describes routinised action as happening "when

actors no longer need to think about what they are doing because they have done it so many times before" (p. 20). All of these descriptions indicate that we have knowledge of which we are unaware.

The topic of learning gone bad (Field, 1998) is rarely discussed in the literature on adult learning, although this certainly refers to change as a result of learning. This absence in the literature reinforces the idea that learning is good, positive, and helpful. Field (1998) discusses how learning can also lead to bad things such as taking advantage of other people, racism, and abuse. There was a context in which slavery was legitimate, just as misdirecting clients to make a sale seems to be all too common a practice among some automobile salespeople. How many people have ever gone into an automobile dealership and been advised that they should not buy a new car because of the constraints and stresses that come with automobile financing? There is danger is assuming, objectively, and all people are good and helpful, and that all learning is positive.

Learning and Change

The process of overcoming dissatisfaction with work involves a change away from dissatisfaction. It also assumes that change is evidence of learning. Donald Schön writes of the loss of the *stable state*, which refers to "the constancy of central aspects of our lives, or belief that we can attain such a constancy [sic]" (Schön, 1973, p. 9). He argues that change, or transformation, is a basic process of life and that human necessarily develop in such a way as to be excellent at learning and adapting. Change and learning, thus, are lifelong.

The idea of learning as change has been discussed in the literature as well. In one sense, learning is a change in how we see, experience, and make sense of the world. The slightest change in how we make sense of something in the world, including ourselves, can have a

profound impact upon our lives. For example, dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment effects mood, stress level, family, friends, coworkers, and work productivity as well. If a simple assumption such as educational credentials should result in appropriate work could somehow be changed, it is possible that all of those negative effects would disappear. In another sense of learning as change, the world is in constant transformation and life is a process of keeping up (Bronte, 1997). In this sense, learning is life (Dewey, 1938) and life is learning. Learning consists of those skills and qualities we need and use to make sense of and survive within our constantly changing world.

Dewey (1938) wrote that "every experience influences in some degree the objective conditions under which further experiences are had" (p. 37). We change every time we learn. With the addition of the idea that knowledge is unstable and contingent, I believe that we are in a constant process of verifying our knowledge. Piaget's ideas about assimilation and accommodation, in which we constantly either assimilate the new knowledge in with the existing or accommodate it by changing the existing, are sensible. I prefer to think of these processes as continuous throughout life. The ideas discussed earlier about people who love to learn are contingent themselves on people's capacity to recognize their knowledge as temporary and their willingness to adjust it. For some people this may take the form of learning street smarts to survive without available money, shelter, or food. For others it may have been learning to acquire and keep slaves for plantation productivity and status. In each world people survive by learning within what is legitimate and what makes sense.

The Learner

Fevre, Gorard and Rees (2000) define the informal learner as someone who has made a career of informal learning because that person likes to learn for practical purposes and self-

transformation. This is not the person who picks up the phone to call someone to solve his or her problems, but embraces the problem as a learning opportunity. Field and Spence (2000) call people today permanently learning subjects, much like Merleau-Ponty's assertion that "we are condemned to meaning" (p. xiv). In the first sense, meaning is the unit of reality and we cannot experience, interpret or create knowledge without meaning. In the second sense, we the process of experiencing is so intertwined with creating meaning that we cannot experience a phenomenon without either referencing meaning we have already created for it, or imposing new meaning upon it.

Occasionally a situation arises in which one can choose between learning with or without a teacher/mentor. The teacher ideally should be a master in content and formulating what is to be learned into an efficient form to make learning most likely for each student, although that learning for each student. Learning with a teacher is learning where the truth is imposed, whereas learning without a teacher is learning between possible discovered truths. Schooling is typically the former and informal learning the latter. Typically, credentialed learning is formal, with teachers and imposed truths. For those who want the job, memorization is very helpful (to treat another's truth as rote information). But for those who want the knowledge, learning tends to have a dual nature: to get the credit and to have something that makes sense and is useable and memorable.

Learning is a fundamental characteristic of human beings (Eraut, 2000). There are learners who love to learn (Lior, Martin &Morais, 2001), self-directed learners (Knowles, 1975), motivated learners (Tough, 1979), curious learners (Reio, 1997), and mature adult learners (Lindeman, 1926) to be found engaging learning, although this short list shows that an attempt to essentialize all learners would be fruitless. Human beings make sense of their worlds in the

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unique combination of contexts that frame the truths and knowledge which they use to make sense of the world. Workers dissatisfied with their underemployment work situation will likely seek routes to overcome their dissatisfaction. Few workplaces, in my experience, have formal departments to help workers deal with dissatisfaction, although there are often people who will discuss this with workers. Thus, in many cases, workers have to find resolution on their own or different ways to survive this dissatisfaction.

Motivation to learn is also a subjective activity. According to von Glaserfeld (1989), motivation is dependent upon the learner's confidence in his/her potential to learn. It is no surprise that motivation comes from confidence, but this does help to make sense of why workers who find themselves dissatisfied with their current situation of underemployment would not be able to overcome it. Perhaps the diminished self-confidence from that situation has stunted his/her motivation to learn. Prawat and Floden (1994) suggest that first-hand experience and success with solving problems and learning boost a learner's competence and thus confidence and belief in one's potential.

The autodidact, "a person who is self-taught," (Jarvis, 1999a, p. 14), does not necessarily have a love for learning. Anecdotal information and observation suggest that people who love to learn are good at learning. Learning can be a competency "which distinguishes the successful from the less successful practitioner" (Matthews & Candy, 1999, p. 50). Those who are skilled at autodidactic learning may be thought of as self-directed, a topic which may well be the most prominent and well researched topic in the field of adult education (Garrison, 1997).

The self-directed learner "seeks to control and manage his or her own learning" (Jarvis, 1999a, p. 166). There are many forms of self-direction, from Knowles (1975) who describes how teachers can use self-direction and learning contracts with their students, to Mezirow and

Associates (1999) offering critical awareness as a key dimension of self-direction. Schmidt (2000) has found that medical students who learn through self-directed methods successfully transfer those products of learning to professional practice.

Accounts of the learner vary from defining the learner to discussions of motivation, curiosity, self-direction, identity, and frequency. There is very little overlap amongst the prevalent approaches to informal learning about the learner. The largest overlap would have to be the idea that people are permanently learning subjects (Field, 1998; Livingstone, 1998). This is one of the ideas underlying lifelong learning: that learning occurs throughout the entire lifespan, not just in schooling and work training. We continuously renew how we make sense of things, throughout life: a constant validation of knowledge.

Some people seem to have an unstoppable and constant hunger for knowing. Lior, Martin and Morais (2001) wrote about many women who love learning, choose to learn on their own, and take informal courses regardless of the relatedness to their work. Another approach is learning on your own, which characterized informal learning as "learning that fulfills people's own purposes and takes place in forms that are chosen by the learner" (Cairns, 2000, p. 16).

Knowles (1980) tells us that adults have more and different experience than children, having lived longer, and that adults self-identify from their experience whereas experience is an external event for children, not an integral part of their identity. In response to Knowles, everyone has different quantities and types of experience. Grouping people into the categories of adult and child based on quantity of experience requires a line of separation. This is a very unclear line. Grouping people by whether they use their experience to self-identify is also a difficult task. People do not all of a sudden, on the verge of adulthood, start self-identifying by

their experience. To group everyone as either adult or child marginalizes people who are not clearly within one group or the other.

Chapter Summary

There were no studies identified that showed how workers used learning to overcome dissatisfaction with work. In consideration of all of these perspectives on learning, workers dissatisfied with underemployment are very capable of overcoming it. They have spent their lives accumulating meaning through the interpretation of experience. Finding oneself to be in deficient work and believing that better work is justified as led to feelings of dissatisfaction about this condition, and work in general. Available to learners in this situation is a mastery of knowledge construction, based on a lifetime of practice. People repeatedly experience, interpret and negotiate potential meaning with existing meaning to create a new reality. Dissatisfaction with work happened, and became a new reality. It is possible that meaning construction can happen again and result in a reality without work dissatisfaction, as evidenced by the participants of this study. What is the new meaning that was added, resulting in dissatisfaction being overcome? The next part of this study will lay out the techniques that were used to explore individual workers' realities of dissatisfaction and what changes occurred as the dissatisfaction was overcome.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Review of Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that takes place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work. The research questions driving this study were:

1. How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment?

2. How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction?

3. What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

The material presented thus far has positioned the worker as a subjective meaning maker. The model that will clarify our understanding of how dissatisfied workers make meaning is radical constructivism in which understanding is constructed by learners, as opposed to passively received or mirrored. Understanding of the world involves creating order between multiple experiences (Von Glaserfeld, 1989). The norms of a context help learners determine what is correct and appropriate

Broadly defined, research is a careful and diligent search (Glesne, 1999). For this study, research was a careful and diligent search for evidence and to inform our understanding of the role of learning for workers who successfully overcame their dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. This search for learning is a process that people undergo perpetually. Uncovering this learning requires research, which is "a systematic, purposeful, and disciplined process of discovering reality structured from human experience" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 5).

Qualitative Research Methodology

Merriam and Simpson assert that "since each type of knowledge is unique, different 'systems' or methods have been developed to access different types of knowledge" (2000, p. 6). The qualitative tradition of research exists as a result of the needs of researchers to better understand the people whom they study. Qualitative researchers "are also concerned with understanding behavior from the subject's own frame of reference" (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003, p. 2).

This study was undertaken from an interpretivist approach to qualitative research. According to Glesne, "qualitative methods are generally supported by the *interpretivist* paradigm which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (1999, p. 5). Researchers working in this paradigm focus on how research participants interpret their environments and construct meaning. "The meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary to what the experience is. To understand behavior, we must understand definitions and the processes by which they are manufactured" (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003, p. 25). "The key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based, is the view that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 97). Qualitative researchers believe that things in the participant's environment do not possess their own meaning. Instead, humans inscribe meaning on them (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). Interpretive qualitative research and constructivism are consistent in this view.

According to Merriam (2002), all qualitative research includes the following elements. The researcher's task is "to *understand the meaning* people have constructed about their world and their experiences" (p. 4). The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and

analysis, which, Merriam goes on to say, is the ideal instrument because "the human instrument

… is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive" (p. 5). Qualitative research is inductive.

In other words, the qualitative research process is a journey from the specific (data) to the

general (results). Lastly, "the product of a qualitative inquiry is *richly descriptive*" (p. 5). Each

of the many approaches to qualitative research share these characteristics.

Based upon these characteristics of qualitative research comes the *basic interpretive

qualitative study*, which is "probably the most common form of qualitative research found in

education" (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). Merriam goes on to state that the purpose of this research

design is to "*understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (2002, p.

38). The following is both a plan for and summary of the steps and characteristics of this

approach to qualitative research:

- The researcher strives to understand how research participants construct meaning of a

  phenomenon.

- Understanding how research participants construct meaning is mediated through the

  researcher.

- The Strategy is inductive

- The Outcome is descriptive

- Researchers seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, and/or the

  perspectives and worldviews of the people involved

- Data are collected through interviews, observations, or document analysis

- Data are inductively analyzed to discover recurring patterns and themes.

- The findings are presented through a rich and descriptive account which includes references

  to the literature that framed the study (Merriam, 2002).

The research methodology for this study was based on the subjective meaning construction of radical constructivism (von Glaserfeld, 1995) and a basic interpretive qualitative design (Merriam, 2002) brought together to understand the meaning making of underemployed workers as they overcame their dissatisfaction with their perceived underemployment.

This chapter is presented as an account of the theories that inform the methodology and methods of this research intermingled with how those theories were applied during planning, data collection and data analysis. The first section is a discussion of how this study was radical constructivist, moving into the presentation of validity in a form consistent with the subjective nature of the meaning making that has been presented throughout this dissertation, called "validity as the incitement to learn." After validity the focus moves to the human elements of the study: the participants and the researcher. The researcher, as the instrument of research, is presented in terms of data collection and analysis skills, followed by bias and subjectivity. After exploring the concepts of discovery and creation in the researcher's work, method and methodology are then presented. Sample selection, approach to interviewing, and the use of software for transcription and data management are discussed as the focus moves into data analysis

Radical Constructivism as a Learning Theory

Workers-as-learners who have experienced dissatisfaction as a result of underemployment, such as the participants of this study, according to radical constructivism, construct their own knowledge and realities (von Glaserfeld, 1989). Radical constructivism has been summarized as the following four postulates by Riegler (2001). First, the nervous system is organizationally closed. Sensation is the only way we experience the external world, even if we are the cause of that sensation. Meaning is non-transferrable both from and to the external

world. Secondly, we can neither confirm nor reject an external absolute reality. The only

contact we have with the world external to our constructed reality is in the form of sensation.

We do not discover the reality behind that sensory data but construct it. Thirdly, belief systems

rely on coherence and consistency rather than using reality as a point of reference. We make

sense of the world as we sense it. All we use to make sense of the world and construct meaning

and reality are our previous interpretations of the sensory data from the external world, and the

sensory data itself. In the fourth place, cognition exists as a hierarchical network of mutual

interdependencies. In other words, all constructions are changeable based upon both their degree

of linkage with other components and (to a lesser extent) their age.

Radical constructivists agree that "there is no real world, no objective reality that is

independent of human mental activity" (Jonasses, 1991, p. 10). Meaning is constructed based on

already constructed meaning and sensory data. Meaning is internal, accessible only to the

learner. This approach to meaning making gives the individual ultimate control over learning,

but, according to Riegler (2001), only if the new meaning is coherent and consistent. The

researcher, in order to understand this meaning construction, has to study the evidence of that

meaning, through the data that reflects the research participant's language and behavior. This

approach is similar to phenomenological research which focuses on the phenomenon, which

refers to the subjective experience of the individual. According to Creswell, "the reality of an

object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual" (1998, p. 53).

The focus with phenomenological research is not on the object, or the participant, but the

interdependence of the two in the context of the experience. The current study differed from

phenomenological research in that the focus was on the *meaning* that underemployed workers

had constructed around their dissatisfaction and the *learning* that took place as the worker

overcame dissatisfaction. Each formerly dissatisfied worker in this study had a unique

collection of constructed meanings, resulting in a unique form of dissatisfaction. Ostensibly

similar circumstances of work dissatisfaction could be based on very different meanings of

underemployment, identity, and legitimacy. To understand the learning that happened as

workers overcame dissatisfaction it was necessary to concurrently understand those underlying

meanings and how they changed.

Learning in this study was interpreted through the radical constructivist paradigm. Not

only do both assume that the learner assigns meaning to his or her environment, but they are both

inductive processes by which meaning is created through the consistency and coherence of

details in the environment (or the data). In other words, the radical constructivist learner

explains his or her environment with the most convincing interpretation based upon coherence

and consistency found in the details. The basic interpretive qualitative researcher does the same

with his or her data.

Validity

As producers and consumers of qualitative research we need techniques to help us

evaluate the quality of studies. Qualitative research is complicated. In the words of Merriam

and Simpson (2000), "in qualitative research the understanding of reality is really the

researcher's interpretation of someone else's interpretation" (p. 101). Validity is one tool to help

qualitative researchers make assertions about the value of their work and evaluate the value of

other qualitative research.

Each paradigm has a different set of rules about what counts as truth and what is valued

as knowledge. Within the objective paradigm in which there is a single reality, validity is a

measure of how closely findings match that single reality. In qualitative research, with the

notion that there are multiple realities, validity takes on a different meaning. Scheurich's (1997)

response is that "the myriad kinds of validity are simply masks that conceal a profound and

disturbing sameness" (p. 80). In the basic interpretive qualitative approach, *trustworthiness* is an

important measure of validity.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a widely used approach to validity within the qualitative paradigm

(Eisenhart& Howe, 1992, Glesne, 1999; Lincoln &Guba, 1985). "Both producers and

consumers of research want to be assured that the findings of an investigation are to be believed

and trusted" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 101). It refers to the study's potential to convince

the reader to have confidence in the findings. The three main ingredients to trustworthiness are

internal and external validity and reliability (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).Triangulation, multiple

data-collection methods, multiple theories for data analysis, and member checks are among

techniques that, according to Glesne (1999), increase trustworthiness.

Internal validity asks if we are observing and collecting the data that we intend to.

External validity is "the extent to which findings can be generalized to other situations"

(Firestone, 1993) and is the qualitative version of quantitative research's generalizability. In

qualitative research it makes no sense to show that findings can be generalized for many reasons

because it is concerned with how individuals make meaning. Also, qualitative studies tend to

have much fewer participants than quantitative studies and larger sample sizes are necessary to

claim generalizability. It would be likened to asking one person questions and assuming his/her

answers would apply to anyone.

Reliability in qualitative research asks what is the "extent to which one's findings will be

found again" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 102). Guba and Lincoln (1981) modify this to

"whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (i.e., consistency, or dependability). The answers to these three factors contribute to the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

How to Ensure Validity

Merriam and Simpson (2000) offer five strategies that researchers can employ to increase the validity of their research. *Triangulation* involves multiple investigators, sources of data and data collection methods to remove the bias inherent in any single approach. Bogdan and Bilken agree state that "multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena you were studying" (2003, p. 107). *Member checks* involve the research participants' review of the data and/or findings to ensure consistency. Member checks are a form of triangulation. *Peer examinations* engage seasoned researchers and scholars as reviewers of the research. Unlike triangulation, peer examinations are directed at the quality of the research as a whole, although these examination scan identify weaknesses in any aspect of the research. The *researcher's experiences, assumptions and biases* are used to ensure throughout the research process that all actions and interpretations are consistent with keeping the research valid. The researcher is, after all, the instrument of research. Lastly, *submersion in the research situation* in the form of collecting data over long period of time and how deep the researcher embraces the participants' lives and meaning making also contributes to increased validity. Creswell (1998) adds *negative case analysis, rich description* and *external audit* to ensure validity.

All approaches to validity legitimate certain methods, data and interpretation, but marginalizing others as a result. Choosing a form of validity before doing research focuses the data collection and analysis, but it may also force the researcher to overlook that which might otherwise be valid. Validity establishes and maximizes "good" data.

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How then, in the words of Eisenhart and Howe (1992), can "the conclusions of educational research … be accessible to the general education community" (p. 660) for those educational researchers who work in spaces outside of the center of traditional qualitative research? The general education community comprises many incommensurable discourses and theories, including different ideas about what exists and what counts as knowledge. Any single set of findings will be valuable to some and discounted by others.

In constructivism, the idea of findings that are universally valid is nonsense. According to Poerksen (2004), there are no objective criteria for what constitutes knowledge. Reality is not universal but subjective (von Glaserfeld, 1989). To the radical constructivist there is nothing beyond the individual's construction of reality and meaning. Learning is contingent, temporary, and in a process of constant verification. Validity would have to be a measure of consistency with each individual's construction of reality and meaning.

Research is a representation of what the researcher has learned through the course of the study. For this study, validity is built upon the constructivist ideas that people, including researcher and reader, construct their own realities. When von Glaserfeld (1995) tells us that whatever reality we have constructed there is no means to validate it, he refers to validation according to an external reality. The approach to validity used in this study is based on an individual's ability to construct meaning (according to the radical constructivist principles of consistency and coherence) from the results of this study.

Validity as the Incitement to Learn

Every reader makes choices regarding what is valid, and there are many systems of truth within which validity can be defined and tested. It is through research that the researcher learns, expresses this solution, and presents it to the reader. Anything presented in this way is put forth

as valid, trustworthy or endorsed as potential knowledge. If the reader assimilates or accommodates this new information such that it becomes equilibrated with existing knowledge, then it has been learned. The findings have passed the test of consistency with the reader's current knowledge. In this way learning functions as validity for this study.

It is complete, consistent, and is accompanied by rules of what counts as knowledge and what exists. Unfortunately, and constructivists would agree, it is subjective (not shared) and cannot be articulated. According to constructivists, meaning making is possible if the new meaning is consistent with existing meaning, coherent among existing meaning, and (something else). In order for the results of this study to be valid to the reader, these conditions have to be met. Only the reader will ever know if these conditions are met, meaning is constructed, and these results are valid.

What good is a validity that approves research findings if those findings do not become subjective meaning for readers and consumers of research? Regardless of other forms of validity (and the reader's expertise in systems of knowledge and validity), if the reader learns, equivalent to changing or starting to change his/her worldview, triggered by reading about this research and its findings, then the research is valid. Therefore, validity for this study is in the reader's ability to construct meaning from it: to learn from it.

Given the discussion of validity presented above, here are the steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative interview study. Before the study began I developed qualitative research skills including understanding and practicing data collection and data analysis as well as designing interpretive qualitative research. This study was designed and carried out with the assistance of faculty who engage in qualitative research to ensure quality. Throughout the data collection and analysis process member checks were carried out on three

separate occasions. The method of data analysis was the constant comparative method which relies on induction to produce findings based solely on the data, and then explaining those findings and showing that data in the final report. This thick and rick description shows the reader the data that informs the findings. Accompanying this description were statements of my biases as a researcher in order to help the reader better understand my decision-making during the entire research process. After the final report is generated and shared the reader evaluates the methods, data and findings. If this experience is consistent and coherent enough with the reader's current knowledge to become meaningful to the reader, we can say that the reader had learned from the study, also contributing to its validity.

Site of the Study

All of the research participants were residents of Nova Scotia, Canada. Two lived and worked in Kingston and the other eight lived and worked in the Halifax Regional Municipality. As this study pertained to workers having overcome dissatisfying work in the past it was decided that the research participants may not still be in the same job, and attempting to observe them at the site of employment would be problematic. It was decided that data collection would be limited to interviews at locations convenient for the research participants to access.

Sample Selection Criteria

Each participant in this study had self-identified as having been dissatisfied with his/her work, as some form of underemployment, and had asserted that she or he has overcome that dissatisfaction. Using both the constructivist and basic interpretive qualitative approaches, the participants in this study were perceived as creating their own meaning as a result of lifelong experience and concurrent lifelong meaning making. They were subjective learners who construct their own realities.

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One of the great benefits of qualitative research is that participants can be selected purposefully in manageable sample sizes (Patton, 2001). Participant recruitment in this study started as *criterion sampling*, which Patton describes as "selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (p. 238). The criteria used to determine whether potential participants were suitable for the study were the following:

1. Participants have experienced work dissatisfaction in some form of underemployment and were able and willing to talk about it in an interview setting.

2. Participants have overcome that work dissatisfaction to the point that it no longer existed and were able and willing to talk about it in an interview setting.

Recruitment posters were placed in an Employment Services office in a large shopping mall within the Halifax Regional Municipality in January, 2007. From past experience I found that this office was busy and the recruitment posters would thus be seen by many people using the services at this location. At the commencement of participant recruitment I would tell friends and acquaintances about the study and many of them admitted to having been dissatisfied at work for reasons of underemployment. Those people who were introduced to the study in this manner, who qualified to be research participants, were invited to participate. Patton describes this as *opportunistic sampling*, which involves "on-the-spot decisions about sampling to take advantage of new opportunities" (1990, p. 179).

I initially decided that I would collect and analyze data from ten participants and at that point determine if this sample size was large enough. Within three months all ten participants were recruited through these informal introductions, and no participants were recruited as a result of the recruitment posters. Over the span of three months, the total time the recruitment poster hung in the employment services office, I was not contacted by a single person.

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As an enthusiastic novice researcher I energetically told many people about this study. Over the course of participant recruitment I was surprised to find that most people I spoke with were currently, or were at one time, underemployed. Many of them admitted that they were at that time, or had previously been, dissatisfied with this work. A large subset of those people had overcome their dissatisfaction, and thus qualified to be invited to participate in the study. After preliminary data analysis on these first ten participants I decided to cease recruitment because the ten sets of data that I had were each unique and I felt that if I continued I would just end up with a larger amount of unique sets of data. As Bogdan and Bilken note, "because of the detail sought, most studies have small samples" (2003, p. 3).

Research Participants

The participants of this study had unique characteristics that made representation as a group difficult. The range in age of the participants was from mid-twenties to late fifties. Five were male and five were female and they were all residents of Nova Scotia, Canada at the time of their interviews. Most participants admitted to being dissatisfied with work for reasons of underemployment more than one time. All participants admitted to working for more than one employer throughout their work careers. One participant had twelve jobs in the two years that followed her high school completion. Less than half of the participants attended university.

Dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment for these participants occurred at various times in their careers, starting with during and just after high school through to a year before retirement. The jobs in which underemployment occurred included waitress, fisherman, military musician, civilian musician, music educator, nurse, licensed practical nurse, personal care worker, accounting manager, and geologist. Chapter 4 includes a more in-depth discussion of each participant.

Data Collection

Data are the "rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that form the basis of analysis" (Bogden & Bilken, 2003, p. 109). Method refers to the collection technique employed to collect data (Wolcott, 2001). Common methods employed in the gathering of qualitative data include observation, interviewing, and document collection. The forms that these data include are field notes, transcripts, documents and artifacts respectively. In many cases these data have already been interpreted in some manner in the process of data collection. In the case of observation the researcher observes and interprets, and creates notes in forms that range from raw observation, through interpretation of behavior, to reflections upon the situation. With some interviewing the interview protocol serves as a rigid structure from which deviation will not happen, whereas in other interviewing it serves as an initial guide, leading to probing questions and reciprocity. In all cases data collection is concurrent with data analysis, although formal analysis would normally initiate after one or more interviews. In this study the data was derived from interviews and field notes.

Method: Interview

In-depth interviewing has been characterized in many ways, most commonly in terms of how fixed the questions are (and as a result how much freedom the interviewee has in answering them). "The open-ended nature of the approach allows the subjects to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by pre-arranged questions" (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003, p. 3). Interviews in this study were initiated with a preliminary set of question including possible probes, with the research purpose and questions on the same sheet, but in all cases the researcher deviated from these questions in order to pursue ideas and understanding that appeared to answer the research questions but was unanticipated and thus not part of the

interview protocol. After each interview the protocol was updated and revised to reflect

preliminary data analysis. The initial interview protocol can be found in Appendix 1.

There were ten initial interviews, one for each participant. Follow-up data collection in

the form of emailed questions occurred to gather specific data that clarified specific issues and

gaps. All initial interviews and follow-ups took place between January and March 2007. All

interviews were recorded using both primary and backup recorders. In the first three interviews

both the primary and backup were cassette recorders and in the last two interviews both were

digital recorders. Interviews ranged in duration from ½ hour to 1½ hours. All recordings were

of good quality for every face-to-face interview.

Interviews occurred in locations convenient to the participants including their homes and

workplaces. Notes were taken during all interviews (telephone and face-to-face). Aside from the

recording problem there were no problems. All participants signed consent forms and gave

verbal consent at the beginning of each interview.

The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was semi-structured and was based upon

questions designed to draw out data to answer the research questions. Participants were

forthcoming with their responses. Most participants seemed to be interested in the study, were

happy to contribute, and were eager to read the final report.

Data Management and Storage

All data was stored on either audio cassette or within digital audio format (.mp3).

Transcripts and field notes were all stored in Microsoft Word format (.doc). All recordings or

completed interviews, transcriptions and field notes were stored on a Compact Disc. The

qualitative research software NVivo 7 was used for data management and helped to facilitate

some data analysis.

Transcription

Transcription was completed by the researcher. The use of transcription devices progressed with the study, from an audio cassette transcription machine with foot controls, to the Dictaphone itself with no external controls, to Nuance Dragon NaturallySpeaking (version 9.0) using a microphone mounted to a headset. Those interviews that were recorded on audio tape were transcribed using the audio cassette transcription machine with foot pedals to control play and rewind functions. Microsoft Word was employed to record the transcribed text. The first interview that was recorded digitally was transcribed using the Dictaphone recorder itself, constantly switching between the hand controls of the Dictaphone and the keyboard, which was a tedious process. Subsequent digitally-recorded interviews were transcribed using Nuance Dragon NaturallySpeaking, version 9.0. NaturallySpeaking is a transcription software package that will convert audio, in the form of spoken or recorded voice, to text. NaturallySpeaking requires the speaker to *train* the software to recognize his/her voice, which is a time-consuming process not appropriate for a qualitative interview. More training leads to more accurate voice recognition by NaturallySpeaking. In order to use NaturallySpeaking to transcribe digital audio, I listened to the interview digital audio data through a headset attached to the Dictaphone, and repeated everything that I heard. NaturallySpeaking did not actually convert the audio recording of the interview, but recognized and converted my voice as I repeated the audio recording as I listened to it. Initially some typing was required as I became familiar with NaturallySpeaking, and as it became trained to my voice. The last interview was transcribed without the use of a keyboard, only using the verbal triggers in NaturallySpeaking to edit. It was very easy to cease playback of the digital recording physically and edit the transcription verbally. I would also

rewind to ensure the accuracy in NaturallySpeaking's transcription of what I was hearing and repeating.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam, "all qualitative research is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds. The *primary* goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (2002, p. 39). To get from the mass of data to the handful of general statements requires inductive qualitative data analysis. At a high level, according to Glesne, data analysis "involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned" (1999, p. 130). According to Merriam, data analysis "involves identifying recurring patterns (presented as categories, factors, variables, themes) that cut through the data" (2002, p. 38). This inductive process allows the researcher to evaluate and gradually reduce data to categories and themes, and eventually findings. "The overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding, mediated by his or her particular disciplinary perspective, of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (Merriam, 2002, p. 38).

As this study was concerned with how workers had overcome dissatisfaction with work, the evidence of overcoming is a change. In some cases the change was clear, and in others it was not. The first data analysis applied to the data was the *Change Read* in order to pinpoint this change and the circumstances that surrounded it.

Data Analysis: Change Read

Learning is evidenced by change regardless of whether that change is in language, behavior or meaning. The condition of participation in this study was a change away from work dissatisfaction. Therefore, every participant had changed in some way and learning had

occurred. The activity here iwa to unearth that learning and understand what role it played in overcoming dissatisfaction. For example, a particular person's dissatisfaction with his/her work may no longer be an issue when s/he becomes a parent. Perhaps learning to be a parent is more important than bothering about unsatisfying work, or perhaps work becomes appreciated because of what it provides to the family. The details of the change are unique to the individual, and central to his/her learning. The data analysis technique I had designed to accomplish this I call the "change read" and was a review of the data to find all instances of change, including explicit change as well as differences that result from change.

In this study the change read was used to reveal the learning activities of the study's participants. Learning is seen here as the process that results in a change in meaning. Change is a sign of the temporary nature of truth, knowledge, and reality. It is also a sign of learning. Learning as change does not marginalize any learning, such as learning that happens with meditation and dreams. Judgment and interpretation are ways in which we learn, just as reality, truth and knowledge work as the raw materials as well as the results of learning. We are constantly verifying what we know and what we consider to be true, and thus we are constantly in a state of learning. The change read shows that learning has happened without having to rely on the participants declarations that it has happened. This learning may occur slowly over time or instantaneously. The change read has the potential of discovering changes in assumptions, belief, knowledge and truth which may have otherwise been missed.

The Constant Comparative Technique

The main qualitative data analysis tool of this methodology is the constant comparative method as articulated by Glaser (1965). The four stages of this method are: "comparing incidents applicable to each category … integrating categories and their properties … delimiting

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the theory, and … writing the theory" (Glaser, 1965, p. 439). The process involves comparing

data describing a particular idea to other similar data, eventually leading to categories and

properties about the relationship. Those categories could be similarities in context, reaction to

problems, procedures, or anything that is consistent with the data. The simple categories

eventually merge into more complex ones, and eventually to theory. It works because the

constant comparisons, at all levels, help the researcher to become familiar with the data and thus

predisposes him/her to construct a theory to represent it. Just as Piaget's (1937) assimilation and

accommodation require comparisons to develop experience into knowledge that is consistent

with other knowledge and the experience itself, the constant comparative method requires

comparisons to develop data into theory that is consistent with all of the data and other theories

that apply. The constant comparative method is highly consistent with radical constructivism in

the sense that both recognize people construct meaning, and reality is a collection of meanings

that have been negotiated in terms of consistency and coherence.

The application of this method to this study followed a slightly different path to theory.

As each participant's experiences were considered to be subjective and only sensible within that

individual's reality, the constant comparative method was applied to transcription and field note

data individually. The reason for this was to incorporate the aspects of work, dissatisfaction,

underemployment, the construction of knowledge, and change for the purpose of theorizing

about each individual overcoming his/her dissatisfaction with work.

The Constant Comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is used to create meaning

(a grounded theory) through a repetitive and systematic review of the data. The principles of

coherence and consistency help to sort and develop the categories into theory, just as the Radical

Constructivist learner constructs meaning that is coherent and consistent with already-

constructed meaning. Grounded Theory is an inductive process of creating theory from concepts that emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In its classic form, Grounded Theory does not rely on a review of the literature or preconceived themes in the data, similar to Radical Constructivism in which there is no absolute (preconceived) reality from which to build theory. In this qualitative methodology, theory is generated using comparative analysis. Attempting to make sense of dissatisfied workers as subjective meaning-constructors requires a methodology that is sensitive to unanticipated data, and will allow the researcher to learn about them in any direction that the data leads him/her. The Grounded Theory technique of constant comparisons allows this in much the same way that people learn. Data is reviewed repetitively and categories emerge. Likewise, a category of interest can be the focus of the repetitive review and will, in a sense, find other data that is related. Categories, through these reviews of the data, become specified and inter-related to emerge as theory. A very similar process occurs that creates meaning from experience.

Member Checks

Informant feedback and member checks were addressed three times during this study. The first of these took place at the end of each interview when participants were asked if they wanted to clarify and/or add anything, as well as if they wanted a copy of their transcript. This was slightly difficult as the only record I had of the interview was the audio recording. No participants asked to hear a playback of their recording. One participant did request an audio copy of his interview, which he did receive. Interview follow-ups were comprised of questions posed to clarify and complete participants' answers. Five participants were emailed their questions, and they all responded with answers.

After data analysis attempts were made to contact all participants to affirm the accuracy and completeness of the findings that pertained to them. A total of six participants were contacted while the telephone calls and emails to the other four went unanswered. All of them accepted my interpretations, although three seemed mildly surprised. One participant did not initially accept my interpretations. After a lengthy conversation in which I explained the data that I had gathered from our interview and the processes of analysis and interpretation, she agreed that my interpretations were convincing.

Reciprocity

One approach that a researcher can implement during data collection, in particular interviewing, is reciprocity. Jorgensen (1989) presents reciprocity as an exchange relationship to develop mutual trust between interviewer and interviewee. Although the researcher brings the protocol, the goals, and the equipment, and initiates the questions, their relationship is not typically power-heavy to either participant of the interview. The task of discovering the data determines to a large part how the interview will progress. From anecdotal evidence I have found that some participants are very eager to talk to you in an interview. It is the interviewer's responsibility to keep the interviewee focused on the questions in the timeframe agreed upon. For those participants who are either hesitant to share, or unable to think of the answers to the questions, interviewers must use other approaches to help. Reciprocity is one such approach. Reciprocity refers to the connection or trust that grows between the interviewer and interviewee. It's not a trick to mislead participants into divulging beliefs and assumptions that may be sensitive and may leave them vulnerable, but researchers who are prepared to give more than what is on the protocol may be more able to establish the relationship necessary to learn about

people's assumptions and beliefs: to show, through sharing, that s/he values the participant and their contributions.

Researcher Subjectivity

Qualitative research has been criticized because "it relies too heavily on the researcher as the instrument" (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003, p. 116). On the other hand, research involves much perception and interpretation, both in data collection and analysis. Qualitative research recognizes that the researcher is the most sophisticated research instrument currently available (Guba& Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 2002) with insight and empathy and the ability to detect and make sense of the research participant's interpretations and meaning. Patton writes that "in qualitative inquiry *the researcher is the instrument*. Validity in qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (1990, p. 14). The qualitative researcher's charge is to make sense of and re-present participants' realities, regardless of the specific philosophical approach. In other words, researchers learn about reality and pass this knowledge on in legitimate ways. The act of research is the act of learning.

According to Merriam and Simpson, "being the primary instrument for data collection and analysis carries with it a responsibility to identify one's shortcomings and biases that might impact the study" (2000, p. 98). The reason these are identified "is not to make a qualitative study more 'objective,' but to understand how one's subjectivity shapes the investigation and its findings" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, P. 98). According to Peshkin, subjectivity "can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers' making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected"(1988, p. 55).

As the researcher on this project I have articulated the problem and informed it with literature and personal experience and belief. I have articulated the research purpose and questions. I have reviewed the literature to find support and consistency for the ideas and theories that drive the study. Through the use of literature and personal experience and sense-making I have designed the research methodology, recruited and interviewed participants, and performed data collection and analyses. In Glesne's words, "the research methods you choose say something about your views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and your perspective on the nature of reality or *ontology*" (1999, p. 4). My choices have been in terms of constructivist and radical constructivist ideas of meaning and reality construction for the most part. I believe these approaches describe meaning making better than all other approaches to which I am familiar. By using these approaches I become more familiar with them and their abilities to explain understanding.

The researcher is as much a subject of the research as the research participants: the data collection tool, the data analysis tool, the interpreting machine, as well as a reciprocal partner in any interview. The traditional qualitative researcher must account for his/her subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988; Bogden & Bilken, 2002) to describe the research machine to the reader, just as you describe the data collection method used – to show where it comes from. Research, simplistically, is an account of the researcher's systematic design of and learning about the answer to the research question in his/her quest to "better understand human behavior and experience" (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003, p. 38) through his/her "effort to remedy the ignorance that exists about something" (Glesne, 1999, p. 24). The researcher is the learner and the act of research is learning, concluding with the dissemination of what has been learned (akin to *teaching*). My attempt to understand how workers overcome dissatisfaction with work is both re-

presenting the participants' realities and presenting what I have learned, through the use of qualitative research tools and techniques to the reader. It has been a process of making sense of, re-presenting, and reproducing all of the following concurrently: my ideas, the literature, the data, and ultimately the participants.

There was substantial researcher subjectivity in this project. The research purpose itself grew from personal experience and a need to know how to help make sense of, survive in, and hopefully find relief from dissatisfaction at work. As work dissatisfaction itself is a large and vague area for study, dissatisfaction with work in the form of underemployment was chosen because it incorporated both unfortunate circumstances with work that the worker has no control over, and also worker beliefs and assumptions that seem to cause dissatisfaction. I know people who have been underemployed and were very happy with their work. I also know people underemployed and completely disheartened and stressed about what was referred to as a "hopeless" work situation. I believe that one reason for their dissatisfaction was the belief that higher educational attainment should result in better, higher paying work. This disheartened me because I saw the damage from this belief and I felt that if they could overcome this belief that they, and their families, would be happier.

I have believed for a long time, previous to my entry into the University of Georgia's Adult Education Ph.D. program that people create their own reality and meaning subjectively. It is only recently that I discovered that Radical Constructivism articulates my beliefs very well. When it comes to meaning, I believe that we create, or construct, meaning internally (I use the terms *create* and *construct* synonymously). Meaning is neither transferable from an external source such as a book or another person, nor can it be transferred to an external source after construction. The example I prefer in representing one's attempt to communicate meaning is the

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children's communication game. The first child is given a message and whispers it in the next

child's ear. This continues from child to child until it comes back to the first child. The

assumption is that each child will whisper the exact message to the next. Most often, the final

message is different from the initial message. I see this as an excellent metaphor for

communication if we consider each child as a different level, which include the following: start

with internal meaning; convert to sounds that the speaker assumes the listener will understand;

speak those sounds, accompanied by non-verbal clues such as facial expressions and gestures;

and the listener interprets those visual and auditory sensations as meaning. The speaker's hope is

that the idea is intact, but my belief is that there are too many places where the idea is interpreted

and re-presented for the original idea to remain intact. In the game the first child has the unique

opportunity of receiving the final message, and knowing the difference: in conversation the

speaker does not know what the final message is.

I do not believe that many people share this belief of inexactness in communication and I

guess they assume the entire message is received as it was intended. Because of my radical

constructivist beliefs, the message becomes another sensation to interpret and create meaning

from, regardless of what the speaker intended.

Risks

I anticipated that each participant, from participating in the interview, was apt to change

how s/he viewed work and possibly life as a result of this study. Meaning in the forms of

knowledge, truth, assumption and belief are at the core of data collection in this study:

discovering them, acting upon them; and changing them. Asking participants to discuss these

things may be for them an intimate request, which will probably require intimate reciprocity. I

do not wish to mislead participants into divulging beliefs and assumptions that may be sensitive

and may leave them vulnerable. This research is important to me and I am prepared to give of

myself in a sensitive and profound way to establish a relationship that may be necessary to learn

about people's assumptions and beliefs: to show through my sharing that I value the participant

and their contributions. I believe that the same risks and benefits to the research subjects apply

to me as well.

Chapter Summary

       The purpose of this chapter was to explain and justify the research methodology that was

designed to uncover the answers to the research questions. By doing this the reader can make a

more informed judgment on the trustworthiness of the study. Trustworthiness is of the utmost

importance in qualitative research. The findings of qualitative studies are inextricably

intertwined with researcher bias and subjective interpretation. In order to leverage the potential

value that comes from asking open-ended questions and the discovery of a participant's reality,

so common in qualitative research, care has to be taken to ensure trustworthiness and validity.

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CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTION IN STUDY,

PARTICIPANT DATA ON UNDEREMPLOYMENT

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that took place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work. The research questions driving this study were:

1.   How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment?

2.   How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction?

3.   What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

Introduction

This section includes descriptions of all participants. It will help the reader begin to formulate an impression of the participants. After the demographics of the participants are presented, the chapter explores each participant's work, experience with underemployment and dissatisfaction, and learning that occurred that relates to the underemployment, dissatisfaction with it, and overcoming the dissatisfaction.

Eight participants were current residents of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the capital of Nova Scotia, and 2 lived within 2 hours of HRM at the times of their interviews. All are native to Canada's East Coast (9 in Nova Scotia, 1 in Prince Edward Island).

The following is a description of the ten participants of this study. Sample selection was limited to adults who were underemployed, dissatisfied, and eventually overcame the dissatisfaction.

Of the ten participants, five were male and five female. Nine of the participants were married and one was in a common law relationship. Each married participant had at least two

children; the common law participant had no children. Participant ages ranged from mid-

twenties to mid-forties, with one participant aged over fifty. Every participant stated that they

had post-secondary credentials: 1 with a community college diploma, 2 with some undergraduate

courses but no diploma or degree, 6 with undergraduate degrees, and 1 with a graduate degree.

Each participant self-identified as having at least three jobs in the past, and one participant

reported having thirteen jobs. One of the participants had all of her jobs with the same employer

over a span of approximately fifteen years.

All participants were living in Nova Scotia at the time of their interviews. Nine lived in

homes that they owned or were mortgaging, and one was renting (incidentally, the renter was

also the common law participant, with no children). At the time of interview, one participant

self-identified as unemployed although he had a part-time job; no participants were current

students (although one participant had just completed an undergraduate program and was in the

process of applying to a graduate program) and two were stay-at-home parents, although one of

the participants who self-identified as a stay-at-home parent also had 3 part-time jobs from the

list above. Each participant had left self-identified dissatisfying work at least once, nine at least

two times, and one of those nine more than 10 times. Table 1 shows how many jobs were held

for how many years and the employment status for each participant, data useful in understanding

the purpose of the study..

Table 1: Number of Jobs Held by Participants

Participant	Number of Jobs over Number of Years	Median in Years of Time in a Job (years)	Job Titles

Adam	3 jobs in 6 years	2.0	Librarian, Business Plan Writer, Bus Driver
Cameron	5 jobs in 20 years	1.0	Fisherman, Carpenter, Pastor
Cecelia	13 jobs in 12 years	2 months	Waitress, Clerk, Operator, Entrepreneur
Danny	3 jobs in 13 years	5.0	Licensed Practical Nurse, Airplane Cargo Loader, Firefighter
Demi	4 jobs in 20 years	5.0	Salesperson, Account Manager, Comptroller, Accounts Manager
Heidi	10 jobs in 9 years	1.0	Music Educator, Real Estate Broker, Secretary
Hugh	5 jobs in 25 years	1.0	Canteen Operator, Dishwasher, Labourer, Musician
Tammy	6 jobs in 10 years	1.2	Nurse, Personal Care Worker
Venus	4 jobs in 25 years (3 jobs concurrently for the last 10 years)	10.0	Geologist, Pharmacy Assistant, Pharmacist
Victor	8 jobs in 20 years	5.0	Salesperson, Musician

The following descriptions of the research participants include a brief overview of their work followed by brief responses to the research questions in terms of how they defined their underemployment, how they have experienced work dissatisfaction; and the learning that came about with their situation and its resolution. The participants will be presented in alphabetical order with respect to their pseudonyms.

Adam

At the time of the interview Adam was 30 years old and married with 2 children, ages 7 and 6. At this time Adam's highest level of education was a Master's Degree in Environmental Leadership. Four years prior to the interview Adam worked with an environmental engineering firm, writing business plans. Between then and our interview Adam worked as a librarian; a telephone interviewer for Statistics Canada; an interpreter for a small, local island that was recently named as a protected area; a bus driver for the local school board; with a few brief intervals in which he had no work. At the time of the interview he was working part-time as a bus driver while looking and applying for work that he felt would be more satisfying, and that would provide an adequate income to support his family. His wife worked in the local community as a Yoga instructor.

Adam's Sense of Underemployment

Adam reported that he felt underemployed in virtually every job he has held. The work that the engineering firm offered to him gradually diminished, and they eventually released him from employment. His work there was always on a consulting basis, and he was only paid when they needed him to work (not via salary). In his work with Statistics Canada he felt that there was no room for advancement, as he did at the library. As an interpreter he had reduced hours and benefits, and the bus driver work was only part-time. Only in the engineering firm job was

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he able to use the knowledge and skills he gained from the Master of Environmental Leadership program that he had completed.

On his latest attempt Adam had this to say,

I had a bit of hard news today that I didn't get a job. I didn't even get an interview. A lot of people phoned me up and emailed me saying, 'oh, you're perfect for this job…' I even know the founder. … I'm disappointed about that because I thought that, at least, an interview would be worthwhile.

This came after months of looking for and applying for work. Later in the interview he added, "I'm left with a sense of confusion now because it seems very hard to say how things work, I mean, not getting an interview for a job that I thought I was qualified for and that I knew people in was a surprise." His belief that work should be accessible is being tested by his inability to acquire work, and he admits to his confusion, but he does not arrive at any new conclusions about how it *should* work, just that it doesn't seem to work as he expects it to.

Adam also believes that within the application process the interview is valuable and the resume is not. He said, "I really don't hold that much hope for sending off a resume to a general competition that you don't know anybody there and they don't know who you are. I would say it's much more likely to be hired if you know somebody in the company already or they know you, I mean, if you have a personal reference." He adds later, "I think the first thing about the resume is that it doesn't really do much. If I was hiring someone I wouldn't believe anything that was written in the resume." The interview is the key, according to Adam. "In terms of deciding what people are like and what they can and can't do, pretty much in the first thirty minutes that you've met the person you get an idea of who they are and what they can do. So it's all about getting the interview."

Work for Adam is both an opportunity to bring out the best in oneself, and an opportunity to bring out the best in one's community. Work is the medium through which people can fully live their lives. Work "is supposed to help wake the world up so that everyone can realize their full potential as human." Adam goes on to describe the Master. "The great people, people I would consider Masters, are able to take this awareness and this feeling of alive, being alive, and go work at Sobeys [a local grocery store], and go create, go to university, or the military, or do something with it."

Adam's personal theory of work seems to be that work is a major goal of life. Work gives us activity, sustenance, and separates us from a lazy, selfish lifestyle. Work should thus be accessible to everybody. We do not have to work to our educational attainment as long as we are active and bringing out the best in ourselves and the community. The goal of life is to become a Master of living life, which, to Adam, is success.

Adam's Sense of Dissatisfaction

Adam's dissatisfaction stemmed from his inability to realize the resolution to his life: to find a job that will bring out his best. Although he would have liked to work in a job related to the area of his Master's degree, he was striving to be a Master and thus would have gladly accepted voluntary underemployment, which he had previously in numerous jobs. He was, however, unsuccessful at gaining meaningful employment.

He believes that his work of writing business plans for the engineering firm brought out his best and the best in the environment. Unfortunately the irregular availability of funds to hire Adam was not sufficient to support him in that role and he was forced to look for work with better pay. As a librarian he would also be helping the community, but he was not happy with

waiting behind the other workers (the "old ladies" as he articulated it) for advancement to a

position that would bring out the best in him. As an interpreter he was again bringing out the

best in his community by educating its members about the history and ecological value of a local

protected space. Again, this work was temporary and an insufficient basis for sustaining his

family. His work as a telephone interviewer also did not last. To bring out the best in him in this

role he worked hard, but found that his hard work was not appreciated, and he estimated that

mediocre workers would get promoted before him, which he found disheartening. His current

work, at the time of the interview, was driving a bus. In this work he said that

> "[I was] trying to relate to [the passengers] as real human beings and I have a
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> captive audience for 15 minutes. Guess what, you're alive, I'm alive, we're all
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> going to be alive for the next 15 minutes, and then you can go back to whatever it
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> was you were doing before you got on the bus."

This, he believed, constituted bringing out the best in his community through its young people.

His inability to get a job, and his confusion about the process, caused a high level of

dissatisfaction. He was quite far from gaining adequate work and bringing out the best in him.

Adam's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

The most noticeable learning for Adam was the loss of confidence in how to secure

employment. He explains it as, "I'm left with a sense of confusion now because it seems very

hard to say how things work. I mean, not getting an interview for a job that I thought I was

qualified for and that I knew people in was a surprise, and then just, it's hard, I don't know how

things really work, you know I'm not sure." He added that "it doesn't seem quite as simple as

just go out and get any job, well, perhaps I've got more learning to do, am I missing the point,

maybe it is easy and I'm just making it hard." He previously knew how to get a job, but recent

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events compelled him to question this knowledge, leaving him wondering what he is doing wrong, without a job.

As a direct result of his inability to acquire work, he was unsure about the potential of his credentials to help him to this end. In terms of his apparent misjudgment in getting the Masters credential, he said "there doesn't seem to be a good fit between me and the jobs that are available. So, I must, I have the wrong skill set or something." As for pursuing a more appropriate credential, he says "I'm not sure school is the answer because I have so much education, I'm not sure if I need any more … if it will do any good."

Adam, faced with an unknown work future, seemed to be both concerned and calm. He is worried about providing for his family (but was, at the time of the interview, making ends meet) but he seems to be very accepting of the unpredictability of work. He says we have to "just come to grips with the fact that life and death go together and everything, every moment is changing so there's nothing to really hang on to, you know, we're, we don't ever really know what's going on."

Adam realized that finding work was not as he expected it to be. In a sense he "un-learned" how to acquire work. He used to know, but after trying hard for months, and still not finding work, he's become skeptical of what he used to know about finding work. This is not consistent with predominant approaches to learning because he did not really *add* anything, but *replaced* something he thought he knew *with nothing*. Adam created meaning about finding work, which turned out to be wrong. Adam thus found himself in a situation where he did not know what he thought he knew, and he was unable to replace the wrong meaning with better meaning about finding work. Usually, those times we realize something we know is wrong; it is because we have found a better way.

Cameron

Cameron started working with his father in the commercial fishery. He went on his own as a commercial fisherman upon receipt of his grandfather's boat. Cameron worked as a commercial fisherman for 16 years and then moved with his family to Alberta to study Theology. He would return for summers to work as a fisherman. While in Divinity school a fellow student mentored him as a carpenter. Upon completion of Bachelor and Master Degrees in Theology, Cameron moved his family to Nova Scotia where he worked as a contractual carpenter and a pastor in a local church. His work as a carpenter diminished and it eventually became a hobby for Cameron. He still works as a pastor.

Work, according to Cameron, completes the person. It is more than just income: work is therapeutic and fills emptiness inside. Cameron believes that for every person there is work "where [that person] should be."

Cameron's Sense of Underemployment

Cameron experienced underemployment three times. First, he was underemployed as a fisherman due to the lack of personal and spiritual satisfaction. Although this is not listed in the literature as a legitimate form of underemployment, Cameron was working *under* a minimum level of satisfaction. Cameron felt a lot of pressure as a fisherman, and came to the understanding that this work was not where he should be. Cameron's message from God was that he should leave fishing, which he did.

The second form of work in which he was underemployment was as a carpenter. In this work he experienced much personal growth and relief. At this stage in his life he wasn't just working on projects, but working on himself. He had his carpentry mentor, did not have to make big decisions as the boss, and accepted his guidance from God. With the experience from his

apprenticeship, Cameron decided to take on carpentry as a career when he returned to Nova Scotia. As a carpenter he was structurally unemployed because he could not find people to hire him, indicating a mismatch between supply and demand conditions in Nova Scotia's labour market. He became a discouraged worker through this. Ultimately his last paid job became *pro bono* because of a disagreement between he and his client on the job he was hired to do (Cameron refused to leave with the job partially done, in spite of the fact that there would be no pay for him).

The third instance of underemployment for Cameron was as a pastor. He did not identify this work as dissatisfying, but based upon his low level of pay he can be considered underemployed as a pastor. His pay was approximately $1500 per month as a pastor, which was substantially below what he needed to support his family. As a result, his wife went to work when their children became old enough to attend school. One could characterize Cameron's work as a pastor as underemployment by choice.

Cameron's Sense of Dissatisfaction

With respect to work dissatisfaction, the first incidence was in the fishery. "Coming from the fishery, where the harder you worked the better you did, like, we were really self-made in the fishery, the better the fishermen the harder you work the better the gear, it was all on me the captain." It got to a point that all he did was work, "all I had was fishing," and he became confused with who he was and what he was doing. He said, "I went through a time of who am I anymore, and I had to define who I was, by my relationship with God instead of what I did." "I felt so entirely empty inside, just like there's got to be more to life." He left the fishery through God's guidance. "God if you're real, I'm just tired of this, show yourself to me and I give you my life," although leaving such secure and well-paying work was difficult. "It was a hard

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decision to leave it because it was like losing control of the only thing that you knew that was certain in your life." Cameron realized that success through hard work, in the form of money and what money can buy, is not the formula for work satisfaction. Cameron left fishing when "God called me out of it."

On Cameron's move to Alberta, he stated that "it seemed like I was being led out there." During his Theology studies he picked up carpentry, which he described as "great, the change was amazing. It was just like, refreshment." His carpentry mentor was also in the theology program. As Cameron describes him, "I think this older carpenter was a huge mentor in my life because his whole leadership style was the exact style that a pastor needs to have."

After he moved to Nova Scotia he experienced dissatisfaction again in his attempts to start a career as a carpenter. Finding himself in an industry full of seasoned carpenters, he found it difficult to find work. Cameron describes leaving contractual carpentry as a result of his relationship with God: "he was telling me all through it … I don't want you to do carpentry Cameron."

Cameron ended up working as a pastor, for $1500 per month. Although there was a major gap between his wage and what he would have needed to support his family, working as a pastor, in Cameron's words, "is exactly where I should be."

Cameron's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Cameron moved through two different careers, he went to university, and he moved twice. He also changed from being the captain of a boat with all of the responsibility, to being a subordinate of God in which he receives direction and guidance. "Now I'm into something where I have to totally let go, and I have to trust that God is going to provide. That's a hard journey to get from one to the other because they are two extremes."

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Overcoming the dissatisfaction he felt as a fisherman was an important change because, as a fisherman, there is very little change: "they usually go to their graves … that was something that made it so much harder for me to leave." Cameron said that fishermen stay fishermen for their whole lives. Cameron needed a change, and he gave himself to God, which was the end of fishing for Cameron. Also, Cameron had small children, and he "wanted to get away from the negative side of the fishery." His changes are mainly in 3 areas: he changed from being the boss and having control to being subordinate to God under his control; his identity changed (as per first point) and his location changed from PEI to Alberta, back to PEI for summers, and finally moving permanently to Nova Scotia.

Cameron's story is one of finding God. Cameron discovered through his work experiences that success did not have to be measured by income, as it was when his salary was at its maximum as a fisherman. His long days of hard work as a fisherman led him to this success. He was the boss, made the decisions, and took all of the responsibilities, all to earn the high wage. Unfortunately he burned out from the hard work and the stress he put on himself. Either in response, or serendipitously, Cameron's identity changed when he found God, from being a fisherman, to being a follower of God. The "hole in [his] soul," that came from only fishing became filled when he found God. Cameron was a successful fisherman, but that particular calling did not satisfy him. He left fishing to fill this void with his devotion to, and trust in, God and His guidance. Cameron states this relationship as, "at one time my job defined who I was. … I was a fishermen, and when that all got ripped away from me and I went through a time of who am I anymore, and I had to define who I was, by my relationship with God instead of what I did"

Cameron's life has come to revolve around his relationship with God. This relationship started one day, coming back after a very hard 18 hours at work, with a boat full of fish. Cameron said "God if your real, I'm just tired of this, show yourself to me and I give you my life." All work from that point was through God's guidance. Cameron trusts God, which made it easier to quit the fishery. Cameron said, "I would've never left unless I was certain that God had asked me to do this, but there was a small hint of trying to get away from, from the negative side of the fishery, and from that emptiness with inside that the job could never fulfill." Cameron said, "I think the real defining thing that, I'm making the choices to do what I do today, God isn't strong-arming me, I've just learned through time that what he says is the best for my life and my family's life, so why I do what I do is because I know I can trust him." "I'm getting there, he's being very patient with me to get me there, and he doing marvelous things, amazing things, to show me look I want to take care of you just keep doing what I'm telling you to do. Balance and harmony. I've tried, it in a Christian world you will hear people say God first, family second, Ministry third, down the line, and I haven't, and it's impossible for me to compartmentalize my life, I can't. One just flows into the other. I can't. I don't even bother thinking about that stuff anymore. Whatever seems to be the most important for the day, I kind of let God set my directions for the day, I guess that's how I live."

Cameron is happiest when he subordinates himself to God. When Cameron is the boss, he is not happy. As a carpenter, he was happy as an apprentice: a subordinate to the master carpenter under which he was learning. When he returned to Nova Scotia to work as a carpenter, he became the boss again, and started to dislike the work. When Cameron became the pastor he was subordinate to God: happy and financially unsuccessful.

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Cameron was resistant to leave the fishery because "it was like losing control of the only thing that you knew that was certain in your life." But he did leave. When he was so burned out at fishing he gave himself to God. Now he subordinates himself to God and allows God to guide his decision making, and his life is much better. He says, "I'm making the choices to do what I do today, God isn't strong-arming me, I've just learned through time that what he says is the best for my life and my family's life, so why I do what I do is because I know I can trust him, 100%, and my future is in his hands."

Cameron has also earned both Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Theology as well as enough carpentry to work as a contractor. But the biggest change he experienced was the shift in responsibility from himself to God. Now he is content, in his $1500 per month Pastor work.

Cecelia

Cecelia worked as a waitress in at least ten establishments in the first two years after moving out of her parents' house. She waitressed in a Sushi Bar, worked at a call center as a customer service representative, and worked as a salesperson at a bookstore. She also, with her husband, owned and operated 2 bookstores. She studied Sociology at university. At the time of the interview she was in her 5th year, applying for Master's degree programs, and working as a research assistant for her major professor.

Cecelia has made sense of work in terms of what she wants and needs from it. This includes: recognition and approval of her skills, knowledge and hard work; fairness of pay structure, independence and the ability to set her own pace and focus, which includes flexibility; not having to compromise; a sense of being valued, fitting in the job she works in, and to do what she wants as opposed to what she has to. She states, "I loved interacting with the customers." When asked why she works (in the past and at the time of the interview, her answer

was, "then I'd say, so that I can pay my rent and feed my kids. Now I'd say for external recognition"

In the past, if Cecelia didn't get what she wanted from work, she quit. She stated that drawing Employment Insurance is a viable employment option for her. She has been through a series of no value, no commitment jobs that were very easy to leave. She also noted that sometimes it's not work dissatisfaction, but home dissatisfaction causing the stress that brings out work dissatisfaction. Cecelia also believes that the meaning of work changes when you have a family.

Cecelia's Sense of Underemployment

In terms of the traditional forms of underemployment, Cecelia has experienced two of them: the credential gap and the performance gap. Cecelia described her work at the call center as "menial," and "too easy" such that "a monkey could do the … job." She was limited to following a protocol and answering questions and concerns from customers that called in about their cellular telephone plans from all over North America. This work could also be considered "underemployment" in different ways. In the first place, she felt intellectually stunted as she felt forced to take on the goals of the firm as her own. She was also frequently confused as different levels of management would issue different memos and protocols, which sometimes were incommensurable with each other. These experiences can be considered as a lack of consistent management, another potential form of underemployment. The clientele with which she communicated were frequently disgruntled and verbally abusive. Cecelia's solution to this underemployment was to quit.

Another job that she eventually quit was her work in the Sushi Bar as a waitress. In the beginning she seemed to like this work, and was very good at it. In fact, she ended up working

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the busiest shift. Her wage was based on tips, and her tips were very good, but management

eventually moved to the "tip pool" system, in which the shift's tips were divided between

everyone working at that time. The result was that Cecelia did not receive the tips that she felt

she earned. While she worked there, Cecelia often felt "left out". "Everyone else was Japanese,

working there, and they would always talk Japanese around me, not really explain to me the

kinds of things that were going on." She was "the only Canadian working in the Sushi Bar, and

… was actually discriminated against, quite a bit."

She had also worked as an entrepreneur, owning and operating 2 separate bookstores.

Cecelia loves to read, and loved to talk to the customers about the books. Unfortunately, her

administrative skills and interest were lacking, and all of those businesses were unsuccessful. In

her work in the large chain bookstore she also had the opportunity to talk to customers about

books. Management at this bookstore forced her to treat the books as products, which she had

difficulty with, and she ultimately quit. As she puts it, "in none of those jobs did I ever feel that I

was appreciated."

Her strategy to quit when she was underemployed changed when she had her children.

With children, she decided to return to school, and secured work as a research assistant. During

our interview, which happened during her fifth year studying Sociology, and her second year as

an RA, she said that when she first started work as an RA she felt disoriented. She did not

understand what was being asked of her, and what her level of freedom was. Normally she

would have moved on, but with having young children and her Sociology degree nearly

completed, she decided to stay in that work. Her strategy was to work harder to, gain the

recognition she deserved for her abilities, and prove herself, which she admittedly accomplished.

At the time of the interview, I believe she considered herself to be the top RA. Whenever other

RAs were hired, she talked about them as if they were hired to help her, and she criticized them in general for not having strong work ethics.

Cecelia's Sense of Dissatisfaction

According to Cecelia, "there have been quite a few times that I have been dissatisfied with my work." Cecelia's dissatisfaction grows out of two main ideas: she has to be comfortable in the work environment, which includes relationships with coworkers and bosses, fair treatment, goals of the firm, and an understanding of her limitations and freedoms. The second idea is the amount of investment she makes vs. the return. "I probably had about a dozen different jobs, just part time jobs, and that's the way it went. Whenever I'd get annoyed with one, or something didn't go right, it could even be little stupid things; I'd just quit and go find another one."

At the Sushi Bar she felt like a minority as the only white female working there. She worked hard and was successful in the busiest shift, and for that she expected to be paid fairly: she wanted the tips that she earned. Unfortunately her employer shifted to a tip pool, so everyone else was paid extra and Cecelia was paid less than what she earned. In her words, "in the food and beverage industry a lot of it came from feeling like a servant, which I guess you are if you're a waitress, but a lack of respect from the owners, in which I worked for, not getting my fair share of tip, doing a lot of work for little satisfaction." She did not feel any camaraderie with her coworkers, and, as Cecelia puts it, "that was pretty unsatisfactory for me, and the way I dealt with it was I quit." At the call center she was treated dismally by the clientele, calling in to complain about their cell phone service. She did not agree with the mission of the firm, and frequently received memos and directives from different level of management that showed no consistency. She characterized this job as "menial" and quit.

Cecelia was dissatisfied for a short time at the research assistant work due to her not having a sense of what her freedoms, limitations and flexibility were. As she explains it, she worked hard to earn the recognition that she excelled in this position. After 2 years at this work she came to refer to it as her "dream job" with the opportunity to be as productive as she chose. She also felt that she had a lot of freedom and flexibility to work and produce without micromanagement from the professor for which she worked.

Cecelia's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

With respect to the change and learning that Cecelia experienced through her dissatisfaction, the "menial" jobs resulted in virtually no change or learning as a result of the dissatisfaction. She does note, however, that "[she does not] like sushi, and [she doesn't] like caviar… [and] that [she] would never want to work in a position or live in a position or be in a position where being a white female, [she] was a minority." Her response to those dissatisfying jobs was always to quit. At this time in her life, the average time she spent in a job was 4 months (see Table 1). She did talk about investment in work and the satisfaction that she expects as a result. With those menial jobs, she invested very little, and thus expected very little in return. With the dissatisfying work environment, and very little investment on her part, it was very easy for her to just quit and move on. In her work as a research assistant she initially experienced dissatisfaction due to not knowing the expectations of her, and her freedom and limitations. Partly due to her recent role as mother, rather than quitting she worked harder and sought recognition. She found satisfaction, as she puts it, by "working your ass off to show that you can do it and eventually you get that stability and kind-of knowing that you don't have to second-guess yourself anymore when you make decisions." Another strategy that she found worked to reduce dissatisfaction was to be "in a consistent dialogue with the other team members so that

you know what expectations are there and they know what expectations are there and just so that there is that mutual agreement."

Her hard work paid off as at the time of the interview, 2 years after starting, she was still there, with the freedom and recognition she wanted from her supervisor. She characterized this as "knowing that I made the right decision in investing so much time and effort in studying a particular thing and actually knowing that I'm using it and I'm getting to use it doing my dream job."

There are a few differences between these situations, such as: she was unmarried with no children in the earlier jobs, and married with children in the later work; she initially invested nothing in the first dozen jobs, and invested time and resources in and education for the last one; and by her own admission the earlier jobs were "menial" and the later work required her Sociology educational attainment.

Danny

Out of high school Danny studied practical nursing and started working as a Licensed Practical Nurse with psycho-geriatric patients. After 5 years he quit and moved to northern Saskatchewan to try to start a career as a bush pilot. At the end of the summer he returned to Nova Scotia and his previous LPN employment. After another 5 years he was accepted into flight crew selection with the Canadian Forces and concurrently offered a position at the local fire department. He accepted at the fire department, where he is currently working. He still does 1 or 2 LPN shifts per week, and works a single 24 hour shift per week with the fire department.

All of Danny's answers implicitly contribute to his theory of work in 2 main areas: what is satisfying work, and the balance between work and family life. Danny believes that before someone starts a job or career that they should do their homework and find out as much as they

can about the work: in particular, if the work fits with who you believe you are and what you will be satisfied in. Once in the career, Danny believes that work should mean more than just income. In Danny's case, his work has to be about helping people as well. Just doing the minimum to get by is not adequate either. Danny believes that a person should be dedicated to their work, which I believe is his way of expressing the idea of work ethic and hard work, for work to be satisfying. Danny also believes that for his work to be satisfying there should be room for movement and advancement, and that it should be something that he can put away at the end of his shift so that he can go home and give all of his attention to his family.

Danny considers his family and the attached responsibilities when he makes decisions about work. For Danny, work satisfaction is important, but life satisfaction is more important. When Danny and his wife had their first child his life changed, and family took a higher value over work. When Danny attempted to become a pilot, a dream of his for a long time, he had to abandon it when he realized that it would cause a serious strain on his finances. At this time he returned to Nova Scotia and started back at work as a Licensed Practical Nurse. Danny believes that the time spent with his family, and their financial security, contribute more to his life satisfaction than work itself. For Danny, work is about family.

Danny's Sense of Underemployment

Danny's work experiences are essentially working as a Licensed Practical Nurse, attempting to gain work as a bush pilot, and as a firefighter. Danny attended Vocational School to qualify as an LPN. While working as an LPN Danny continued investing in his pilot skills and reached the levels of pilot and instructor. He attempted to gain work as a bush pilot by first working packing and unpacking planes. Although he expected to be doing this for a couple of months before advancing to pilot, he found out that it would actually be 2 years, so because of

financial obligations he returned to Nova Scotia, back to his work as an LPN. When he was

offered the position of firefighter he first investigated the career in order to decide if it was a

good choice for him. At this time he was also offered a place in the Canadian Forces pilot

school, which itself was not a guarantee that he would be accepted as a pilot: it was just one in a

series of hurdles through which he would have to progress. Consistent with his belief of putting

his family's security first, he decided firefighting would offer his family a better life, and he

accepted that offer.

Danny experienced underemployment in his attempt to become a bush pilot. Although he

had the proper licensing required to do this work, he was still required first to load and unload

planes. When he found out that this process was to take 20 months longer than he anticipated, he

decided to forego this career choice at that time and return home. He experienced the credential

and performance gaps as he had credentials and abilities that he could not use while he waited to

work as a pilot.

As Danny holds his family in higher regard than work, he also missed the opportunity to

pursue piloting with the Canadian Forces. In his words,

> "I was accepted at the fire department and in the military to go to flight selection.
>
> The offers came at the same time when you're excepted in the fire department
>
> you're excepted when you're excepted to go to flight selection you just jump over
>
> the first of many hurdles each of which narrows the field of competitors down so
>
> being selected for flight selection didn't mean I was to be a pilot so I had to go with
>
> the fire department."

Thinking of financial security, he accepted a position as firefighter, and has been very happy

there for the 10 years of employment there that preceded our interview.

Danny's Sense of Dissatisfaction

Danny has a few rules about work that help him to avoid dissatisfaction. His work as a firefighter, although exciting and very much aligned with what he wants to do, is really about providing for his family. He also uses a strategy of investigating a job before he applies so that he knows what he is getting into, and thus anticipates and avoids any dissatisfaction that would result from a mismatch of him to work.

Despite these rules, Danny was dissatisfied with the process he would have had to endure to become a bush pilot. The underemployment in this situation included the difficulties that anyone who wants to become a pilot must endure. The military is very selective, and the commercial airlines require many in-air hours, which is very expensive to people who have to pay by the hour. In Danny's work as a flight instructor he did not accumulate enough hours in the air to qualify for a commercial pilot position. Ultimately, in Danny's words, the effects of dissatisfaction are apparent "when you're tired of your job what you do is not good for you and it's not good for your family."

Danny's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Danny underwent a number of career changes (3 jobs in 13 years, see Table 1) all of which he seemed to be well prepared for (except possibly the attempt to become a bush pilot). This attempt helped him realize how difficult it was to become a pilot, although he seemed to have known that it was very difficult already. When he returned home to work again as an LPN, the only change he admitted from the previous LPN work was his actual shift. His second attempt to change careers from LPN was when his brother applied to the fire department. Danny applied as well but was unsuccessful. He was, however, intrigued by this career and started investigating the fit with his needs. He was already in a position of helping people, but believed

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that as a firefighter he would not have to give this up. The next time he applied to become a

firefighter he was successful, and was ready for the career.

Danny's learning with respect to dissatisfaction and underemployment is proactive.

When he went to work for the bush pilot business he knew he would have to pay his dues, and

normally he would have been accurate with the time he would have had to spend packing

airplanes before he could be a pilot himself. The recession at the time, however, changed that

time, and Danny had to choose between his dream and his financial stability, the latter of which

he chose. In applying for the fire department, his learning was again proactive. As he puts it,

"you have to do your research, talk to people … to have to dedicate yourself to job to give it as

much considerations as you can to understand it." When he was hired he was confident that this

career was a good match for his needs, which were first and foremost time with and security for

his family, and secondarily his need to help people. He also loves the excitement of screaming

down the road in a fire truck with sirens blaring.

Demi

At high school completion Demi entered the finance program at university and graduated

with a Bachelor's degree in Finance. "I guess it was what I found most interesting at the time,

and probably one of the things that I did well. I did quite well at it." She immediately accepted

work in the sales department of a food company. "I started working there the Monday after I

graduated. And I worked there for 11 years when I started working there it was a summer job

and I told myself I wasn't going to stay there beyond this summer and, it didn't happen." After

moving through the company in different roles, including comptroller, she ended up as

Accounting Manager. She quantifies her level of dedication to her as, "without sounding

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conceited, at 150%, I was very diligent and did what had to be done regardless of the hours, and I was very committed."

The company merged with a competitor at the same time that Demi was pregnant. She had to stop work for health reasons, and within a couple of months had accepted a retirement package. She is currently a stay at home parent.

Demi likes work to be simple. She very much enjoyed finance and followed the quickest path of advancement; from high school to comptroller (no other jobs, no time off to travel). As manager she had to deal with people's problems in addition to the finance responsibilities, which she did not like. With the merger her role was further complicated as she had to lay off workers, which she was not comfortable with. With the birth of her first child she maintained her work commitments. Pregnant for the second time she was advised by her physician to stay at home, at which time she was offered a package, which she took under the premise that she could return to work when she was ready. At the time of the interview it was 4 years since the birth of her twins, and she has still not returned to work. She did, however, start a little part-time finance business from her home, with no coworkers, just her. She says that she never wants to be a manager again.

Perhaps she based her identity on her finance abilities, and then as a mother she shared this self-identity between finance and motherhood. She was an extremely hard worker before she had her children, but did not return to work after the births of her twins. Was the package the reason itself for her staying home, or was the package a sufficient catalyst to help her stay at home for the actual reason of motherhood and a changed perspective?

Also, it seems that Demi likes to keep her options open. She worked her way up through the company, perhaps to have more decision-making power and more of a choice to do what she

wants. Or perhaps this advancement progression was to keep up with her abilities in finance so that she would maximize her satisfaction in finance. Maybe she has a much lower resistance to dissatisfaction, and so advancement and a strong work ethic were to avoid dissatisfaction.

Demi's Sense of Underemployment

Demi's underemployment is limited to her work as manager, from the time of the merger, and ending when she accepted the package. Demi was always adequately employed. The Monday after graduation she was working for the firm. She pursued advancement and employer-supported education throughout, all the time staying loyal to the firm and turning down offers from other firms. Two things happened to change this trend. First, she was promoted to manager of the finance department, and second, the firm merged with one of its competitors. This was the start of Demi's underemployment. As manager, she was no longer doing accounting. Aside from "protecting the company's assets" she spent a lot of time "babysitting" employees, listening to their personal problems, and offering her shoulder to cry on. She now had abilities and credentials that she could not use in her job. Also, with the merger, former "enemies" became coworkers, which was awkward. As there were now 2 complete sets of staff, to run what was now a single company, there were many cuts and layoffs that needed to happen, many of which were the responsibility of Demi. This was another part of the job that she did not like. In addition, she was pregnant again. With the birth of her first child she managed to return to work and retain her career. She took maternity leave, and at the time of her second pregnancy her first child was 2 years old, in daycare. Demi, in her attempts to hold on to her career, would pick up her child at the babysitter's after work, bring her home for supper, and return to work after supper, leaving her husband and child together in the evening.

The forms of underemployment that Demi experienced were the performance gap and the credential gap. As she wasn't trained to deal with the personal problems of people, she could fit the category of underemployment by advancement in which a person is promoted, through the legitimate progression of careers, until their job does not match their credentials. In the case of Demi, her job is "in" finance but not "doing" finance, but "supervising" those people doing finance. She knows what they are doing, and her job is to ensure that they do finance.

Demi's underemployment seems to stem from the merger and not motherhood, although the fact that she thought to herself that she would return to work, but never did, is evidence that her perspectives on what was important had changed.

The forms of underemployment that describe Demi's experiences mainly describe her work as manager. Finance manager is the logical progression of anyone working in that office. Unfortunately it involves a different level and amount of finance abilities, and required the addition of supervision and human resource skills. As Demi could no longer use some of her finance skills (she said she was not using her credentials) she fell into the credential and performance gaps. When the 2 companies merged and downsizing was required, she voluntarily became unemployed with a package from the firm. As a parent (which draws no income) and a part-time accountant (which draws a small wage) she became underemployed by choice, and her wage certainly no longer matched her credentials. This final arrangement was her choice, which she reinforces by remaining at home, working as a mother and part-time accountant, even though all of her children are now in school and she could have the opportunity to return to higher paid finance work. She felt no dissatisfaction with this final form of underemployment.

Demi's Sense of Dissatisfaction

Demi described her work as, "prior to the merger it was great." The dissatisfaction, at the time of the merger, was at a maximum. "We had to go from two buildings to one, from 200 people to 150 people or 125 people, so there were people that were going to be fired or laid off or what not, so it was a very stressful situation." Between the human resources duties of her management job, coupled with the layoffs for which she was responsible, and her attempts to make sense of being a mother and a manager at the same time, the solution presented itself. Her physician told her that she needed to stay home for the remainder of her pregnancy. After a month of this she was approached by a representative of the firm who offered her the package, which she accepted.

Clearly, Demi has a strong work ethic. She goes back to work in the evening after bringing her 2 year old home; she give 150%; and she stays loyal to the firm that has promoted her and is paying for her education/training. Her dissatisfaction was overcome when she was offered a package to leave, when she was already home for the last month, pregnant with her twin daughters. If she wasn't pregnant, would she have overcome the dissatisfaction? During the study there was no data to support the idea that she was heading in the direction of a resolution to the dissatisfaction.

Demi's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Through her career at the firm, Demi changed jobs through advancement whenever there was opportunity. She also participated in further education, and eventually achieved her professional designation. Her last job change was to manager, which was a position that made her happy, until work changed through the merger with the firm's competitor. At this point her work changed with a shift towards what Demi calls "babysitting." This shift caused dissatisfaction as she was getting uncomfortably far from her desired work of finance.

Before she had children, Demi "never imagined [she] would stay home, [she] always wanted to work." There was little change in her work priority with the birth of her first child. She would pick her up at the babysitter's, bring her home for supper, and then return to work in the evening. But halfway through her pregnancy she was ordered to stay at home. In her words, "I actually was going to go back to work after I had the twins. I had daycare lined up, I was going to try it, and see how things went, but when I was offered a package I thought it's just fine for me to take it, let's try this, and I could always go back after, and I never have."

Her finance work, at the time of the interview, was a little, part-time job, with no co-workers, in which she finds herself happy. After progressing through virtually all levels of finance, she finally finds contentment in a finance role in which she is close to her family and can spend more time with them.

The two things that Demi learned were that she doesn't want to me a manager, and that she is happy being a stay-at-home mother. She says, "If I ever do go back to work full time I never want to work in the capacity that I was working in, I never want to be management."

Heidi

After high school Heidi entered the music program at university and graduated with degrees in music and education. After working as a substitute teacher for a short time she became licensed as a real estate agent and worked in that capacity for 3 years. She then returned to music education and worked term positions for 7 years until securing permanent work as a music and drama teacher at a local high school. In her words, "it's actually been great for me to teach at 9 different schools because you get stuck in 1 school you don't see what else is out there." At the time of the interview she was working in this position. She also owned and operated a defensive driving business while in this position.

Heidi experienced the inevitable underemployment that new graduates of education

programs generally feel. Just out of university all she could find was substituting work: in some

cases a few days in a row and in other cases just a single day. In the school district that she

works, teachers normally follow a process to gain a permanent contract, unless you teach a

content area that is highly needed, in which case the process is accelerated. The process is:

substitute (days, rarely weeks); term position (normally months, sometimes a full school year)

for the equivalent of 2 full years; and then you are eligible to apply for permanent contract

teaching positions.

As a real estate agent Heidi admits that she did not have the financial investment

necessary to give herself a jump-start in the industry. She made a few sales and ended up as the

office manager for the remainder of the 3 years she spent at the firm. She did not have the

investment it took to be successful. Once again she is underemployed because of inherent

problems with working in the real estate industry.

Back into teaching, her next move was her first 1-year term teaching position at a local

elementary school. As a novice teacher, just starting, she didn't really know what to expect. She

was used to being supervised as a student educator, and her initial experiences in the term

position were consistent with this. The principal would frequently observe Heidi in the

classroom, teaching the children. He would also provide direction and criticism as frequently.

After the harassment became so intense that she would cry when she came home from school,

she happened upon another teacher who had been experiencing the same thing. At this point, the

formerly legitimate behavior of the principal, acting much in the same way as an education

program supervisor would act, became harassment. Fortunately Heidi was still able and willing

to pursue the legitimate path to overcome this situation by contacting the teacher's union

representative of the school, which basically resulted in the entire union acting on her behalf. Although the eventual solution did not involve a suspension or job loss for the principal, Heidi was allowed to teach the rest of the school year harassment-free.

As a new teacher Heidi did not know if what she was recognizing as harassment was appropriate or not, so she stayed the course and endured. After talking to another teacher that had experienced the same thing, the problem went from surprising behavior to legitimate harassment, and the solution was pursued along a legitimate path. At a different school in the future, Heidi recognized the problem another teacher was having as very similar and took immediate action.

With her marriage, she said that she needed her family to tell her that she shouldn't be treated like that before she decided it was wrong and that she should leave her husband. When she was younger, Heidi believed that her legitimate role was to be married, but as her parents were married happily for as long as she can remember, there was no legitimate end to marriage except to see it through. Her Dad's mottos was that members of that family "never give up," which may have caused her to deny that leaving the marriage was an acceptable resolution.

Heidi's Sense of Underemployment

Two instances of underemployment that Heidi experienced can be attributed to the legitimate processes within those fields. In the first place, every new teacher is underemployed (by virtue of having no permanent contract) for the first few years, attempting to start a career through daily substitution work and securing short term employment as a teacher. In this case, Heidi underemployed by virtue of her inability to secure full-time benefitted work as a teacher. Heidi explains, **"**I graduated from the university march 1994 and then within the first 2 years started getting some sub positions and some short-term positions and things like that, and then

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generally got frustrated with the lack of employment, so I actually left the teaching profession for a period of 2 years and decided to get my real estate license."

As a real estate agent Heidi made less than ten sales during a two year period, and ended up working as the office manager for the real estate firm, rather than brokering real estate deals. Fortunately she received a call from a teacher-friend at this time, and refocused her efforts to teaching. She was hired in a one-year team as an elementary school music teacher. As a new teacher, she did not want to bring attention to herself. Initially the principal would make occasional appointments to observe Heidi with the students. This quickly turned into daily sessions in which the principal would observe entire classes. "He would criticize all my techniques/tactics and the way, my strategies. He would question how I was actually teaching the kids, he doesn't know anything about music and he made that very clear from the day I was interviewed."

It was not limited to the classroom either. "He called me into the office daily after school, he kept me there anywhere between 15 minutes to an hour, grilling me, accusing me of not being a teacher, accusing me of having a fake degree, how could I possibly have a degree from a university? Where on earth would you have taught before? "On top of this, the principal made Heidi keep extensive plans for her classes.

> "He felt that I wasn't putting enough detail in each block to indicate what activity
> I was doing, when I, how many minutes I was doing it in, he basically wanted me
> to have, or insisted that my daytimer, every day, was more than what a
> standardized daytimer was, he insisted that I buy a new binder, do a template up
> on my computer, and print it off every day, and in each template I should have
> about a page of information for each class, and at this school I had 11 classes

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every day, so he wanted 11 pages per day or information, and basically he wanted me to write out every single thing that I was going to say. So I realized I think I'm being harassed"

Heidi's Sense of Dissatisfaction

The principal was relentless. Heidi recollected that he would criticize her teaching methods. "Why don't you just stick with one thing and continue, and I said, but I don't understand, and I kept saying that I don't understand what you mean. And he thought I was, and he said, are you stupid? And right there that was when I knew that I was in trouble."

When Heidi realized she was being harassed, she "started coming home from school very stressed out, and crying every day, [she would] cry in his office." Her dissatisfaction did not take an aggressive, defensive stance, but a feeling of helplessness. Her response was not to fight or to be angry, but to solve the situation by complying with the principal's instructions. According to Heidi, "I just felt like he was actually tearing me apart so much that I was ready to leave the whole thing and just walk away." When she was stressed previously, she had a candle-lighting ritual in which she would light the candle, lay on the couch, and stare at the candle until it burned down. She felt like she couldn't go anywhere, and this gave her the time to figure things out. Heidi was grateful for the opportunity to share when she found out that another teacher was in a similar situation, with the same principal. "She was also feeling like, you know, like there was nobody to talk to so she also felt very good that she could find someone that she could confide in and to share, you know, both of us, we were dealing with this really with our spouses, and it was affecting our family life, and it was just nice to see somebody else who was going through it." This new relationship was the start of the end of the situation for both of

them. It was when they both realized that the principal's behaviour was not appropriate, and

they started the process to involve the union and stop the principal's harassment.

> " So I realized I think I'm being harassed, and I started coming home from
>
> school very stressed out, and crying every day, I'd cry in his office, I was
>
> scared to talk to the other staff members because I was still so new and I hadn't
>
> really made any major bonds there yet. And this was still into the fall and early
>
> winter, I hadn't really gotten my foot wet yet, hadn't really got my foot in the
>
> door. "

Heidi did not experience dissatisfaction with work the same way as other participants.

She seemed to assume that the harassment she received from the principal, no matter how

dissatisfying it was, was legitimate, which caused a different reaction. She wasn't' dissatisfied

in "this sucks, I'm quitting" but tried to change and adapt to the principal's instructions and

criticisms – i.e., solve the source of dissatisfaction.

Heidi's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Before entering her dissatisfying situations with her underemployment, Heidi believed

that independence and persistence were important to her. Heidi always preferred to solve her

own problems, or at least to first attempt to find solutions herself. She felt that if she solved

them herself, the reward would be greater, and she would not have to share the glory with

anyone else. She also contained her immediate reactions to situations, preferring to think about

something rather than immediately acting. With respect to persistence, her family motto was

"Smiths never give up" according to a plaque that her father had kept hanging near his desk for

as long as Heidi could remember. She highly valued the approval of her parents, and always told

them about her accomplishments, as if those accomplishments were a gift for her parents.

In her attempt to become a real estate agent, Heidi realized that she would have to make a larger investment than she was capable of, and thus changed her real estate career direction from agent to office manager. In her first term as a term music teacher she drew from her university education program. A core component of those experiences was her supervision and periodic feedback from her teacher/supervisor. In this teaching position she was not surprised with the principal acting early in the school year as a studentship supervisor. He would ask to observe, and offer her suggestions. She took this as appropriate behavior. The observations became more frequent, and the suggestions became criticisms. In some cases Heidi would defend her methods as what she learned in university. As a new teacher she did not consider, as the criticisms became harsher, that the principal was harassing her. She thought that in her relationship with him that her job was to do her best, and his job was to bring out her best. In his responsibility as the school's #1 teacher, he knew best what worked. She complied, accepted in many cases, and learned to anticipate his criticisms. "I spoke very professionally and very articulate, and I did that to impress him because I had to think more clearly about what I was saying to the kids, make sure everything was just so, and so yeah, that experience, though he was a real jerk to me, and a real bully, has improved my teaching and improved how I speak to people too." In hindsight she admitted, "That whole year has really made me stronger." But the stress of the situation kept increasing for her.

As a new teacher, she knew nobody, and kept to herself, so she did not have anyone that she could talk to about the situation. One day she could not control herself, and broke down crying in a meeting. She described to one of the teachers briefly the situation, and she was advised to seek out a specific teacher. She did, and it turned out that this other teacher had endured the same treatment from the principal, but for twelve years. They talked after school, on

the phone that night, and the next day. Through this conversation Heidi realized that the principal's behaviour was inappropriate, and that her and this other teacher should do something about it. Although unfamiliar with the teacher's union, Heidi approached the local union representative, and that afternoon a union person had come to discuss the situation with the principal. The principal did not come to observe Heidi any more after that meeting. As Heidi was a term teacher, her work at that school ended with the school year. She had one last discussion with the principal, at which time she was informed that she will never, as long as he has anything to do with it, teach in that school again. There was no apology, or amends, just a continuation of the harassment and criticism from 7 months before.

The next year Heidi was hired for another term position, at a different school. At this new school Heidi recognized a very similar situation between a teacher and the principal. That day after school Heidi met with this teacher and told her everything that happened in her situation, and what she did. As it turned out there were many teachers being harassed by the principal in this new school, and after this principal was confronted by the union and the school board, she was told to retire, which she did.

Heidi stayed in the harassing situation, just as she stayed in her failing marriage, until someone else helped her realize that the situation was inappropriate and that she did not deserve to be treated like that by either her husband or the principal. In both situations she persisted, she did not react immediately, and she tried to solve the problem first by herself.

She admitted to substantial learning as a result of her harassment situation. She learned to anticipate the criticisms of the principal; she learned that the network of teachers in Nova Scotia is very large, and is a valuable resource for teachers themselves; she learned to recognize harassment; and she learned to feel better about herself.

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Hugh

During and immediately after high school Hugh had many jobs. "When I was younger before, during university and high school, I had lots of part time jobs, "which included dishwasher, canteen operator, laborer and deck/flooring installer, all the while working as a part-time musician with the Canadian Forces. In University Hugh studied music education but switched to psychology and education. He also worked as a teaching assistant and temporarily filled the responsibilities of special education teacher when the school was unable to find someone with the right credentials to fill the position. Before he completed university he was accepted as a fulltime professional musician in the Canadian forces. His last posting in this role was in Nova Scotia as the bandmaster of a volunteer band.

Hugh's work shortly after high school was "just for pocket money" with little or no investment and for the most part very little satisfaction. At the time he was interested in music and education, and studied both subjects at university. He always wanted to keep them separate (i.e., not become a music teacher). While he attended university and worked in the local military reserve band, he had a series of better paying and higher skill requirement jobs, but there were still "nothing [he] ever wanted to do." He assumed that his sustainable career would be in either music or education.

He was eventually offered a position at the Canadian Forces Band Branch, starting with a few years at their school for musicians, as a full time member of the military. Hugh has always enjoyed performance music, and said that musicians "work so they can play." Hugh stated, "I don't think it is important to have a job. I think it's important to be active." Hugh goes on to say, "whatever job it is, or whatever activity you're doing, is important to give us a sense of

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focus, it keeps our mind stimulated." Musicians, such as Hugh, work at their jobs to allow themselves the ability to keep performing in some capacity, for both enjoyment and stimulation.

Hugh was always very satisfied as a musician. When asked what his advice would be to someone coming to the end of high school, and the beginning of their work career, he suggested, "figure out what you're good at, and then figure out a way to earn an income from it rather than searching through the want ads and spending your time doing something that could be dissatisfying."

As a member of the military, Hugh had a very secure job. But as the military is a hierarchical organization, suggestions often took the form of orders. In many cases Hugh was not aware of the reasons for certain orders, and in the military it is not considered his business to know the rationale behind the decisions of someone higher up than he. His job is to follow orders. There is technically no process to refuse an order, other than possibly being charged. One thing Hugh noticed about orders was that some people who give them will likely not change the order if questioned because it shows weakness, regardless of how appropriate it would be to change the order. It is viewed as a "negative character trait" for people to make decisions and then change them.

Hugh's role, for most of his career in the military, was as a clarinet player. For seven years leading up to our interview, he was the Director of Music of a volunteer military band, in which military personnel could join the band as a secondary duty, and civilians were allowed to play with the band. The civilians were given a uniform to use, and access to the band's resources, including musical instruments. Because half of the musicians are military (many of which out-rank Hugh) and the rest are civilians (with no rank), there is a complicated

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hierarchical structure. Hugh found himself constantly negotiating with his supervisor and his

boss to promote the band. As he puts it,

> "my supervisor and my boss, which are 2 different people, both have no training
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> in music or experience with music other than being a passive listener at
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> engagements, so, each time that their position changes in personnel, i.e., we get a
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> new supervisor or a new boss, we have to educate them about what we do and it
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> can be a difficult situation because sometimes when there is a change the new
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> person coming in may not have the same interest in promoting the band as the
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> previous person."

The volunteers in Hugh's band were treated well. Their reason to attend was the music,

whereas the fulltime military personnel were required to have a secondary duty, which was the

case for all military personnel in the band with the exception of Hugh himself. Hugh noted a

saying among music directors: "they express their interest with their feet" meaning that if they're

not interested, they don't attend. These volunteers had the opportunity to borrow a military

musical instrument, free maintenance on those instruments, and basically no costs whatsoever

when playing with the band. In addition, Hugh recognized the potential to help these volunteers,

some of which were high school students, and tried to provide guidance and opportunity for

them. In fact, shortly before our interview, Hugh took the entire band (including volunteers) to

Bermuda to play in their tattoo. The tattoo itself involved an impressive showing of bands and

acts from all over the world, including the United States, Canada, England, and Germany. This

was an extraordinary experience for high school students wondering whether he/she should

pursue playing his/her trumpet past high school. On these experiences that Hugh provided to his

Musicians, he admitted that, "it's self-satisfying knowing that they're coming out because …

they're satisfied with the job that I do." Hugh believes that because he provides these

opportunities and because of his leadership style, volunteers' attendance is high, and military

personnel subordinate themselves to him in the band situation.

Hugh's Sense of Underemployment

For Hugh, underemployment has been a constant factor in his work. Each part time job

he had when he was younger, he "only did the job in the first place because [he] was a teenager,

young adult, and needed the money." There was no investment of him, just a need for pocket

money. Later in life, his advice to a young person would be to "find another job that challenges

you or is in a field that is something that interests you, [and to] not take the job washing dishes.

However, if you're a young person and student, high school student or whatever, and you need

the money because you got to put gas in the car and pay for school dances and things like that,

well then, of course, go ahead."

At the crossroads between high school and starting his sustained career, Hugh was

working in both education and music, but neither in a sustainable capacity. As it happened, he

was accepted to become a fulltime musician for the Canadian Forces, and so his choice was

made, and the unsustainable nature of both of those positions was overcome.

The underemployment situation that Hugh mentioned when I screened him to be in this

study was one of harassment and slander. His "new" supervisor, the base chief, was as any

other: he did not understand the benefits and needs of a volunteer military band, and it fell on

Hugh to show him, which he did, as was the case for each base chief before him.

Eventually Hugh was posted to another province, back into a professional band as a

clarinet player. Unfortunately Hugh's family did not want to go but the military would not

withdraw the posting orders. The new band did not need a clarinet player, but the military again

did nothing for Hugh. Hugh was undergoing work on his teeth that prevented him from playing the clarinet, but the military again did nothing. Hugh appealed the posting, and he initiated a harassment complaint against the base chief, but nothing ever came of it. Hugh believed that the posting was just to get rid of him, and not for the original purpose of his employment in the Canadian Forces: to provide clarinet support for the Canadian Forces Band Branch.

In terms of the definitions of underemployment, Hugh can be considered underemployed in the following ways. As a young person he fell into the performance gap as he worked as a dishwasher and canteen worker. He could not sustain a career as a teaching assistant or clarinet player in the military reserves, so he could have been considered a low income worker. In the military he experienced subordination underemployment. All of these instances of underemployment thus far were by choice, but when he was harassed, slandered, and subsequently posted, he was performance underemployed by virtue of his employer putting him in a situation where he could not play because of his dental work, and he could not use his bandmaster skills because he was reassigned to a clarinet playing role (not to mention his perception that his employer just wanted him to "go away.") Regardless of his emotional reaction to this situation, he was certainly treated with disregard for his family and health.

Hugh's Sense of Dissatisfaction

A common reaction to dissatisfaction for young people, based on the data collected from this study, is to quit and find another job. Hugh is no exception to this tendency. When he was young, Hugh felt dissatisfied with work because he was not challenged or did not feel productive. Having experienced dissatisfaction in the type of work he had when he was younger, such as dishwasher and canteen attendant, he feels empathy to those who are working in those jobs.

In the military, Hugh found dissatisfaction inherent in the hierarchical nature of the work. A specific incident of dissatisfaction that Hugh offered was when he had to wear an unnecessarily warm and heavy uniform in a parade taking place on a hot summer day. This dissatisfaction was further antagonized because he felt that his supervisor only had to change his/her mind, but would not, just to save face and present the image of a confident officer. As he puts it, "I just didn't feel like doing or I didn't feel was necessary or, so I'd be dissatisfied in that regard and the resolution came because knowing that I was a member of a hierarchical organization that that's the way it works." Regardless of this continual source of dissatisfaction, Hugh always found satisfaction in playing and performing. The applause, as Hugh puts it, "is big." Hugh also expressed that most musicians put up with dissatisfying work and underemployment just so that they can play their music.

As a bandmaster, Hugh found dissatisfaction in those parts of the job that he had to do but did not like, such as the administration and paperwork as required by the Canadian Forces. Once again, he was told it had to be done that specific way, which to him seemed inefficient, but not why he had to do it that way. His current form of dissatisfaction, at the time of our interview, was from his being slandered, leading to his boss harassing him and eventually posting him to another band far from his family. Once again, Hugh felt that this supervisor was making an irrational decision, most likely based on him not liking Hugh, and there would be no recourse. As Hugh put it, "I've found myself in a situation where I've been harassed and slandered and my boss is potentially going to have to answer to that as well as allegations of abuse of authority. So that's been very dissatisfying. It's resulted in a transfer. It's resulted in a lot of stress, which is carried over into my family life and my work itself."

This dissatisfaction was amplified due to the impracticality of quitting and losing his pension. "It's the sacrifice of having to stick it out in perhaps an unpleasant situation. The sacrifice is one I'm willing to make for a year-and-a-half." When asked what Hugh was doing to prepare for what could be another year-and-a-half of dissatisfaction, his answer was basically to pursue the resolution of the harassment and slander complaints. He said, "I'm certainly doing lots of preparation trying to pursue a positive resolution for me, and, i.e., doing a lot of research and talking to the appropriate people that deal with harassment in the military."

Hugh's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Hugh's first few jobs were, as he puts it, "laborious, they didn't pay well, and some of them were really hard work." In each of them he learned and honed the skills that he needed to do the work. As a dishwasher in the Chinese restaurant he "learned how to wash dishes better." Also, "now [he] know[s] how to lay a stone floor, [and he] know[s] how to run a hockey canteen." Beyond these work-related abilities, the work made him "more empathetic to people that are stuck in jobs that they feel that they have to do, so they can put bread on the table."

As a young person, while he was testing both the pursuit of teaching and the pursuit of music performance, a teacher he was working with could not return to work so he was given an unofficial promotion to be the replacement. In the reserves, as a performing clarinet player, he worked part-time during the year and fulltime in the summers. So the jobs complemented each other and provided an adequate wage when combined. The opportunity presented itself "to join the military fulltime as a musician," which he jumped at. At the time of the interview, Hugh was still employed by the military.

Working as a musician in the military, Hugh found that as people progress up the hierarchy, they are less likely to reverse their decisions. He later learned firsthand as a bandmaster that these decisions can have monumental effects on another person's life.

When he first took the job as bandmaster he knew very little about the specific obstacles a bandmaster of a *volunteer* band would face. In the first place, he found that his supervisor did not have as high an opinion of the volunteer band as past supervisors had of the professional bands. Hugh realized that it was part of his job in making the band a success to help his supervisor realize the benefits of this band. Hugh also did not know what the intermingling of military personnel and civilians would create. As it turned out, Hugh believed himself to be a successful bandmaster. Civilian attendance was high, partially because he was booking good concerts and offering the musicians rewarding playing experiences. He also found that the military personnel were subordinating themselves to him, thus allowing him to facilitate good music his way. Aside from a few civilian musicians who attended the music program at the local university, he was the only professional musician, and had by far the most military band experience of anyone in the band.

Hugh expressed that he was "certainly a better conductor" because of the bandmaster job, as well as a better band organizer and military leader. "I would consider my leadership role harder than most military people that would be in the same rank or position because my members are volunteers so they don't have to follow orders but they voluntarily subordinate themselves to me on a regular basis and that can be people that hold a rank far above mine, but they respect what I'm doing and so they allow themselves to fill a subordinate role." The learning that seemed to be most important to Hugh, in terms of advice to his replacement, would be "to carry on similar to what I did, really listen to the people that are members of the band because they

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know what's going on, I would encourage him to develop a good relationship with the supervisor, but keep it on a very professional level, and I would also encourage him to … take care of small problems before they become big problems." He also learned that within a hierarchical organization like the military you have to be careful not to rub your supervisor the wrong way. If he had his time back, Hugh would have resolved the small problem which turned into a large problem, leading to his posting and dissatisfaction.

Tammy

After attending nursing school Tammy became a Registered Nurse (RN) and was recruited from Nova Scotia to work in that capacity at a hospital in Texas. She moved to another hospital while living there, and after 5 years in Texas became a travelling nurse, working for an agency that hired her out all over America for term work. Her last position was in Chicago. When she quit this work she stopped working as a nurse altogether for 10 years. When she decided to return to the profession she did requalification studies while working as a personal care assistant for a few months. When she re-qualified to be an RN she continued with this same company but in the role of RN. At the time of the interview she had finished with this company and was working with the Victorian Order of Nurses in a permanent RN position.

When Tammy talks about work, what she says seems to revolve around the following themes: power relations in the health care system, appreciation, and work ethic. The power relations that she has direct experience with are those involving Personal Care Workers (PCWs), nurses, nurse managers, and physicians. Tammy had a higher than usual sense of these relations as she had worked as a nurse, in the middle of this hierarchy, and then at the time of the interview was at the bottom of the hierarchy, as a PCW.

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Work as a PCW is difficult. Tammy chose to work as a PCW to stay in health care. As she puts it, **"**I could've worked at Wal-Mart or Tim Horton's or any of the seven or nine dollar jobs to pay the bills, but this would look nice as well on my schedule on my resume, and also I needed to step into being an R.N…." Tammy "was treated better than the average nine dollar per hour worker." As a former nurse, Tammy's expertise at work was higher than what was required for the PCW work. She was required to do only her job, and "watch on the periphery." Tammy discussed a situation in which one of her PCW coworkers needed to make a decision, which was marginally above the requirements of her job, and the Registered Nurse (RN) that was supervising said that "no she can't" even though Tammy, having worked in both positions, knew that the PCW could make that decision. Tammy gave the following advice to her coworkers, "I speak to a lot of people that are doing the nine dollar an hour job. And I always encourage them to go back to school if they can or take a course"

With her work in Chicago as a travelling nurse, Tammy admitted that the "unlicensed staff is treated very well because, they do all the work … I appreciate the fact that they do all the heavy lifting and, they do the hard work, we make the decisions but they do all, … it made me appreciate my job, and it did because I know I don't work as hard as, I make three times the money and I work half as hard."

Later, when Tammy completed her retraining and gained employment as an RN, with the same organization, she said, "I would go back to the nursing home, I would try to treat everybody with respect to health or I could when I could, and make their lives a little easier because I know what it's like, I guess that's what, I mean, it hasn't made me sit in my office hiding all day, I am not that kind of person, I can walk if I can walk around I can do something instead of holding my clipboard and yell."

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Tammy found that "when you work in a nursing home there's very little thanks" for the workers, especially the PCWs. She noted that management showed little appreciation. Tammy always went to this particular nursing home when there was need for extra PCWs there. In one situation, Tammy was doing paperwork while sitting on the floor, because there were no more chairs. The nursing supervisor saw her and said "up," nothing more, which made Tammy feel like a dog. Incidentally, when Tammy returned to that same nursing home, but as an RN, the nursing supervisor was very happy to see her, and treated her with respect. Tammy thought that this nursing supervisor did not realize that it was the same person to whom she once said "up."

In terms of work ethic, Tammy often went beyond the requirements of her work, to the limits of her abilities, to help her clients. This was most profound in her PCW work. She felt it was important to "help certain clients deal with their doctors." One client was having troubles with his foot, and the physician had decided that surgery was the appropriate course of action. Tammy's judgment was otherwise, and wrote the physician a note telling him about something she had done in the past that would work with this client. The first note went without a response, but the second one was well-received, and the patient did not need to have surgery after Tammy's recommended treatment. She also went beyond in other ways. One client loved a particular type of mincemeat tart, which apparently was not available locally. Tammy had her mother, who came to visit her from Europe, bring a few, and Tammy gave them to this client, who was very appreciative. Apparently his deceased wife used to make them. Ultimately, Tammy "wanted to do a good job."

Tammy's Sense of Underemployment

Tammy's clear instance of underemployment, and the reason she was selected to participate in this study, was her experience becoming recertified as an RN, which included

working as a PCW. In consideration of her training only, she was credentially underemployed. In terms of what she was capable of, the performance gap between what she could do and what she was allowed to do was large. As she was working in a PCW job with no benefits, and no shifts unless the administration gave them to her, she was technically in involuntary reduced employment.   Tammy's work as a PCW is probably the highest level of underemployment seen in this study.

In her previous work as an RN and a travelling nurse she experienced underemployment. These instances of underemployment are not the types mentioned in chapter 2, but are based on what is appropriate at work. In Texas she was treated with disrespect from her nursing manager, and thus found other work. As Tammy puts it, "things started to change when the hospitals merged; it got smaller … before they would send us on seminars and things like that. And they were really focused on educating their staff, and that kind of stopped when the hospitals merged."

In this work she had opportunities for further education, but those were taken away when these two hospitals merged, and the former nurse manger became her manger again. She quit that work and became a travelling nurse. While working in Chicago as a traveling nurse she experienced underemployment because she did not receive support from other staff, even though help from coworkers was a required part of her work for some tasks. Unfortunately this underemployment, combined with other factors, was too much for Tammy and she not only quit being a travelling nurse but gave up her license and moved to Europe.

Tammy's Sense of Dissatisfaction

Tammy has experienced dissatisfaction in her various underemployment experiences. In her previous work as an RN in Texas, and as a travelling nurse, she experienced dissatisfaction

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repeatedly. The nurse manager at the hospital in which she initially worked did not treat Tammy well, and so Tammy went to another RN job at the other hospital in the area. She was very happy with this work as she had the opportunity to go on courses. Unfortunately, these two hospitals merged. Her former manager became her new manager, and the education disappeared. In order to again get away from this dissatisfaction, Tammy became a travelling nurse.

One job she worked as a travelling nurse was in Chicago, in a very busy hospital. One of Tammy's patients would need to be changed, but as he had a spinal injury, she was required to have helped to move him. To Tammy's disappointment, she found it very difficult to find someone to help her. When asked, they could just say "no." In some cases it was 2 hours before she could get the help. There were a number of issues with this work, some from dissatisfaction, and some from burnout. She eventually ended her RN career at this hospital because she could not go back there because of stress. In hindsight, she explained, "I had lived in California by myself, and would walk on the beach, I was very content. And I moved to Chicago, it just wasn't my thing, I guess I shouldn't have gone there."

Tammy's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Of all the changes that Tammy went through, the most profound was her first-hand realization of the working conditions of PCWs. It made her appreciate her work as an RN and improved her relations with PCWs. She did not have to work as a PCW while she was retraining. In fact, working at a local grocery store would have paid her more, and given her benefits. She chose to work as a PCW just to get back into health care. The decision was more beneficial than she imagined. Also, through this realization of experiences as both a PCW and

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an RN, she encourages PCWs to go back to school to get a credential that will allow them to get better work.

In terms of the underemployment and dissatisfaction she experienced previous to this, she stated that she would still work as a travelling nurse, but not in a hospital as busy as the last one. She believes that combination of this hospital being so busy with personal issues at the time led to her burnout. If the personal issues were not there, she probably would have been successful, and may still be working as a travelling nurse. With respect to the work as a PCW, it was never anything more than temporary. She would move far away to work as an RN as opposed to working as a PCW again. Tammy does believe that appropriate work for her, based on her credentials and preference for salary, is RN work. Overall she did not change or have any epiphanies about working as an RN, except the realization of PCW disrespect and under-appreciation. She vowed not to make those mistakes again.

Venus

Venus studied Geology in the 1960s and 1970s at university. When she completed her degree she moved to Calgary to work as a Geologist. After marrying and having 4 children she stopped working when her husband left her and stayed with her children for 3 years. Half way through that time she started taking courses at university. At the end of the 3 years the divorce was finalized and at the same time Venus was accepted into Pharmacy School in Nova Scotia, and moved herself and her family. After completion of her Pharmacy degree she started working at the local hospital in a full time permanent pharmacist position. She is currently in this work as well as part time with 2 retail pharmacies.

Venus's first experience with work was in geology. Not only was she the only female in her geology program, there were no geology jobs in Nova Scotia in 1975 so he moved to Calgary

and was hired, becoming the only woman in her department. According to Venus, geology at this time was a male-dominated field.

For Venus, at this time, work was her life and she was very successful. Not only did she earn a very large wage, she spent some time as president of the local geology association, which at the time had over 600 members. She did, however, always want to be a mother. Venus said, "I knew that I wanted motherhood from the time I was a kid practically, and the minute I had children to career totally left my mind and I just wanted to be with the babies." Her and her husband had 4 children within 5 years. Venus said that "by the time the fourth baby came along, I was really winding down in the career." Her family quickly became more important to her than geology. She says, "I didn't know though at the time when I had them that my career would take second place, everything would be not the same passion as an interest as the children would be for me." Then, in early 1994, her husband left. Venus did not go back to her geology work at this time, but instead stayed home with her children. Her work had become that of a stay-at-home mother, living off of her investments. Through the divorce process she started taking university courses because, in her words, "I always thought someday that I'd like to go back to school, not necessarily for degree but to take things I'm interested in." After a long divorce that greatly reduced her investments, she moved to Nova Scotia to start the Pharmacy program at Dalhousie. This seemed a logical choice as her father was a pharmacist and her family lived in Nova Scotia. She financed her Pharmacy studies with the rest of her investments, and at the time of the interview was gainfully employed as a hospital pharmacist fulltime, and a retail pharmacist part-time. She believes it is important that her children do not pay for university with student loans, so she works 3 jobs to facilitate this.

Venus's main theme seems to be sacrifice. She easily sacrificed her geology career for her children. She sacrificed her investments to stay with her children. She sacrificed more of her investments to study Pharmacy, and at the time of the interview she was sacrificing her time so that she could earn enough money to put all of her children through university. Even with these sacrifices, she still questions whether or not it was the right decision to take the children to Nova Scotia, away from their father, even though it was he who left them. She said that the relationship her children have with their father is strained, and she did not know if it would have been any better if she had stayed.

Venus's Sense of Underemployment

Venus was underemployed when she completed her geology degree. As there were no jobs in Nova Scotia for a person of her credentials, she suffered from structural unemployment, and moved to Calgary. In her geology work there, she was the only female in her department. "I'd be the only girl there and it was very difficult for the company to accommodate me." Although this is not a specific form of underemployment previously mentioned, the deficiency related to her employment was by virtue of being a minority. For example, when she went in the field, special arrangements had to be made for her accommodations. In addition, "working for the engineering consulting company, they did a lot of projects, international oil fields, and some of the countries, Kuwait and Turkey and Saudi Arabia and places like that, I could do work on the project but I couldn't go to the countries to work on them so that was kind of frustrating to me."

Although Venus self-identified as underemployed, a prerequisite for inclusion in the study, this was the least obvious when she was screened to be a part of this study. She did not admit to being underemployed in geology or as a pharmacist, although as a Pharmacist her part-

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time retail pharmacy work is in fact involuntary reduced employment, underemployment that she accepts by choice. She admits to only doing this work for the extra money, for her children's university costs.

As a stay-at-home mother she was underemployed, as are most people who work as stay-at-home parents. The wage was non-existent and she survived because of her investments. Her credentials and abilities as a geologist were not used. She was, of course, underemployed by choice.

Venus, when her husband left, was the sole caregiver for her children. All parents make a decision about how much care for their children is adequate. Venus, in spite of the costs, chose to stay home with her children. She describes the situation:

> "legal things went on for about three years and I just felt like I couldn't handle work on top of all that, looking after the kids to because I had no family at all anywhere but Nova Scotia, no money really to pay for sitters or anything at that time because things weren't worked out financially after he left so, it was just kind of, not many options were presented to me other than stay at home."

She said in the interview that she had chosen her family over her work anyway, and the divorce was the nudge she needed to leave geology and stay home with the children. In the realm of what is adequate in terms of employment, and what is "under" an adequate level at employment, staying at home with one's children doesn't seem to be addressed. On the one hand, many families choose to have both parents working and the children babysat on a daily basis. Venus chose to sacrifice her investment, and potentially her future security, to stay at home with her children. On top of this, she was alone. As she puts it, "we lived outside the city in the country

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more or less and, just outside of Calgary and all of my family was in Nova Scotia so I didn't really have anybody to turn to for relief of any sort."

Venus's Sense of Dissatisfaction

Venus expresses her dissatisfaction with restraint. In her participant screening, she led me to believe that she was dissatisfied with being the only woman in her geology work. However, she did not admit so during our interview. In regards to fieldwork she explained that "everybody there lived in trailers and camps set up and I'd be the only girl there and it was very difficult for the company to accommodate me in that situation. It was very awkward and frustrating, I don't know about this satisfying, it was a just hard to accommodate girls at that time."

I believe that Venus prefers to make sacrifices with a positive outlook. In regards to her underemployed as stay at home parent, she expressed no dissatisfaction with this. I believe she was dissatisfied with having to use up her investments, and she may have been disappointed with leaving such a successful career, but the potential to stay at home fulltime with the children was more than enough for her to overlook these dissatisfactions.

Venus's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

When Venus graduated from geology school to no openings in Nova Scotia, she moved to where the work was, changing her location and starting a life away from her family. When she had children, she reprioritized such that they were new her highest priority. She articulated this as, "I didn't know though at the time when I had them that my career would take second place." When her husband left, she stayed home to care for her children. When she needed something positive to focus on during her divorce, she returned to school. When her divorce came through and custody was granted, she packed up her children and moved to Nova Scotia.

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In terms of learning, Venus always loved to learn. She had taken university courses in the past just for the sake of learning about things she was interested in. With respect to her work and family life, it seems that Venus accepts change and moves on. As it turned out, she left a male-dominated career for a female-dominated one.

Victor

Victor held a number of jobs as a young person while still in high school and after, although his passion is his music. He believes that he's "had probably more jobs than the average person." Victor is a successful and talented singer, band leader, and conga drum player. He worked in the 80s and 90s in a popular band that made a record, had a video on Much Music, and toured Canada. He was one of two front men in the band. Irritations grew to stresses, leading to Victor quitting the band and moving back to Halifax where he played with a number of successful bands. At the time of our interview he was playing with a popular local band every few weeks, worked part-time as a waiter and as a digital recording producer, and spent most of his time as a stay-at-home father.

Victor's approach to work is very informal. He believes that the appropriate age to start work is whenever you can get your first job. Training for work, especially for musicians, can effectively happen through self-teaching. A person does not have to seek formal education and credentials to acquire work skills.

Appropriate work is that which a person does to make a living. Any work that pays and allows you to keep doing what you enjoy doing is acceptable. In the case of Victor, he works as a waiter part-time; makes digital recordings; and works as a musician, all for pay. He is also a stay-at-home father to his two children, which does not pay but is what he feels is the best thing for his children. His love, after his children, is his music.

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According to Victor there are two ways to become a good musician: practice a lot and get lots of instruction, or be a natural. Victor is the latter. He admits that the best musicians are those that are "music geniuses." But even with talented and skilled musicians, bands need to progress and evolve in order to maintain their success. As the leader of his bands, Victor recognizes the audience as the factor that makes or breaks a band. When the audience is absorbed in the music, and the musicians are so absorbed in the music that "they don't even remember what song they're playing," the band it highly productive.

Victor spent a lot of time with one band as one of two front men. This led to problems as well because sometimes there was disagreement in the direction that the band should take. Victor's opinion was to progress and evolve in the direction of what satisfies the audience, whereas there were others that wanted to play music that they personally preferred. Regardless of how hard a band attempts to progress, there are always "bad gigs." The key with a bad gig is to preserve your reputation and get better gigs.

Victor spoke about work as a win-or-lose situation. By letting things or people get you down at work, or so unfocused that you can't interact successfully with your audience or clientele, you lose. By getting along with coworkers and being productive, you win. In the hospitality industry, better performance leads to better tips, just as performing better as a band leads to better gigs.

Victor was also very accepting of the fact that life is neither predictable nor fair. The "winds of change" applies to life as much as music, and sometimes a person (or band) needs to change to progress. Success is something that should be appreciated when it comes, not expected to come. On doing a yearly gig he said, "it goes in circles, you play there a bunch, and people love it, and then you get a little tired and, time for a change, that's a natural progression,

I'm all for that in every sense of life on for natural progression and letting it go, I don't fight the waves, I don't fight the Tide." He also related this idea to being a musician, and being a band. In terms of his band at the time, "I felt that the band needed to do certain things and make certain changes in order to keep on progressing and becoming more successful in writing music and expanding the band a bit more."

Victor's Sense of Underemployment

The work of a professional musician is not always "grooving" though. Victor has experienced dissatisfaction with his underemployment as a band leader. As a "co-front man" Victor admitted that "when it came to the work we didn't agree on things." Sometimes, Victor said, "it was like I had to answer to him" which worked against the dual nature of the show. One time when Victor tried to tell the other front man what he did wrong, he would say "don't tell me what to do!" This relationship, according to Victor, came at the end (or "caused" the end) of his involvement with the band.

After he had left this band there was one incident that Victor described which encapsulated another form of underemployment for many musicians: getting the gig. He was told, "it's time for change: I am totally hip to that, we've been playing there for seven years, you guys have been great to us, and it's time for change." As an experienced manager this was no problem to him. The problem was the verbal agreement they had made earlier, before Victor booked musicians and gear for this gig. He said, "you can't pull this gig out from under my feet because I booked it, because you told me to book it." As a performing musician the only credentials one has are skill and popularity. Employers tend to hire based upon the latter, so musicians have to work, as Victor articulated earlier, to progress. Getting the gig is like getting hired, but having a successful gig is like getting a good recommendation for the next job. Also,

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you have to basically apply for each day you go into work, so musician's "resumes" are basically a list of gigs, but most of this is unwritten.

Victor's Sense of Dissatisfaction

There were numerous other instances of dissatisfaction as well. For one gig the venue was a "seedy hole" in which there were very few people in the audience, outnumbered by the staff. The other front man was not singing his harmony part because he was dissatisfied with the gig. Victor was disappointed as well, but Victor did not perform in an inadequate manner. As for the other guy, who Victor characterized as a "jazz sax music genius," "it didn't make sense for him to do a gig that really wasn't happening." In response to this Victor stated that in the music industry, "you're doing it because you want to make some money, so you have to perform." Sometimes there are bad gigs: that's just the nature of the work.

In that same band, Victor spoke of building tension between him and the other leader.

> It became a very tense situation whenever we would rehearse, they playing would
> be okay because we would go through the songs and there was enough
> excitement in the room to make us forget about differences until the end of the
> gig when, there would always be a point where the same thing would arise the
> same thing that was wrong the same thing that was bugging me or them or him or
> whoever, you know, the differences of opinion would clash, whether it was on
> stage or at a rehearsal or at a band meeting or in the van coming home from the
> gig, you know it was unpleasant we couldn't, we couldn't put the differences
> behind us enough to work together.

In terms of Victor's ideas about winning and losing at work, this band turned into a situation of perpetually losing because of his relationship with the other front man. After quitting this band and returning to Halifax, he fronted a few other bands and did not admit to experiencing dissatisfaction again. Even with his work as a waiter he did not admit to being dissatisfied, even though he did admit that he would prefer playing in the band. Victor knows the place of his music and his other work: music is his passion, and the other work is what he has to do so that he can spent time at his passion.

Victor accepted that he needs to do this other work to afford the opportunities to do the music. He accepted that change is normal in the music industry, and that inevitably the bands in which he plays will fall out of popularity at certain venues. He responded to this perpetual change by evolving the band, and by being aware of audience preferences.

Victor's Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Change of this type, according to Victor, is the reality with working in a performing band. Bands need "to do certain things and make certain changes in order to keep on progressing and becoming more successful in writing music and expanding the band a bit more, and other people didn't agree with my way of getting there." Victor, unfortunately, was not supported in this belief, and as Victor tried to survive in a situation that made no sense to him, his dissatisfaction grew, and he eventually made his own change to the band by quitting. Change is perpetual in the music industry, and bands have to change perpetually to survive. As far as learning goes, Victor ironically learned more about working with his band mates in the dissatisfying situation than he did about the underemployment itself. Victor "learned to let things go" to help him survive. Previously he would be bothered and have to react. He learned to accept the way other musicians, club owners and managers, clients and audiences are, in line

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with his acceptance of the "winds of change" of the music industry. As he puts it, "I've learned

to let things go." It is as if the natural progression of playing in a band includes being popular,

going out of popularity, getting along with some people, not getting along with others, and

sometimes sharing the goals of your band mates (or not). Victor's life at the time of the

interview included working in a popular band with some highly talented musicians, doing other

work on the side for some extra cash, and spending his days with his children. Victor was

extremely happy with his life.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented each of the ten participants of this study. Each has a unique

combination of experiences with underemployment, dissatisfaction and learning, ranging from

Cecelia's dozen service industry jobs that brought her dissatisfaction until she quit, to Demi's

work at almost every job in the account department until she became accounting manager which

was dissatisfying until she was serendipitously offered a retirement package and left to raise her

children and return to accounting. From Hugh's dissatisfaction at the end of his twenty year

career in the Canadian Forces as a musician because of a boss that did not like him, to Victor's

dissatisfaction as a musician because of his band mates which terminated his association with

that band. The circumstances of underemployment, dissatisfaction, and relief from the

dissatisfaction vary widely among these ten participants.

The learning that occurred also varied widely. Adam learned that he really does not know

how to secure work. Cameron learned to follow God's guidance. Cecelia learned that she

doesn't like being a minority. Danny learned that he needs to help people in his work. Demi

learned that she does not want to be a manager. Heidi learned to recognize and survive within a

harassing work setting. Hugh learned to not let little problems become big problems. Tammy

learned firsthand what it was like to work as a PCW and to appreciate her work as an RN. Venus learned that her passion was with her family, not her work. And Victor learned to let things go and relax. Each participant learned something valuable about themselves and their work as a result of the dissatisfying situation.

The next chapter includes presentations and discussions of the themes and categories of analysis related to underemployment, dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, and learning around these experiences. The themes answer the research questions and are supported fully with quotes from the interview data.

Chapter 5: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that takes place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work. The research questions driving this study were:

1.   How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment?

2.   How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction?

3.   What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

Three main themes emerged from the research data: (a)Workers want to feel secure, valued and free; (b)Workers respond to dissatisfaction by quitting, and (c) Workers did not demonstrate the learning abilities to turn a dissatisfying situation into a satisfying one. These overarching themes are based upon the data collected from the ten research participants. Each theme is roughly a response to the corresponding research question. Within the discussion of these themes are more specific accounts of how the participants in this study made sense of their underemployment and overcame dissatisfaction.

Also emerging from the data was the significant finding of a wider view of underemployment than presented in the literature. In response to this view a model was created to explore the idea of *satisfying work*. This view emerged in direct response to the first research question and was used to focus and develop the three main themes that emerged from this research.

The unit of analysis in this research is the worker. The three overarching themes are presented initially in terms of individual workers' experiences to explore different aspects of the theme and how the theme relates to each individual participant, followed by a summary which

relates the themes back to the applicable forms of underemployment. In many cases there are

commonalities between workers; however, this presentation of the themes shows the uniqueness

of each participant as they experience underemployment and dissatisfaction.

Theme 1: Workers Want to Feel Safe, Valued and Free

Feelings of safety, value, and freedom all emerged from the data as the needs of

participants who were both dissatisfied and underemployed. All of these feelings were responses

to different forms of underemployment. The components safety, value and freedom were

assembled into a single theme because for some participants they are inextricably intertwined

and interdependent. Safety, value and freedom will be discussed in separate sections to better

characterize each and illustrate how each functioned and contributed to participants' work

dissatisfaction. Throughout this discussion *safe*, *valued* and *free* will refer to the same

sentiments as *safety*, *value* and *freedom* respectively. The first component of this theme is

safety.

Workers want to feel safe.

Safety relates to how comfortable and predictable a worker is in his/her work. A clear

example of this theme is financial security. Workers who cannot find full-time and/or benefitted

work might find themselves dissatisfied with that work based on the involuntary reduced form of

underemployment. In other words, they do not feel safe because their salary and/or benefits are

not adequate to support their desired (or minimal) quality of life. Another clear example is job

security in the form of having a reliable job that can sustain a desired (or minimal) quality of life

for the long term. The musician who makes a verbal contract to play a venue, prepares for the

gig, and then is told by the management that they will not be doing the gig also experiences a

deficiency in the safety of his/her work.

There are other forms as well such as feeling safe in a workplace that is harassment free. This does not pertain to a form of underemployment found in the literature, but it is related to a work environment in which the worker feels in danger of being harassed in any form, which is a deficiency in work and thus, by definition, underemployment. These other forms of underemployment that lead to workers not feeling safe at work will be named and discussed after each participant's experiences with safety are presented in the following section.

Participants and safety.

Adam and safety.

The series of jobs that Adam held have not led to what he believes to be a viable or secure career. In his words,

> I'm thirty now so if I don't find a job soon that has opportunities for advancement I feel like I missed the wave … and that I've come to the final years of my beginner generation, you know, this sort of new worker generation and, if I don't catch a wave, then I won't have anything to ride for the rest of my career. …I'd like to start thinking in terms of five years, you know having a job for five years rather than five months.

His previous jobs did not lead to a career, although I believe Adam would have tried hard to turn them into careers if the conditions were adequate. For instance, his work at Statistics Canada was dissatisfying because he felt that

> they only expected a mediocre performance. People who were good at doing interviews, did a lot of interviews, weren't kept, they were let go, if you fit the profile of who they were looking for then you could stay, it didn't really matter how well you did the job, so it was, really frustrating to know that no matter how hard you worked you weren't, they were not going to keep you. So that's probably the most frustrating job I've had.

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In the end he is left with feelings of frustration and insecurity. In his work as a librarian he was also uncomfortable because, as he puts it, "I didn't really feel like I fit in there."

At the time of our interview Adam had been job hunting unsuccessfully and was clearly downhearted about finding work. He stated in different ways that he no longer understood how to get a job: all of his recent attempts were unsuccessful. In terms of the resume he had this to say,

> I really don't hold that much hope for sending off a resume to a general competition that you don't know anybody there and they don't know who you are. I would say it's much more likely to be hired if you know somebody in the company.

A short time later during our interview he then added, "I think the first thing about the resume is that, it doesn't really do much, I mean, that's my sense, if I was hiring someone I wouldn't believe anything that was written in the resume." In regards to the job that he thought was a sure thing but for which he did not even get an interview, he commented, "it's all about getting the interview and I just don't know, I would have thought that a personal recommendation would be the best way to get an interview" which he had, but was still unsuccessful.

To further illustrate his feelings of confusion about how to find work, he did not understand how there could be no available work at his level of credentials. As he stated, "I've applied for gas station jobs … stuff that supposedly anybody can do, and haven't been called back for an interview or anything like that, you know, maybe because [I am] overqualified, who knows what the reason is." In spite of his Master's degree in environmental ecology, and his related experience in writing business plans, not to mention his long line of lower qualification work, he is still at a loss as to why he cannot find work. "I found myself in a real gap between the mocha job and the high level professional job, and I don't qualify for either." He is willing

to work at pretty much any level, but, as he puts it, "it's funny that I just can't find somebody to do the hard work for."

It comes down to Adam not being able to provide the minimum security and quality of life for his family that he should. He said,

> I'm just trying to create independence for four people who live in Tantallon. [My wife and I are] trying to create independence for [our family] and I haven't been able to do that and, and it's a source of frustration for everybody.

Overall, Adam's characterizes his life in much the same way that he characterizes his search for work. He said that he has to "just come to grips with the fact that life and death go together and everything, every moment is changing so there's nothing to really hang on to, you know, we're, we don't ever really know what's going on." Adam faces the unknown in both his work and his life. His dissatisfaction with not being able to achieve employment security was at the time of the interview continued to be unresolved.

Cameron and safety.

Cameron's experiences around safety include financial security ranging from that of a fisherman to that of a pastor as well as the responsibilities that came with being a fisherman, a carpenter, and a pastor. As a fisherman, Cameron explains, "I was the captain of the boat. I had it made so to speak. [I had a] salary of $80,000 to $200,000 per year. [I was] very happy in it, happy financially in it." But the career of a fisherman, according to Cameron, was the only career they ever have. "They usually … go to their graves. They don't know anything else." But he could not sustain life as a fisherman. He describes leaving the fishery as follows:

> I was going 19 hour days and, I burned out … actually I went so low that I started into depression, you can't drive it that hard for that long. I knew I needed to wean back some

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anyway. It was a hard decision to leave it because it was like losing control of the only

thing that you knew that was certain in your life.

When Cameron left the fishery he left financial security as well, to start life as a student

with very little to offer employers during his studying. He said that not having any other skills

was something that made it so much harder for me to leave because my resume out in

Alberta wasn't any good, and my resume even coming back to Nova Scotia, there was a

point back here in my struggle with what in the world am I going to do to provide for my

family?

While studying Theology he found a mentor in a fellow student who taught him

carpentry. Cameron describes learning carpentry and his mentor in the following way,

carpentry [then] was a time of healing for me. I guess one of the big factors [is that] he

had the experience, he had the responsibility, so to speak, for everything, and I could

slide in under and learn everything, and work and get paid well and everything without

all that.

In this statement Cameron admits that the responsibility of being boss and making decisions was

too much for him, so when he started as a carpenter's apprentice, just doing the work and not

having to be boss and carry a heavy load of responsibility, he found himself relieved and happy

again.

Once he completed his studies in Alberta and came back to the east coast of Canada,

Cameron struggled to find work as a carpenter. "It just wasn't working out because I didn't have

quite enough experience and credentials … so it seemed like our whole time here in Nova Scotia

was a huge struggle, financially." With his background in Divinity, and his history for burning

out from pressure in the fishing industry, he found himself unable to make the hard choice of

fighting to be paid for the work he had completed. In his words, "with one client I did some work for in her basement, and, … there was some unspoken stuff that I had no idea about, and it ended out I'd did the job for nothing. Just being a pastor and all I just thought, I had no idea, she expected one thing and I thought I said the other." The combination of not knowing the local industry and allowing people to let him work for nothing made Cameron's work as a carpenter unreliable in providing financial security.

From the time that he left the fishery, through Divinity school and carpentry, into his work as a pastor, Cameron had found God to be reliable and dependable in his life. It was when he found God that he found the strength to leave the fishery and study Divinity. It was through Divinity school that Cameron found his carpentry mentor and learned new work and life stills. It was also through God that Cameron decided to abandon his efforts in attempting to have a successful career as a carpenter. On leaving carpentry, Cameron said, "I would've never left unless I was certain that God had asked me to do this." In fact, not only did God compel him to leave carpentry as a vocation, but God is responsible for Cameron being paid for this last project that he completed for free. In Cameron's words, "I had a number of these experiences … with God providing. He sent a check … and I have no idea where it came from, for the exact amount that this lady would owed me. Yeah, in the mail, I have no idea where it came from."

In every experience that he described in which he was the boss or primary breadwinner, Cameron had suffered stress. He had a lot of pressure on him captaining his own fishing boat and as a carpenter alike. With God in his life, listening and guiding, Cameron had become stress-free, and safe. Cameron adds, "as long as I'm doing what he wants me to do I know he will take care of us … Whatever seems to be the most important … I kind of let God set my directions for the day, I guess that's how I live." In addition, Cameron admits, "I'm making the

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choices to do what I do today, God isn't strong-arming me, I've just learned through time that what he says is the best for my life and my family's life."

After earning a very high wage as a fisherman and maintaining a very high level of stress, at the time of the interview he was earning a small fraction of that wage, with an even smaller level of stress as a pastor. As he puts it, "to be honest with you Derek I get $1500 a month, so [money] is not an object. That's all I get paid: it's not a money thing." Cameron's wife had to go back to work, as a schoolteacher, so that they could make ends meet financially. Now, with less financial security and a lower-yet-satisfactory quality of life, they are happier as a family than they have ever been. Cameron describes this change in his identity as follows. "I was a fishermen, and when that all got ripped away from me and I went through a time of, 'who am I anymore?' I had to define who I was, by my relationship with God." Safety, for Cameron, comes through the guidance he receives from God and no longer through financial security.

Cecelia and safety.

Cecelia described her work as a waitress as something she loved to do because she loved to talk to people, which she did constantly as a waitress. In the beginning she was happy with the pay as well, but her employer, changed the system which caused her to make less money for the same work. She describes the situation as follows.

> The way the tips were working, was that I was actually working the busiest shift, the lunch hour shift, to deal with all of the white, upper class businessmen who eat sushi on their lunch break. There were some clients, some of my regulars, who would tip me really well, some of them up to $15, but after about a week of that the owners decided that they were going to move the tip system into a tip pool, so I didn't actually get my tips until my payday, and it was prorated by hours, and I only ended up getting about 1/3

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of the tips that I actually made with the rest of the money being divided into the other Japanese workers who were there in the less busy times. So that was pretty unsatisfactory for me, and the way I dealt with it was I quit.

Working as a waitress, for Cecelia, was very much about the pay. The fact that she held a dozen jobs in two years and quit when she was dissatisfied is a testament to how easy it was to get a job with very little investment. The only security in this type of work is one's confidence that if you work hard you can make a bit more in tips, but her employer took that security away from her.

In her work as a call center operator Cecelia once again found it hard to feel comfortable in doing her job. She had no problem talking to irate customers about their cellular telephone bills, but it was the multiple, hierarchical management and policies that made it difficult. She describes it as,

> it was just the general atmosphere of the call center and the hierarchical structure of it and the getting policies, corporate policies from five different levels and they all disagree with one another and not knowing exactly what standard protocol is, following one person's memo and then getting in trouble for it when you follow another person's memo.

In the end she was felt as if she could get attacked with contradictory policy and management at any time. In another job that she worked, in which she was responsible for the administration of the business, this was not the case.

As an entrepreneur, owning and operating a book and memorabilia store, she was again comfortable in the fact that she could talk about the books and other items for sale with the

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customers. The pressure of having to sell items to keep the store afloat and generate enough

profit to achieve a minimal satisfactory level of financial security was high. She said,

> I knew that we had to care about the money because we had to eat and we were just, we
>
> just had the book store, there was no other source of income coming in, so, you knew that
>
> it was there but that anxiety and tension and not wanting to deal with it and do it, it made
>
> the job as it was work to be really stressful and unsatisfying because here I was in a
>
> position that I really loved doing and stuff but at the same time there was all this anxious
>
> and nervous tension behind selling the product.

In each of these jobs she eventually felt unsafe, and thus dissatisfied. In the first her pay was

reduced without warning and without a reduction in her workload; in the second there was little

stability in management; and in the third she was not at financial security. The job she held at

the time of the interview, however, resolved these issues for her. As she describes,

> the position I've been in right now, I've been in it for 2 years now, and it is probably the
>
> only job that I've ever had, well it's the longest job that I've ever had, for one thing, but it
>
> is probably the only job where dissatisfaction is easily identified and worked on so that
>
> its minimized.

The main difference between this job and the others is that she was working toward achieving a

Bachelor's degree in Sociology in order to be hired. Her work involved writing, independent

working, and responsibility, and she was valued for doing a good job. In her words,

> eventually you get that stability[and] you don't have to second-guess yourself anymore
>
> when you make decisions within the environment. You have the authority and legitimacy
>
> to make the decisions, and that really comes from working and being confident.

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The pay was good (better than the previous jobs) and secure, and she was valued for her abilities. Finally she felt safe.

Before she secured this job she admitted that the purpose of work was "so that I can pay my rent and feed my kids." Now that she was in this job her response was different.

> So why do I have to work now, I'd say yes, money is one of those things, but in the job that I'm in know I'd say I have to work to be able to build a name for myself and to get some external recognition.

Her ultimate goal, as she articulated it, was "buying a huge commune land up in Annapolis valley and going off grid and independently living for the rest of the time." In other words, her goal is to be in a situation of "completely independent living." She also noted that her "dream job is to be an independently wealthy eccentric." The ultimate safety for Cecelia is to not have to rely on anyone.

Danny and safety.

Danny's experiences with work alternate between his safe, secure work as an LPN, and his desire to become a pilot, ending with a job that can be considered as solving the needs of both other jobs: firefighter. As an LPN, Danny had secure, reliable work. It was so reliable that there was very little room to move laterally or to move up. Due to his qualification he was pretty much at his peak when he started. He admits, "I am a bit of an anomaly because I stayed in the same discipline for so long" referring to LPN work, for a total of ten years.

Danny was a trained and licensed pilot as well, without a flying career. He was an instructor, but due to a low demand for instructors could not convert this into full-time work. His first serious attempt to become a pilot ended with him working as an LPN again, in the same

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job, with only his shift as the difference. He describes this attempt to become a bush pilot in the following way:

> The company I worked with for four months required everybody to follow the same promotion hierarchy so I worked loading planes all summer and since it was a recession than normal one-year I would've had to spend voting planes would have been two years which was more than I was willing to commit to. I couldn't stay for two years because I was still paying for my education and I needed more income than that so I came back to Nova Scotia.

He was motivated by financial security and his desire to be a pilot. As an LPN he had financial security, but was only able to remove himself from that for a limited time to pursue flying. Ultimately financial security won and he returned.

His next attempt to become a full-time pilot was while he continued to work as an LPN. This time it was through the Canadian Forces, which has an extensive flight selection process. When he was finally accepted into the early stages of flight selection he was also successful in his fire department testing and was facing a similar choice: pursue becoming a pilot, or take the financial security. In Danny's words,

> To go to flight selection you just jump over the first of many hurdles each of which narrows the field of competitors down, so being selected for flight selection didn't mean I was to be a pilot, so I had to go with the fire department. It was not too hard of a decision to make because I was not going to turn down the fire department. If I turned down the fire department and would've had to reapply.

Fortunately for Danny, the career of firefighting involved helping people similar to LPN work, the exhilaration of screaming fire trucks and fire, as well as financial security, which he

describes as, "now I'm being paid twice as much then again. As a firefighter there are lots of other things that you're paid for: benefits [and] medical." And he still continues to work an occasional LPN shift.

When asked about stress at work, assuming he was going to talk about the stress of firefighting, his response was, "I don't usually get too stressed out. If I get stressed out it's usually because of financial situation." Work, for Danny, is very much about the pay. "You work to pay bills. Unless you come from a wealthy family you have to work … How much work you need to do all depends upon your lifestyle choices." But financial security is not the only reason to work. In Danny's words, "it's not enough to just work for a paycheck." Danny chose his career based upon two principles: help people, and have some excitement. As an LPN he did not get much of the latter, and eventually became a firefighter, which has both. For work to be sustainable for Danny, and thus stable, he needs some excitement.

Danny also spoke about choosing his career. When he first tried out for the fire department he knew very little about that career, which he thinks might have contributed some apprehension and led to his failure the first time. The second time, after research the career and thinking seriously about what he wanted in a career, he was successful, and is still happy as a firefighter. He had been a firefighter for ten years at the time of the interview. This is how he puts it:

> As a firefighter I could handle my job fine but then after a couple years if I witnessed a horrific accident in your car crash if I can't handle that that's not good job for me. You can have an idea of what a job will be like in how you like it but until you're actually doing the job and exactly happened in the job you don't really know.

As a testament to what Danny prefers in a career, his answer to the question of how to improve this current job was, "What could make my job better? Of course, more money and more vacation, more exciting events/challenges and better management." In spite of the tendency for pilot and firefighter careers to be dangerous (and thus unsafe) Danny finds safety in his work first through financial security, and then by matching his personality and preferences with the job. He and firefighting apparently make a good match.

Demi and safety.

It could be said that Demi followed a safe career. She liked finance in high school, went straight into a commerce degree, and upon completion took a job without a break. Within the firm that hired her, the only firm that she ever worked for, she did well. In her words, "before I had children I never ever imagined that I would stay home. I always wanted to work, and I was doing quite well from myself, at 27 I was a controller for a very large organization, I was on a good path." She was loyal to the firm as well. "I was actually offered a job while I was going to school and they were paying for it, and I turned it down to stay with the company thinking that doors would open up for me there, and it ended up working in my best interest to stay there."

There are always the unanticipated events that confound situations, and for Demi it was the merger of her company with its main competitor, an event that caused Demi discomfort. She said, " it was a very stressful situation." Her position itself was not in danger. "Because I was in management, so my position was not an issue" but she was asked to perform layoffs, which was another aspect of the job that made her very uncomfortable. Her description of the effect the merger had on her workplace is as follows.

To be honest, prior to the merger it was great, it was a fantastic place to work and

anybody who worked there before would tell you that, it was universal with all the

employees that work there, and people might even say that the competitors location as well, but when we emerged had to go from being each other's competitor to getting along, it's not that people are mean and nasty or anything, it's just your way of thinking, you're competing you have to beat the other person and now all of a sudden you have to work side by side and you were in essence competing for jobs so I guess in essence you were competing and still had to get along.

By the end of her career Demi had a high amount of security in her job and its pay, but before the merger she had moved into a management position which took her away from finance and brought her into the realm of human resource management, which she described as "employees coming into my office and crying about coworkers." At the time of the merger she was getting ready to give birth to her twins as well, and the thought of having three children in daycare while she worked was not as appealing as the work was before she had a family. She had entered into a time in her life that was getting complicated. So she accepted a retirement package. She describes it as, "I was getting a year and a half salary and, it just made more sense for me to take that package and even if I thought, maybe I do want to work after my maternity, I still come out ahead financially, and I could possibly look for a job elsewhere." She never did look for a job elsewhere, and is content as a stay-at-home parent with a small accounting business that she runs out of her basement.

Heidi and safety.

After completing her studies in music education, Heidi attempted to find work as a substitute teacher in the local elementary schools with little success. She said, "I graduated from the university march 1994 and then within the first 2 years started getting some sub positions and some short-term positions and things like that, and then generally got frustrated with the lack of

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employment." The difficulty in becoming a permanent teacher is through having to pay your

dues first as a substitute teacher and then as a term teacher, each of which are based on the need

of the school (no need, no work for non-permanent teachers). Heidi had to look for something

more secure.

In her attempt to become a successful real estate agent Heidi realized that a substantial

financial investment was required. In the end, in Heidi's words, "I didn't have any money to put

in, so it didn't go." Once again, her attempt to create a successful career was not working, but an

opportunity presented itself to substitute teach again. As Heidi put it, "there was a call for subs

which gave me a little more hope that there might be something out there and I started subbing

again, so I've actually been teaching fulltime for, this is my 8th year."

Her first term position was another step towards work security, and Heidi was excited

about it. "This particular elementary school had a wonderful setup and I was thrilled, it was my

first full year gig although I knew it wasn't a permanent contract at all." Soon after starting there

she noticed that the principal was spending an unexpectedly large amount of time in her

classroom doing observation. She was used to this from the music education program, so she did

not think too much about it at the time. She was confused when she realized that it seemed to be

excessive. "He questioned everything I did and I couldn't understand what he was saying to me

most of the time, and I just didn't understand why." Her sense of feeling safe was being

compromised through her confusion about the principal. In her words,

> I kept saying that I don't understand what you mean. And he thought I was, and he said,
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> are you stupid? And right there that was when I knew that I was in trouble. … I think it
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> was probably into October that it started to happen, and it was probably mid-October to

late October that I was coming home in tears. … So I realized I think I'm being harassed,

and I started coming home from school very stressed out, and crying every day.

Initially he seemed to be "very friendly" to her, but later she found out that "he would make

advances, sexual advances to the staff members, it was always women too, there was no men

involved in this."

As a new teacher, Heidi was insecure about telling other teachers what was happening, so

she endured the harassment. "I was scared to talk to the other staff members because I was still

so new and I hadn't really made any major bonds there yet." He would harass and embarrass her

in front of the children in her class.

> I remember he came in my class one day, twenty kids sitting in my class, and we were
>
> playing a game or something, and he came in and he started going down one side of me
>
> and up the other, in front of my kids. So [there was] a lot of harassment. And certainly
>
> not what I felt I deserved.

As these experiences continued Heidi struggled to make sense of it in a way that she could keep

her anxiety level down. She admitted to herself, "really deep down he was just being a bully."

She also became good at being perpetually prepared. "I never knew, I was always looking at the

door seeing if he was coming into my classroom.… I started realizing it was all just basically

manipulative, because I guess I was immature and young about it and I just said that I needed to

do what he wanted me to do, I need to keep this job." She also said, "I'd avoid the staffroom"

and thus might have slowed down the development of relationships with other teachers which

might have helped end the harassment sooner.

Throughout the harassment she did not quit. She admitted to coming close however. "I

felt that I'm new in this career, I love it, I love what I do, but I just felt like he was actually

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tearing me apart so much that I was ready to leave the whole thing and just walk away."

Eventually the end of the harassment started when she found another teacher who was in the same situation.

> So in the end I finally caved and I came in after a lunch meeting and I briefly spoke to another staff member, and she could see that I was crying. It was like lunchtime or something like that, I came in to get like a drink or something like that in the cafeteria, and she said what's wrong, and I said I can't talk about it. You have to talk about it, you got another half day to go … I said I'm having a problem with a staff member and it is to the point where I feel like I'm being just harassed, everyday all day, and I don't even want to be here, and I told her who it was, and she said you have to talk to so-and-so, which was another teacher, and apparently this other teacher was going through the exact same thing I was, but for a lot longer, she's been there for like 12 years, and it had been going on every year.

This conversation was the beginning of the end for the harassment. They called the school board and "he got into a lot of trouble, he certainly didn't lose his job but once I came out and started talking about it this other woman came out and started talking about it, and lo and behold, people started coming out of the woodwork. More and more people had been harassed by this man in the past." Not only did Heidi save herself, she initiated an event that saved a number of teachers who were secretly all in the same situation.

In her next term position Heidi was initially careful. This is how she put it, "of course my guard was up and I felt … I didn't want to stand there, [I stayed] under the radar, really low, especially with the administration because I didn't know the administration yet." Because of her previous harassment experience she was able to help a teacher in the new school to deal with a

similar form of harassment. Heidi was very happy to have helped this other teacher feel safer in

her work as a teacher.

Growing up, Heidi found security and strength in her relationship with her parents. On

her father, Heidi said,

> I just know that he would always try to encourage me to try to, there are certain things
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> that you have to expect to have happen: how you deal with them is up to you, but you've
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> got so many people around you that can deal with it with you, and he kept encouraging
>
> me to do that so a lot of strength came from my family.

At the time of the harassment Heidi was strong. She did not quit, enduring the harassment for

two months. She spoke with her parents about the situation and felt better after doing so, but her

marriage was failing which made it that much harder to be strong. She had to face harassment at

work, and then a mean husband at home. She reported,

> I would have liked to have a stronger marriage so that when I went and had to deal with
>
> this crap at school I could be just a little bit more emotionally strong to bear it more … if
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> I had had a stronger work environment, more positive there, I would have come home
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> and been able to deal with what was going on, I don't think anything would have fixed
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> our marriage problems, certainly wasn't that. But I certainly would have felt a little bit
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> stronger about it, more positive about it, more patient about it.

Heidi's work experiences, in those first few years of substituting, real estate, and term

teaching, all lacked security. The amount she substituted was based upon the need of the schools

and the supply of substitute teachers, so as a new graduate she did not get many calls. Her

failure as a real estate agent was related to her not investing the money she needed to (but did not

have) in order to promote herself to get more deals. And being harassed certainly removed any

sense of safety from her first term teaching position. At the time of the interview she was a

permanent high school music teacher, and finally felt safe.

Hugh and safety.

Hugh, like other participants, had a different view of his work as a younger person than

he did at the time of our interview. As he puts it,

When I was younger before, like during university and high school and stuff, I've had

lots of part time jobs, and usually that resulted in some sort of dissatisfaction because we

just got bored with it, and I only did the job in the first place because I was a teenager,

young adult, and needed the money. … If you're a young person and student, high

school student or whatever, and you need the money because you got to put gas in the car

and pay for school dances and things like that, well then, of course, go ahead.

Work, in this case, provides the financial means to maintain that quality of living. At the time of

the interview Hugh was nearing the end of a two decade career in the military, with very

different life and family circumstances. He was married, had four children and another on the

way, vehicles, a mortgage, not to mention the hockey, dance and music fees he paid regularly.

His financial needs were much higher, and as a musician he was happy to be employed as a

professional musician in the military. He expressed this financial security by stating that "in the

military we make a good wage."

Safety, for Hugh, took other forms, and he was not feeling as safe as he was about this

pay. In the first place, he occasionally found himself in a difficult position as bandmaster. Every

few years he would get a new commanding officer (or "boss" as he puts it) and the outgoing one

would be posted to different duties. Sometimes his boss would be in favor of the band and know

how to use it, and other times Hugh would have to help the boss understand the benefits of the

band. He said, "[each time] we get a new supervisor or a new boss, we have to educate them about what we do and it can be a difficult situation because sometimes when there is a change the new person coming in may not have the same interest in promoting the band as the previous person." When the boss did not appreciate the band, engagements would be reduced, the budget would be reduced, volunteers would not volunteer, and the band would be in danger of failure. Hugh took it upon himself to ensure that this did not happen.

> In the second place Hugh was being harassed.

> Most recently I've found myself in a situation where I've been harassed and slandered and my boss is potentially going to have to answer to that as well as allegations of abuse of authority. So that's been very dissatisfying. It's resulted in a transfer. It's resulted in a lot of stress, which is carried over into my family life and my work itself.

Hugh does not feel safe because his boss seems to have abused the hierarchical system of the military and has made Hugh do something completely unnecessary regardless of the impact it has on Hugh's life.

> Right now there is no immediate plan to replace me with another musician, which ties in with the claims of harassment because I sort of maintain that it ties in with my supervisor's appreciation for what we do, he assumes that if I leave, and they don't get a replacement, the band will just carry on its own, and another band member will just fill in.

As a member of the military, in this hierarchical system, he unfortunately has to follow orders and accept the posting, or quit. If he wants to redress the posting he first must accept it.

> Hugh is unable to quit due to his financial obligations and his anticipated need for the expected pension when he retires.

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The financial impact of quitting would be too strong at this point to have that as a

solution … I have another year-and-a-half of time that I have to serve to complete my

contract, at which time I could receive a pension, and if I quit now, I would lose a

pension and financially and economically with a family to support and a mortgage and

cars to pay for and children activities and things like that, it's, the sacrifice of having to

stick it out in perhaps an unpleasant situation is, the sacrifice is one I'm willing to make

for a year-and-a-half.

To add to the situation, he cannot anticipate what the results of his redress of the posting and the

harassment complaints will be. "With the situation I'm in at work with my immediate supervisor

and the ensuing harassment complaints and charges of abuse of authority it's hard for me to tell

exactly where I'll be until those issues are resolved."

Employment, according to Hugh, is necessary to provide financial security.

It's important to have a job or employment so that you can provide, you can, if you have

a family or not that you can keep yourself warm in the winter and you can put food on the

table and financially or economically look after yourself or whoever else you are

responsible for.

He did not believe, however, that one must accomplish this by going out and getting any job. In

order to sustain a career it has to be something the worker is interested in, or in Hugh's case,

something the worker loves (performance music). His advice is to "find something you like to

do, and find a way to make money doing it." The easier it is for a worker to do that job, the more

sustainable, and thus safer, it is. "If there's a way that you could, financially and economically

support yourself from sunbathing, we probably wouldn't consider that a job, but it would

accomplish the mission."

Tammy and safety.

Tammy had worked as a hospital nurse and a travelling nurse in which she was well-paid with benefits and had job security. After she burned out, quit, and ran out of money she decided to re-qualify for RN work, during which time she worked as a PCW, in which she admits, "I was working below my level. And I was working in a position, sort of maid/worker for not very much money. I don't know how people survive on nine dollars an hour." She could have worked at the local grocery store while she was retraining, but "[she] wasn't interested in getting into that system, because I knew that I would, eventually, in the short term, have better benefits and better pay and better time off, on the short-term" meaning that she would be paid for her vacation rather than bank it, and she had flexibility to choose when and how many shifts to work. On the down side, she had no benefits and no sick days. In her words, "at the job I was working, I didn't have paid sick days, I got a percentage of my check was vacation pay, and I had no vacation, no paid time off, no benefits, just work and get money and that's it." On the issue of having no sick leave she admitted that "it was quite this disheartening sometimes to know that if you called in sick, because sometimes you have to call in sick, that you weren't going to get paid for it." So she gave up the security of a guaranteed income (whether she was sick or working) for the flexibility of being able to choose her shifts, an option she preferred so that she could spent time with her mother when she came to visit.

Unfortunately, not having a guaranteed shift has its downside as well.

One of the schedulers left and I had a new schedule, but she had made a mistake and just regenerated my schedule for next month, so it was a repeat of the previous month, and none of my shifts existed, and there's no recourse for me, I just went without work for a

week because they can't always produce work out of nowhere, and I'm just out of luck,

and I lost a week's pay.

In this firm this situation was not uncommon. Tammy noted, "I don't think they pay well across the board, they had a big staff turnaround as far as schedulers went, and receptionists, and things like that. The whole organization was a bit in chaos most of the time."

Tammy equates safety with higher pay, and to a lesser extent higher position (for example, RN vs. PCW). Her advice to other PCWs considering going back to school was

If you consider doing that at least consider becoming an LPN because it is just a little tiny

bit more money and your least recognized for getting a better education.

Tammy herself was much safer when she finally achieved her recertification as an RN. She stayed with the same firm but just changed jobs, and found herself to be more satisfied as a result.

I went from $9-$30 an hour in the day, which is actually what I'm making right now per

hour, however I have benefits, sick time, you name it. Vacation. Security. The only

reason I stated that company was because they had, in general, treated me very well, they

gave me her car for the summer, but it's only because they knew they would be keeping

me as an RN, I was treated better than the average nine dollar per hour worker.

Tracy's temporary exchange of a secure wage for the flexibility to spend time with her mother almost backfired when the scheduler did not give her any shifts, but it enabled her to spend as much time studying for the recertification as she needed. As the firm drew from a smaller supply of RNs than it did of PCWs, Tracy was treated very well when she moved "up," which contributed to her contentment in her new position as an RN.

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Venus and safety.

Venus has dual safety themes as they pertain to her work. The first is financial security and the second is the safety and well-being of her children. As a geologist, while she was still married, her pay was high. As she puts it, "at that time were both working full time as geologists, we had lots of money, and even at that time in the late 80s or so I get $50 an hour, I won't come close to that in pharmacy." But then her marriage ended and she was forced to make some choices about financial security.

> I had no family at all anywhere but Nova Scotia, no money really to pay for sitters or anything at that time because things weren't worked out financially after he left … not many options were presented to me … other than stay at home.

She chose her children over financial security and stayed with them, living off of her retirement plan.

While she was still in Calgary with the children she decided to go back to university to take courses. Although she had started thinking about whether she would return to Geology or start a new career, she loved to study and learn, so returning to university seemed to be more of a hobby than vocational training. "When I went back to the University of Calgary I used [retirement plan] money to pay for that, so we certainly went from having anything we wanted to have been very careful of what we spent." When she was in pharmacy school her money management was very similar. "I found myself very conscious about the cost of it and I wouldn't skip the class for anything more as I would have when I was a teenager, so certainly a lot more appreciation for school and the cost." She always seemed to know how much money they had, how much was coming in, and could wisely use that to maintain a satisfactory quality of life for her and the children.

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The divorce itself made the largest dent in her financial well-being. As she said, "my

legal fees probably hit $100,000. Everything I had in the house would pay the lawyers, so we

guess it left me financially to where I was when I was 21." With the impending need to address

the dwindling assets off of which they lived, Venus had to decide whether to return to Geology

or pursue something else. The problem with going back to Geology was that she had been out of

it for a few years, during which time it had become more computerized, and she felt that she

would need extensive training to bring her up-to-date. The money, however, was very appealing.

> It's crossed my mind I must say a few times when I worked part time in community
>
> pharmacy and I was thinking I wonder if there's an oil company because I'd probably be
>
> making more as a geology technician that I would be making working extra shifts in
>
> pharmacy. Pharmacists don't make a lot of money compared to geologists, nowhere near
>
> it. I think somebody in geology with the years of her of the experience I would've had
>
> would've been three and $300,000 plus stock options. When I was working I had a
>
> company car. And expense accounts and I traveled. I was president of the society with
>
> about 600 members. Just a totally different [job], wearing dresses in high heels and
>
> eating lunch leisurely all the time. It was totally, totally different world than pharmacy in
>
> many ways. I would dearly love just have one job or I could say this is enough money to
>
> support us.

Regardless of what she did, it had to provide financial security for her children.

At the time of the interview Venus was working three pharmacy jobs (one full-time

hospital and two part-time) and was still supporting her children.

> Working at the IWK is just not enough for four teenagers. My youngest daughter is in
>
> grade twelve, and university coming up, my oldest boy just finished a degree and he

wants to go back to law school. One job at the [hospital] or at [the drugstore] just

wouldn't be enough.

Throughout the interview Venus spoke highly about her children and expressed repeatedly in

many ways that her purpose was to keep them safe and secure, which she seemed to be

accomplishing.

She was committed to providing this security for her children for as long as she needed

to. About the future, this is was Venus had to say: "Once I get the kids through school I might

see about just having the one job. I would love to take more courses at university as well, it will

happen but I'll be like 65 when it does." It is apparent that safety for Venus is about providing it

for her children.

Victor and safety.

As a musician, Victor has experienced a different sense of safety. Safety takes the usual

form of financial security, but Victor also shows how doing his job well (to keep it safe and not

have to look for another one) is a way for him to protect his passion, which is performing

onstage. In other words, if he does a good job as a waiter and keeps that job safe, he can earn

enough to afford the time to work as a performing musician (keeping that job safe as well). In

addition, Victor is a stay-at-home parent with no opportunity to earn a living while he is with his

children. Victor describes his current work situation as, "I'm currently playing in a band that is

more of a part-time thing because now I'm a full stay at home Dad and I do a couple shifts a

week at a restaurant that I used to work at 25 years ago and I also do some recording of online

safety manuals." It seems to be an intricate balance that he is maintaining.

As a waiter Victor has to be successful in order to keep his not only the job and the financial security it provides, but also to keep himself satisfied. He describes it in the following way.

> As a waiter you have to perform. If you say [very monotone] "hi what do you want," you're not going to get a tip, and you're not waiting on tables for love of it. You're showing up at the bar to play for 80 bucks a night for the love of it, but when you go to the Bar to serve tables you doing it because you want to make a couple hundred bucks, or a hundred bucks, you're doing it because you want to make some money, so you have to perform. It's kind of the same and so, the satisfaction you get, you never leave there on a high like you would from a gig but you do leave satisfied if you didn't screw anything up and nobody had to get the wrong steak, or, forgot their salad, or, and you didn't piss anybody off, you didn't let anybody piss you off, even though they might have tried. You just got it right, you made some money, and go home, that's satisfying on any level.

At the time of our interview Victor was at the end of a problem with a club manager. Victor and the manager had spoken months earlier about a performance and the manager gave Victor the "go ahead" to book musicians and gear and set up the performance, but the verbal contract was not as secure as Victor had hoped.

> [Two years ago] I booked all the entertainment. Because they wanted me I booked myself one night out of the three nights. This year it comes again and I wanted to do it again. I call them up and they say it would be great. …I'd like you to book it, and I said listen, if you don't want my band I understand, we've been playing a lot at the club, so maybe you want something different, so he said we'll talk about it. I went to the meeting and he said we want you for Wednesday night. We boosted up the band, big 10 piece

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horn section, it was rocking. … I get everybody lined up, it's done. … Months later they call and say "… a couple of people been saying maybe it's time for change." No it's not, because you told me to go book this, I called a bunch of musicians, I called another band, and another band plus a PA for the week. I did what you asked me to do, and your exact words were we want you for Wednesday night. … my exact words were, "look man, I've been booking this club way before you were the manager here and I'll be involved in this way after you're gone, so, … you have to do the right thing here, and the right thing is to honor your verbal contract. … So he said okay but that's it, so I won't be playing there anymore.

For many workers aging holds retirement and a pension, but for Victor there is no pension and there might not be a retirement. Victor has been a musician for his entire adult life, and he is already seeing how he has evolved through it. He is worried about what will happen when he is older and his voice weakens.

When it goes away it's going to be a real drag and I'll have to reinvent myself somehow maybe just doing some sort of fun jazz gigs or playing congas, because my voice, I won't be the strong and virile front guy when I'm 65, well you know maybe I will, James Brown was, I certainly won't be sought after by bars and clubs, I'm going to have to go and find my gigs and I'll do that you know maybe 2 to three times a year as opposed to three times a month. It used to be two or three times a week now is to three times a month … at this point it is a huge part of my life and it adds to my overall well-being and mental health and physical health … when I'm gigging I feel better, I just feel better.

For musicians like Victor there is little job security. He is relatively successful but still has to fight with management over bookings. He has to work another job to earn enough money so that

he can still do his gigs. In the end he will have no retirement or pension to look forward to. But he still does it because he loves it and, in his own words, "when I'm gigging I feel better, I just feel better."

Summary of safety.

Financial security was the most common concern, under the category of safety, for participants. Every participant referred to a lack of financial security in some form, including not having any work at all; not having enough work; having pay reduced; and not having a high enough wage to maintain a minimally acceptable quality of life. Other breaches of safety that contributed to dissatisfaction included not fitting in, not knowing how to get a job, inadequate management, unexpected changes such as mergers, harassment, and having a boss that doesn't understand what you do. The scope of safety-related forms of dissatisfaction is wide and spans money, management and personality factors.

Related forms of underemployment.

Although Slack and Jensen's (2004) low-income workers and discouraged workers, as well as Livingstone's (1999c) structural unemployment directly address salary (or a complete lack thereof), underemployment with respect to financial security can be defined in other ways. Cecelia experienced underemployment when her employer changed the tip system to a tip pool and reduced her take-home pay as well as made her wait until payday to receive it. Heidi did not have the investment capital to viably start a career as a real estate agent. This is similar to the talent-use gap (Livingstone, 1999c) form of underemployment, but with financial capital rather than education. Other new forms of underemployment related to safety that emerged from this data include inadequate management, uncomfortable work environment, lack of independence, and harassment.

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Workers want to feel valued.

Description of value.

Value, in terms of worker dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, relates to those situation in which the worker is treated with low respect, discriminated against, harassed, bullied, or cannot find support or mechanisms in place at work that would be in place if the employer valued the workers. For example, some workers might feel that employers who offer training and opportunities for advancement are showing that they value the workers, whereas employers who do not offer these things, forget to schedule shifts, or change the payment system from straight tips to a tip pool are showing that valuing employees is not a priority.

Value also extends to how much a worker values themselves at work, doing their job. For example, Adam will not "sell credit cards" and Danny prefers work in which he is helping people. As it is his preference, he feels that his value is increased when he does this work. Musicians feel valued through the applause that is a response to their performances.

Participants and value.

Adam and value.

Adam found himself repeatedly working in jobs with low expectations for his performance. In particular, his work at Statistics Canada was dissatisfying "because they only expected a mediocre performance." Adam wanted to work at his credential level but was unable to find suitable work. As a result he was working as a bus driver at the time of the interview. He described this work as follows, "I like driving a bus, I feel like not only am I keeping the kids safe and getting them back and forth from school, but I'm actually trying to relate to them as real human beings and I have a captive audience for 15 minutes." The value of this work was not only through keeping them safe, but relating to them.

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Adam wanted work in which he could be of value to the environment, community and the people in it. He described it by saying,

> for me I guess there's a question of really helping, how to help other people, what would be the best way to help other people, and that's all I really want to do, is be of service to other people and I can do that at home by cooking and cleaning.

For Adam value did not necessarily come from other people. Adam knew what was valuable, and that is what he wanted to be able to provide. He wanted a job that would allow him to do this.

> I think the purpose for me of employment is to basically do something physical, because we have our hands and our body, like for me the classic example is a gardener, where through your own efforts you create paradise that wouldn't normally be there, you know, a small garden of Eden through your ability to nurture plants but also through your awareness of how nature works and bringing out the best in nature. … I think the point of going to work is to make a difference, and do something that helps the world.

Cameron and value.

When Cameron worked as a fisherman he had great financial security, but it left him feeling worthless. In his words, "I had the world by the tail, and everybody wanted to be who I was, so to speak. And I felt so entirely empty inside, just like there's got to be more to life." Fishing was hard work and it offered him no reward beyond the financial security it provided.

Cameron was always a hard worker, in fishing, Divinity school, carpentry, and in his work as a pastor. Cameron felt that "it is a really negative character trait to be lazy" and he instilled value in himself with his hard work. Hard work, to Cameron, was important for so many reasons. Cameron described hard work in the following way:

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It's good to work, we need to work. It's very important, it … keeps us healthy and it does

give us a sense of purpose. I've struggled with my purpose in the whole thing, and work

kind of plays a part in defining us, no matter who you are.

Hard work is valuable in so many ways, for Cameron.

Cecelia and value.

Of all the participants in this study, Cecelia held the most minimum wage, low

investment, low value jobs, including working at the Sushi Bar and at the call center. As a

waitress Cecelia felt as if employers held little or no value for her.

In the food and beverage industry a lot of [dissatisfaction] came from feeling like a

servant, which I guess you are if you're a waitress, but a lack of respect from the owners,

in which I worked for, not getting my fair share of tip, doing a lot of work for little

satisfaction.

On top of this view of working as a waitress, her position in the sushi bar offered new ways of

de-valuing her. "Everyone else was Japanese, working there, and they would always talk

Japanese around me, not really explain to me the kinds of things that were going on." Being

excluded made her feel more like they did not value her as a coworker.

After leaving her work at the sushi bar and being hired at the call center, her hopes for

showing how valuable she was were quashed. To Cecelia the job was too easy. In fact, she

stated that, "a monkey could have done the [call center] job." She did find value in her work

there because of her personality. She valued her own ability to talk to people. "My ability to

diffuse situations, what term did they use, de-escalate customers, I was pretty good at that, just

because of the calm way I talk."

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Working in the large bookstore chain selling books was another position in which she attempted to gain value through her interpersonal skills, but once again she became dissatisfied and quit. She said, "in all of the jobs that I had, and I worked for a large bookstore chain as well, for just about a year, and in none of those jobs did I ever feel that I was appreciated."

It was not until her work as a research assistant that she felt genuinely appreciated and valued. She felt that she accomplished this through "just working your ass off to show that you can do it." At the time of the interview she was working in this position as a research assistant. When I asked her what the purpose of work was, she responded in the following way.

> I'd say for external recognition, and especially that I have so much more invested in it now, because I have been in school for the past 5 years. Knowing that I made the right decision in investing so much time and effort in studying a particular thing and actually knowing that I'm using it and I'm getting to use it doing my dream job.

In this work she had opportunities to work independently without suspicion from her supervisor that she was goofing off. She had proven her value through hard work and the demonstration of her skills. Her reward was the following,

> If I want to work from home on a day that my kids are a little bit off, or sick, that I can do that and not have to justify why I have to do that, and if I am working from home that I actually am working from home and having her completely trust in the work that I'm doing.

She had finally found a job in which her skills were recognized and she was valued.

Danny and value.

The strongest sense of value that Danny found in all of his work was through his ability to help. He said on numerous occasions that as a nurse, or as a firefighter, he "was able to help

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people." In his work as a geriatric nurse he was used to feeling valued. According to Danny, "a lot of my job was comforting [the patients] before they died," which brought him a sense of value. Danny felt that in this work he had "found a job that includes more of the things I enjoy in trying to help people. I.e.: changing some old, confused ladies diaper. I'm sure I made her feel better and in doing so made me feel good knowing I've helped her."

As a pilot Danny insisted, "I would have been helping people … in the military side of things I felt like a would have been certainly helping my country, serving my country." Unfortunately his work as a pilot never went beyond that of part-time instructor.

In the end, his work as a firefighter left him with feelings of security, freedom and value. He described firefighting as, "it satisfies my current life situation. I am able to spend lots of time with my family, it pays the bills, I feel appreciated and respected by the community and my friends and I always look forward to going to work."

Demi and value.

Demi felt value in herself through her work ethic and commitment to her job. She described herself by stating, "I was very diligent and did what had to be done regardless of the hours. I was very committed." She felt that her company recognized this, valued her as a result, and rewarded her. "The company actually pay for my education." Demi had proven her loyalty to the company through her commitment.

> I was actually offered a job while I was going to school and they were paying for it, and I
> turned it down to stay with the company thinking that doors would open up for me there,
> and it ended up working in my best interest to stay there.

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Demi had a very health attitude about being valued at work and felt that being valued should be shared with coworkers. She insisted that "you're only as good as the people you work with, or work for you. It's important to have knowledgeable people on staff."

Heidi and value.

Heidi's experiences focus on not being valued as a teacher by her principal. She was harassed for at least two months, during which time she suffered frequent criticisms and insults. "He would criticize all my techniques/tactics and the way, my strategies. He would question how I was actually teaching the kids, he doesn't know anything about music and he made that very clear from the day I was interviewed." His degrading treatment of her was not limited to criticizing her. "He would call me, he called me into the office daily after school, he kept me there anywhere between 15 minutes to an hour, grilling me, accusing me of not being a teacher, accusing me of having a fake degree, how could I possibly have a degree from a university?" Heidi also remembers, "he came in my class one day, twenty kids sitting in my class, and we were playing a game or something, and he came in and he started going down one side of me and up the other, in front of my kids."

Throughout these months of harassment Heidi was also experiencing a failing marriage, which eventually ended in divorce. She describes it by stating, "by that time in our marriage I recognized that I was being bullied and harassed … and abused by my husband, … that took me a long time to recognize because I felt … why would someone treat me like that?" Heidi had endured a lot of negativity through the harassment, and she tried very hard to persist. "I felt that, I'm new in this career, I love it, I love what I do, but I just felt like he was actually tearing me apart so much that I was ready to leave the whole thing and just walk away."

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The thing that probably contributed the most to her surviving the harassment was the value that she held for herself. She loved to teach and felt she was good at it. In response to a good lesson that she had taught, "I feel it was successful because of the way I taught it, and the energy I put into it, and because it was me, and the actual activity I chose" rather than the principal's instructions and criticisms about Heidi's methods. Heidi was reassured of her value to the students' parents when they would tell her, "oh you were so great, my child loved you, and he just learned so much."

Eventually she found another teacher who had been going through the same experience. Through their discussion of the similar situations Heidi realized that she was valuable and that the treatment she was enduring was in no way appropriate. They teamed up and took action against the principal who did not lose his job, but stopped harassing teachers. She spent the rest of the year teaching and not having to defend herself.

In another term teaching position, in another school, she had started to make friend with another teacher who was experiencing a similar situation. When she realized that her new friend was being harassed she decided to help.

> The first time I witnessed it was with one of the teacher that I actually had made a bit of a bond with, and I went right up to her and I said, and I told her everything I said we have to talk, I said meet me after school in my classroom and we talked for probably an hour and I said I saw this today, and I said I'm going to tell you something that happened two years ago. I told her everything. And I said what's happening here is exactly the same thing I dealt with, you can't allow this to happen, let me tell you what, I was so excited to help her, because I felt I could help, and I just knew how important it was for me to have somebody to connect with when I was going through it … I felt like I helped and in the

end she did the same, she went the same route as I did, she contacted the school board

members and the union reps and whatnot, and the same lady that came to see me came to

see them, and she was fired actually, so that was the result of her actions.

Ironically, the situation in which she was treated as if she had no value became an opportunity

for Heidi to show her value through the help she gave others to overcome similar harassment

situations. "So, I felt, after it was all over with, that I helped more people get through this

[harassment] because it had been going on for years."

Hugh and value.

As a young man Hugh, like most young people, had the opportunity to work in a job that

required a minimal level of abilities to be successful. In his words, "I worked as a dishwasher in

a Chinese restaurant, and so really there are no qualifications." This work did not involve much

investment, and he only took it because he needed "pocket money."

As a musician for much of his life, Hugh became accustomed to the appreciation that

audiences give for performances that they like. This helped him feel valued as a musician. He

said, "There are a few things that I find really satisfying. In no particular order, the applause is

big, and I think most musicians would probably have that same answer." Probably due in part to

this satisfaction, Hugh became a professional musician in the Canadian military, and after years

as a clarinet player he eventually accepted a position as bandmaster of a volunteer band.

The military volunteer band is made up of military personnel whose secondary duty is

musician and civilian personnel who volunteer. Hugh noted the difference between his

experiences in a professional military band and his volunteer band:

In a professional band, in a military environment, everybody's there because they have to

be there and they have to do what they're told and, whereas in my ensemble nobody has

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to be there so it's a choice that they make to come and in our community with the

volunteer bandmasters we sort of have a mantra that the volunteers, their satisfaction,

they speak with their feet, so if they're not satisfied they're not going to show up.

It was Hugh's responsibility to attract new members and keep the returning members satisfied so

that they continue to return. He was successful at this, and grew the band to capacity while he

was its bandmaster. He noted,

It is personally satisfying that they're coming out and I've been told by some and I

speculate with others that they come out and they keep coming out because of the

environment that I've provided for them. … it's self-satisfying knowing that they're

coming out because of, they're satisfied with the job that I do. … they respect what I'm

doing and so they allow themselves to fill a subordinate role.

The value he felt through providing a satisfying experience to the musician of the band faded in

light of the difficulties he faced each time a new commanding officer arrived. Although all of

them had experienced military bands before, not many of them knew what to do with their own

band. Hugh's job therefore included convincing incoming commanders of the value of the band.

The solution is to try and educate the people we work for on what we do and the benefits

and if they're reluctant then to be more adamant about it. Invite them to engagements so

they can see the benefit of what we're doing and essentially what we consistently have to

do is sell our own product to make the hierarchy believe that it's a valuable resource

Tammy and value.

As a PCW and former RN Tammy knew there was a difference between how each level

was treated, but she had to work as a PCW to really appreciate that PCWs were treated as if they

has no value. In her experiences as a PCW, "sometimes it was satisfying sometimes it wasn't. It

depended on, when you work in a nursing home there's very little thanks. It's very hard work."

The poor treatment came mainly from the nurses and nurse managers. In one situation the nurse

manager caught her sitting on the floor and addressed her in a way that matched how little she

was valued,

> One of the girls I was working with, the nursing home employee, sat on the floor to chart,
>
> and I sat on the floor next to her, and up comes the nurse manager, or the head of nursing,
>
> and she just looked at us with a very dirty look on her face, and she never said hello or
>
> anything, and she just looked at us and said "up." Like I was a dog.

When she eventually achieved her RN certification she stayed with that company because

she felt that she was valued there. She describes it as,

> I went from $9-$30 an hour in the day, which is actually what I'm making right now per
>
> hour, however I have benefits, sick time, you name it: vacation, security. The only
>
> reason I stayed at that company was because they had, in general, treated me very well,
>
> they gave me a car for the summer, but it's only because they knew they would be
>
> keeping me as an RN, I was treated better than the average nine dollar per hour worker.

Tracy, through the experiences that her previous work as an RN created for her, was able to go

beyond her duties as a PCW to help some of the patients. One gentleman suffering from a foot

wound was facing amputation. Tammy was familiar with the wound and, in the past, had treated

it differently that amputation, and decided to advocate for the patient. The first attempt made no

difference, but the second was successful, and the man kept his foot.

> I suggested to the doctor in a note and he continued with the [amputation plans] but not
>
> the best practice. Now this week I rephrased the note in a very sweet way, "perhaps can

we try this," and he said to the client, "oh I never thought about that, and he agreed, and

he ordered the treatment that I suggested.

For Tammy it was important to care for the patient in any way that she was able, and through

these actions she set herself as valuable in her work. As a PCW she was restricted by her station

and unable to do things that required a licensed RN. There were other things that she could do to

make patients more comfortable, such as in the following situation:

Sometimes I would do things like fry parsnips and butter for him, or little special things,

or my mom brought meat tarts from England over one time. He had traveled all over the

world. And I brought him a mincemeat tart, and just look on his face, like I brought him

a pot of gold, the same look on his face, so those kinds of things were satisfying.

In spite of her efforts to carry out the best care that she was able, there were still situations that

she could not. In particular, the Chicago hospital in which she could not find someone to help

her move the spinal injury patient.

I would have patients with broken backs, brand-new, and you're not allowed to turn them

by their by yourself, and I would ask the regular staff if they could help me to turn my

patient, and they would say no, and I had never been anywhere where so many would say

no. It was always I help you, you help me and we get through the day. They didn't

negotiate it was just no.

This was frustrating for Tammy, and it was in this hospital that she finally burned out and quit.

The combination of working very hard with not being able to provide a reasonable level of

quality care to her patients added stress to her work, contributed to her dissatisfaction, and she

found that the only freedom she had left was to quit.

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Venus and value.

When she first entered the field of Geology Venus had a high salary and lots of freedom as a result. Aside from the special arrangements that had to be made whenever she, the only woman in the firm, went into the field, she thought she was content.

In the beginning, I would say in the mid to late 1970's, it was a little bit difficult just because it was such a guy's world. When we would go in and do field work in northern Alberta or Saskatchewan on the well site it was very difficult. Everybody there lived in trailers and camps set up and I'd be the only girl there and it was very difficult for the company to accommodate me in that situation. It was very awkward and frustrating. … it was a just hard to accommodate girls at that time.

Then she married another Geologist and started having a family.

Venus was very happy to be a mother. In her words,

I got married and in very short order, within five years, had four kids. So at that time, after they were born, I did a few consulting projects, part-time work, that kind of thing, but by the time the fourth baby came along, I was really winding down in the career. … I wanted them desperately and as soon as possible and as many as possible and I didn't know though at the time when I had them that my career would take second place, everything would be not the same passion as an interest as the children would be for me.

She found her value in her role as a mother. At the time of the interview her first child was in his twenties and she was still doing everything she could to care for them. In the early years she stayed home with them and lived off of her retirement plan. Lately she was working three jobs to ensure their financial security. Venus found her value in her role of parent.

Victor and value.

Value to a musician comes mainly in the form of appreciation from the audience for creating something of value to its members. In a sense it is a transaction where something valuable (the music) is given and its value to the audience is expressed in applause. Victor has spent all of his adult life making these transactions, although sometimes it was harder than others.

After playing with his first successful band for a number of years Victor was feeling that he was not as valuable to the other members as in the earlier years. This assumed the form of his difficulty in his attempts to keep the band progressing. The other front man of the band had different ideas about how to evolve the band and Victor felt as if they were always butting heads.

When it came to the work we didn't agree on things so it became, you know, I have my ideals and I thought I was right they had theirs some of them agreed with me and some of them didn't and we get to the point where it was like beating your head against the wall. I felt that the band needed to do certain things and make certain changes in order to keep on progressing and becoming more successful in writing music and expanding the band a bit more and other people didn't agree with my way of getting there so it became a very tense situation.

Adding to this disapproval were the problems that Victor was having with his health. At times he would experience pain in his back that would not go away, and sometimes he felt that his co-front man did not care about Victor nor his back trouble. According to Victor,

I also have arthritis in my spine my back and I'd be crawling on the stage sitting in a chair and then taking whatever drugs I had to take to medicate, over-the-counter painkillers, just to get through the gig. Then there would be one time I couldn't do it and

I'd just go home and he would say, "you can't go home"… there was no sympathy at all about my physical condition which was debilitating at times, it was very painful and still is to this day. … There would be weeks where I was beyond … his insensitivity drew us apart even further.

This situation did not improve and probably contributed significantly to Victor leaving the band.

One of the lessons Victor took from this experience was to not always try to win the argument: to choose his battles sometimes and to let things go other times. As a waiter his success depends directly on how pleasantly and competently he serves the clientele. There is no room to stand up to someone complaining for, what he would feel is, no good reason. And his problems, whatever they are, cannot interfere with his work. He explains,

You have to be up, … no matter how you feel when you're driving to work you have to get along with people whether you like them or not. You have to stay positive through a whole bunch of crap because if you don't, you fail. … you have to win at work, you have to be the winner, and I'm not always the winner, so that's how I feel with the band having an argument with somebody on stage, and after, I feel like I've lost. Any work, the crappy jobs and the jobs you love, you have to win, you have to win, and by winning it means you kept a positive attitude and you've done what you came to do as well as you can do it,

With waiting tables, Victor does not necessarily value the work or the clientele. He values the financial security it provides, and to a larger extent he values the opportunities this financial security provides him so that he can play his music. Waiting tables is like performing music. The difference is if the financial security was not an issue, he would never wait tables again but still do every gig.

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As a father Victor found more value in his life. He describes parenting in these terms, "my main purpose in life are my two children … I am the primary caregiver. I'm a stay-at-home dad. I'm the guy who is with them the whole time. They don't do daycare." Victor has sufficient value in his life and in his work to be satisfied.

There is a special form of value that musicians experience that depends very much on how free and secure they are as well as the connection they create with the audience. Victor has clearly experienced it, as he described.

When you're in a situation where you're on stage with five or six other people and you're all playing together … it's not like you're playing a part of the song that you've learned and you play it every night, this is like, you're improvising and grooving, if I may, together, and there are people out there [in the audience] who are picking up on that energy, smiling dancing clapping moving, giving back that energy to you, and so it becomes a connection, a circle. … it's like a cyclical thing that we put it out … it's picked up on it and sent it back to us which makes us play even harder which goes back to them which makes them even happier which comes back to us and you get a whole room of people and a band that are all on one level for, it might only be one song could be a whole night, whatever, but for that minute or that two hours you don't think about your sore back you don't think about your bills don't think about the argument you had with your friends or your wife or anything. … it's almost like meditation. … The best time is when you can't remember what song you're playing… because you've totally let yourself go and put your trust in the people you're playing with and totally open yourself, revealed yourself to the people who are watching you.

Summary of valued.

The most prevalent form of dissatisfaction in the category of value is not being valued, respected or appreciate by one's manager or employer. The second most prevalent form is not valuing oneself or the things that one does at work. These forms are sentiments but contribute to work that is deficient. The experience of not being valued by one's manager or employer was experienced by Cecelia repeatedly, Heidi, Hugh, and Tammy. Two of those cases were harassment cases. Cecelia held a number of service industry jobs in which her employers treated her with little value. Tammy worked as a PCW and was treated literally like a dog by her nursing manager. In terms of not valuing oneself or what one does at work, Adam admitted that he would not "sell credit cards" or work in the military. Danny and Tammy valued themselves for the work they did helping people. The musicians, Hugh and Victor, stated that applause, the audience's show of value toward the musicians, was "big" in their work. And everyone with children (all participants with the exception of Tracy) expressed in some way or another that being of value, and being valued by their families made them more satisfied at work.

Related forms of underemployment.

There was not one form of underemployment identified in the literature that spoke to value or appreciation. The forms of underemployment that would best explain dissatisfaction that is related to value are: unappreciated by employers, managers and/or coworkers; and work or a part of work having no or negative value. An example of the latter is something that does damage in some way, such as destroying the environment.

Workers want to feel free.

Description of freedom.

Workers do not like being restricted in some ways. For some spending 9am to 5pm every day at work might be restrictive if they feel they can do their work anywhere and anytime. For others restriction might come as a lack of opportunities to advance, participate in further training, not being able to do one's work because other workers who need to contribute are not doing so, or being forced to work unreasonably far away from one's family. Another example is not having the freedom to retire or quit when dissatisfied because the pension is not available until twenty years of work have been completed.

On the other hand, employers who satisfy some of worker's needed freedoms, and remove restrictions, may create a more productive and more satisfying workplace. The most noticeable form of freedom exercised by these participants was the decision to quit when dissatisfied with underemployment.

Participants and freedom.

Adam and freedom.

Adam was unsuccessful in finding work. When speaking of the goal of work, he explained that "the point is to actually live your life, and the great people, people I would consider masters, are able to take this awareness and this feeling of alive, being alive, and go work at [a grocery store], and go create, go to university, or the military, [and] do something with it," all of which require freedom to manage. In his pursuit of a minimally acceptable level of financial security Adam kept finding himself in jobs, not careers. There were no opportunities for advancement, "it didn't seem like there was as future there," so that he could grow as he progressed. All of the freedom Adam has with work was through his own beliefs about living

his life to its fullest. He would take an ostensibly restrictive situation, such as driving a bus, and turn it into an opportunity to connect to the passengers for fifteen minutes each day. In spite of his jobs, his life was free.

Cameron and freedom.

There were two situations in which Cameron felt restricted. As a fisherman, with plenty of financial security, Cameron worked hard for long hours each day away from his family doing the same thing over-and-over. Eventually he realized that he was empty. The work, as he described it, "could never bring the true contentment."

With his work as a carpenter Cameron had some difficulty finding contracts. As a novice contractor in an industry already occupied by larger companies doing the same work, he eventually realized that he could not achieve financial security if her persisted as a professional carpenter. He said that "there were too many other people doing it, and it seemed … you have to have a name, or be in a big company or something like that … because, you have to be all into it or you can't even be into it." The freedom of picking and choosing contracts was never apparent for Cameron.

He eventually spread himself between being a stay-at-home parent and a pastor. His work as a pastor and his wife's work as a teacher afforded them the freedom for Cameron to stay home with his children. With God helping Cameron make decisions and thus relieving Cameron's responsibilities and stresses, Cameron's freedom to spend stress-free time with his family increased, but life was not without its worries for Cameron. He was still working at his capacity with taking care of the kids and the house and working as a pastor. In his words, "I'm trying to juggle a lot of different stuff at once and it seems a lot of days I come up short in everything, especially when you're being the stay-at-home dad type of thing, and everything just

gets put on hold some days." But he seemed to have achieved a balance between freedom,

financial security and value for which he had worked so hard and so long.

Cecelia and Freedom.

Cecelia exercised her freedom to quit a dissatisfying job more than any other participant

in this study. In response to the tip pool change in her work as a waitress, she said, "that was

pretty unsatisfactory for me, and the way I dealt with it was I quit" and her rationale was, "when

you're that young and working day to day, especially in the restaurant industry, your tips [are]

why you work in the restaurant industry, because you get tips every day, and it helps, the money

helps." With her work at the call center, similar to her work as a waitress, she found freedom in

opportunities to use her communication skills to perform her job. She qualifies this by saying,

> In both of those jobs I think that probably one of the biggest skills that I have in terms of
>
> working in retail or customer service or any aspect of the service industry is my
>
> personality and just being able to talk to people … I liked being able to talk to a bunch of
>
> different people, when they were nice, and same with the restaurant, waitressing. You
>
> get … regular clientele, you form relationships with people.

In both of these situations there were restrictive conditions that led to her quitting: the change in

the tip system as a waitress, and the over-restrictive and contradictory policies that governed her

work.

The restrictions she experienced in her work as a book store entrepreneur related to the

administrative duties that were required to sustain the business. She did not have the skills to do

them adequately, nor did she actually want to do them. She describes,

> What I was the most dissatisfied with what the administrative role that I had to assume in
>
> terms of money, in terms of management and organization and I was dissatisfied that I

had to do that because I didn't have the skills to do it, and I also don't really care about

that kind of stuff.

Her disinterest in the administrative side of this work was indicative of a need to do what she

preferred, and not do what she did not like, more so than all other participants in this study. In

the chain bookstore she did not want to treat books as products although that was the premise of

her job. As she puts it,

One of the biggest problems I had working within the chain bookstore was [that]

everything was product and everything was sell, sell, sell, and it's just not the kind of

person that I am. I guess overall, in general, for everything, it's just about, the most

dissatisfaction has come because of my personality.

It was not until she secured work as a research assistant that she found a job that better fit

the side of her personality that requires freedom. Alongside the value she felt in performing

skillfully and productively in this work, she was given the freedom to work independently. As

she said, "it comes because I worked my ass off for the last 2 years and proven that I can do it

and that I do think about things and that's been rewarded and I've been given a little bit of

license." Her freedom in this work was slightly limited, however, when she had inadequate help

to perform as productively as she preferred. "The biggest part of my dissatisfaction in this job

has been in not having adequate help to do it, which is kind of tricky because I'm in a helper

position too, in an assistant type position too."

Cecelia has a strong sense of freedom beyond that which she has found in her research

assistant work. When she spoke of an ideal world, work took on a different meaning. "In an

ideal world I wouldn't have to work, I could just write and be freelance … be completely

independent and not have to work for anyone else's agenda but my own." Since her world was

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not ideal, she expressed the importance of freedom in other ways, including explaining why she quit so many jobs over two years. "I don't think I could stay in a situation in which there was job dissatisfaction for more than a month. If I was in a position and was having a dissatisfaction issue that wasn't resolved within a month, then I wouldn't want to stay in it at all, I just don't think I would." Ultimately, she expressed the importance of her freedom in terms of negotiation. She said, "Never compromise. Never compromise and never settle. Which I don't think I've ever done, I don't think I ever would do."

Danny and freedom.

Danny's career choices have reflected a clear need to provide financial security for his family, although his real interest has always been flying airplanes. He tried to bring these two ideas together but found that security repeatedly trumped freedom. He worked as an LPN for a long time, ensuring financial security, but was losing interest and needed a change. "After about the eight year mark I started looking for other things. Nurses should change their discipline sooner than that." He looked beyond scope of nursing because "as a licensed practical nurse there aren't a lot of places you can work."

His first two attempts to leave nursing involved pursuing work as a pilot. Danny describes the process in becoming a commercial pilot.

> There are two ways to become a commercial pilot: starting as a bush pilot or starting as an instructor. I tried being a bush pilot but it would have taken too long. I was working as an instructor part time but I did not have enough time flying to get in the commercial flying because [the flying school] did not have enough clients. … I had to keep my full-time job so I could not increase my flight instructor hours, so I was not going to become a commercial pilot that route.

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He was finally successful in leaving nursing when he was accepted to work as a firefighter. This work afforded better financial security, better freedom through more time to spend with his family, and maintained his need to be of value (formerly to the patients and now to the community). In addition, he had "an hour a day to work out in the new job."

Ultimately, at work Danny wants to be free to help people and to enjoy himself. Working as an LPN and a firefighter allowed him to help people, but he found work as a firefighter more enjoyable.

The main reason I enjoy firefighting more than nursing, even though they both [allow me to] help people, is because firefighting fits more of the attributes that make up my personality. I am able to use and enjoy more of the talents, skills, attitudes, and pleasures that [define] me, [not to mention] screaming down the road in a bright red fire truck, responding to a MVA where we had to tear apart a BMW with cool tools to free a trapped, scared, injured teenager who just wrecked Daddies midlife present to himself.... no comparison!

Demi and freedom.

In her work as an accountant, before she had children, Demi was free to work long hours in this job that she loved. "I didn't have other priorities or obligations … it was nothing for me to always be at work." She started at the firm straight out of university, with just a degree and no formal accounting designation. From her position answering phones she was offered opportunities to train and advance in the firm, all of which she seized. In her words,

I basically answered phones, and what happened was other positions opened up, a position in accounting opened up, I took that, and it just went from there, then I went back to school, decided to make more courses, and got my accounting designation

In the end she had advanced through the company into a job that was actually separated from the accounting work she was used to. "In my role as manager I didn't actually do what I was trained to do." This was the beginning of her restricted freedom to do accounting: the time when accounting for her became started to become dissatisfying.

With the merger, due to her position, she was involved in merging the two accounting departments into one, including reorganization and staff reductions. "I had to actually take part in making these decisions as to who goes and who stays, and the reorganization of job responsibilities." During this increasingly dissatisfying time she was pregnant and was advised to take it easy for the health of the babies. So she started a leave of absence during the reorganization after the merger. She said,

> I had every intention of going back to work but what happened, they did a reorganization of the accounting functions, and offered me a different position, or a package, and at the time, because my priorities have changed a little starting a family, I decided then instead of going back to work where I wasn't completely satisfied, to stay home … even if I want to work after my maternity, I still come out ahead financially, and I could possibly look for a job elsewhere. That never happened.

As a result of her taking the package she was not only free from the dissatisfaction of the accounting manager job, but free to stay at home with her children. With the substantial severance she received she was also free to continue her work as an accountant in a reduced form: out of her home, part-time, for clients that she chose.

In the end she had financial security and was free to be both a stay-at-home parent and an accountant, as much as she wanted. Her afterthoughts on the accounting manager position were the following,

I worked pretty hard to get my designation, and I can still call myself an accountant, however if I ever do go back to work full time I never want to work in the capacity that I was working in, I never want to be management.

Heidi and freedom.

For some, teaching is an exhausting profession. The concurrent tasks of supervising and teaching can be draining. Heidi figured out early in her career that she loved to teach and looked forward to her first term teaching contract. In this position she was harassed by her principal, temporarily restricting the freedom she should have had as a teacher. As she explains it,

the principal would, in the beginning, just do very minor things, like he would come up to me and ask me if I could meet with him after school to go over lesson plans. He asked me to come in, if he could come in and see my lesson plans and observe my class. … he felt that I wasn't putting enough detail in each block to indicate what activity I was doing [and] insisted that I buy a new binder, do a template up on my computer … and in each template I should have about a page of information for each class. At this school I had eleven classes everyday so he wanted eleven pages per day of information, and basically he wanted me to write out every single thing that I was going to say.

The most common exercising of one's freedom, among people in this study, was to quit a dissatisfying work situation. Heidi considered this option as well, but decided to stay and endure the principal. "I started realizing it was all very, just basically manipulative, because I guess I was immature and young about it and I just said that I needed to do what he wanted me to do, I need to keep this job."

Although the harassment was daily and Heidi frequently cried, she endured without talking to any of the other staff members about it. The extra work for the principal combined

with her growing exhaustion eventually wore her out, and as she describes, "that's when I just felt overwhelmed, where I couldn't handle it. And I think that's at the point when I started seeking help." Up until this point she did not think that anyone at the school knew about her situation.

In a staff meeting around this time Heidi broke down and started crying. When she was consoled she admitted she was being harassed to another teacher, who quickly brought Heidi together with another teacher in the same situation. They were both glad to have found someone else to talk to about this. Heidi said that, "she also felt very good that she could find someone that she could confide in and to share, you know, both of us, we were dealing with this really with our spouses, and it was affecting our family life." Once they were together, supporting each other, and realizing that he was the problem and not them, they found the freedom to take action against the principal.

Because of Heidi's and the other teacher's actions against the principal other teachers started to admit to having been harassed themselves. As Heidi said, "once I came out and started talking about it this other woman came out and started talking about it, and lo and behold, people started coming out of the woodwork. More and more people had been harassed by this man in the past." Other teachers were being freed from harassment because of the efforts of Heidi and the other teacher.

For Heidi, personal freedom involves spending more time with her children. Her perfect job, as she puts it, "would be just teaching at school, an 8 to 2 job, coming home every day, and spending more time with the kids." Her drives education business, which she has because of the financial security it provides her, also consumes some of the time that she could otherwise spend with her children. She describes it briefly by saying "I enjoy it, but it's added stress."

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Hugh and freedom.

In his youth Hugh had a number of jobs for the sole purpose of earning money. The work was laborious to him but these are the sacrifices he knew he had to make in order to earn money to survive. In his words,

> I did other labour jobs, building decks and laying flooring and stuff like that, nothing I ever wanted to do … the dissatisfaction might have come from not feeling challenged, not feeling productive, [they] didn't go anywhere, there was no progression, it was just menial labour, to, give me pocket money … I needed the employment and I needed the money, so I did it. It's not really anything I was interested in.

Hugh was very happy when he was hired by the Canadian Forces to be a full-time musician. One of the issues with attempting to make a career in music performance is the lack of financial security. In fact, the other performing musician in this study, considering himself successful, still has to work a waiter job two nights a week to bridge the gap between financial security and successful musician pay. The irony in working as a musician in the Canadian Forces is that he gets the freedom of being able to play his horn for a living is concurrent with the inherent restrictions in the hierarchical system, which Hugh explained in the following way.

> Sometimes people in the military may make decisions without really thinking of the impact that the decision has on everybody … as people rise in the hierarchy and they get closer to the top of the food chain that they become more adamant that if they make a decision that they're not going to change their mind just out of principle … it would be a negative trait in their character to change their mind.

In spite of the infrequent and temporary dissatisfaction that derived from this system, Hugh is very happy to have his job in the military. "In some ways I don't really consider what I do a job, it's, I'm getting paid to do something I like."

In his position as bandmaster he was no longer playing his clarinet. His duties included conducting the band, administrator and public relations. As a performing clarinet player his secondary duty in the military was in public relations, so he enjoyed that aspect. Conducting was an opportunity for him to grow within performance music in a different direction, and the freedom these new skills as conductor have afforded him transferred well to the civilian world in the form of conducting a local community band and assuming the role of music director in a local high school. The administration side of it, however, was not something that led to satisfaction for Hugh. "I wouldn't call myself a [great] administrator and mostly because it's not the area of the job that I prefer to do. I do what I need to do to stay on top of things and I focus on the other parts that I like to do more."

Alongside the bullying and slander that Hugh was experiencing from his supervisor came further restrictions on his freedom, mainly in the form of the requirement of him to move away from his family to become the new clarinet player in a band 1100 kilometers away. He was presented with two immediate solutions: take the posting, or quit. In consideration of this decision he had the following to say,

> I have another year-and-a-half of time that I have to serve to complete my contract at which time I would receive a pension. If I quit now I would lose a pension and, financially and economically, with a family to support and a mortgage and cars to pay for and children activities and things like that, the sacrifice of having to stick it out in perhaps an unpleasant situation is one I'm willing to make for a year-and-a-half.

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The unpleasant situation being, of course, working in a place that was a sixteen hour commute away from his home and his family.

> We've sort of resolved that I would have to go by myself and leave the family behind. I've done some preparation … and tried to figure out a plan that would minimize the amount of time that I would have to be away from home."

Through these experiences Hugh has experienced the widest range of freedom and restriction of all the participants, from transforming his love into his job, through being harassed, slandered, and forced to live 1100 kilometers from his family or forfeit his pension. But through all of it he never lost the financial security or the freedom to engage in performance music every day at work. This core has sustained him through the thick and thin of his career. He believes this is the key to satisfaction with work.

> I tell my young kids now that they're getting to an age that they want pocket money … I encourage them [to] figure out what you're good at, and then figure out a way to earn an income from it rather than searching through the want ads and spending your time doing something that could be dissatisfying.

Tammy and freedom.

After Tammy completed her initial training to become an RN she had to move away, from Nova Scotia to Texas, to find work. Although this program was graduating nurses, there were no jobs in the community to support all of the graduates. She quit the first hospital because she did not get along with the nurse manager and moved to another hospital in the same community. Because of the restructuring after the merger she found herself working under the same nursing manager that she already quit to avoid, so she quit again and became a travelling

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nurse, a job in which she was afforded more freedom to work in different places and learn new things. Tammy describes the process as follows.

Before [the merger] they would send us on seminars and things like that. They were really focused on educating their staff. That kind of stopped when the hospitals merged. So I quit, and did travel nursing, which I loved. I enjoyed it because I got to go to different hospitals, big hospitals and little hospitals, and learn and do … And every day was hard work, but every day you learn something, or you did something new, I enjoyed that a lot.

When she eventually returned to Nova Scotia, after quitting the travelling nurse work five years earlier, she knew whatever work she was going to do would be temporary until she re-certified, became an RN, and found a permanent job. The temporary work she did find was as a PCW at a firm that basically booked shifts and paid by the shift. There were a lot of shifts available, most likely because there were not a lot of people willing to do the hard work for little respect and pay. Tammy characterized this work as follows, "There is great demand for … personal care workers. … it is one of those few jobs that I could also set my own schedule so I could study," which is what she wanted because her mother was scheduled to visit and she did not want to use up all of her vacation time for the year to spend time with her. "I stayed on … until my mom came and I had friends from Holland come, and then I took a real job after all that was done."

Tammy found that her past experiences as an RN offered her more freedom in her ability to help the patients that were in her care. Normally a PCW would not speak to a physician on behalf of the patient, but Tammy was presented with opportunities to go beyond what was expected of her. Tammy describes this ability to help as follows.

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I can only do this because I have the skills, but I could help certain clients deal with their doctors and things that they weren't able to do, and the doctor actually responded, was quite happy to have me on the line instead of a deaf 87-year-old patient.

Tammy demonstrated through her career path that having the freedom to learn and work to help patients as well as she could was important to her.

Venus and freedom.

As a geologist, Venus had a high salary and thus very good financial security. This freedom seemed to be reduced only because she was a woman, and geology, in Venus's opinion, was a "guy's world." She explains,

In the mid to late 1970s it was a little bit difficult just because it was such a guy's world and when we would go in and do field work and things in northern Alberta or Saskatchewan on the well site it was very difficult to go there. Everybody there lived in trailers and camps set up and I'd be the only girl there and it was very difficult for the company to accommodate me in that situation. It was very awkward and frustrating, I don't know about this satisfying, it was a just hard to accommodate girls at that time. … working for the engineering consulting company, they did a lot of projects, international oil fields, and some of the countries, Kuwait and Turkey and Saudi Arabia and places like that, I could do work on the project but I couldn't go to the countries to work on them so that was kind of frustrating to me.

Venus always knew that she wanted to be a mother. Within five years of her marriage she had four children and, because of the freedom that her financial stability afforded her, was shifting her priority away from her geologist work to that of a stay-at-home parent. When her marriage ended and her husband left, she was again able to stay at home with her children and

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live off of her retirement funds. The divorce lasted for three years and made a sizeable dent in these funds. She explains, "My legal fees probably hit $100,000. Everything I had in the house would pay the lawyers, so we guess it left me financially to where I was when I was 21." There were, fortunately, enough funds to cover the legal fees and allow Venus to remain at home with the children, although there was not much left to sustain that arrangement for much longer.

In addition to her freedom to stay with her children, her retirement funds allowed her to take courses at the local university, for the love of it. She explains, **"**I was taking mostly sciences which have always been my interest. It was the stuff that interested me, but I would happily go back to school and stay there for the rest of my life taking courses, I love being in school." A short time after the divorce finalized she moved her and the children from Alberta to Nova Scotia and she started pharmacy school.

Throughout her studies to become a pharmacist she worked and emptied her retirement fund to maintain a safe environment in which her children could grow. Her exercise of freedom was in the form of providing for her children by working three jobs so that they too would have maximum freedom to choose their own paths. She expressed her thoughts on the future in the following manner, **"**once I get the kids through school I might see about just having the one job."

Victor and freedom.

Victor has pursued his love for music performance since before he was an adult. Through a lot of hard work in Canada's music industry he and his band achieved fame and thus success, and allowed him to make a living off of playing music. He describes the process he went through to get there as,

> I've always loved music and I always sang right from when I was five years old … after
>
> high school we played in a few bands. Out of that came another band that I spent 15

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years with basically off and on touring the country quite successful in a underground,

small cult following across Canada, that enabled us to make a living at playing music, so

that was my job, I was a musician.

As the music industry evolved and the band developed within, Victor and the relationships he

had with his band mates changed as well. In Victor's efforts to keep the band popular and thus

successful, to provide them all with the freedom to maintain their lifestyle, he felt that certain

changes were appropriate, but some of the other musicians did not agree. He explains,

> We didn't agree on things … I have my ideals and I thought I was right. They had theirs
>
> some of them agreed with me and some of them didn't and we get to the point where it
>
> was like beating your head against the wall … I felt that the band needed to do certain
>
> things and make certain changes in order to keep on progressing … and other people
>
> didn't agree with my way of getting there so it became a very tense situation whenever
>
> we would rehearse.

Eventually he left the band, returned to Nova Scotia, and started new bands that also became

manageably successful. This success was not enough to sustain a lifestyle of touring and playing

three times a week, but the bands were popular and had regular gigs near Victor's home.

> None of these bands provided financial security. On the contrary, Victor found that he

needed to achieve financial security in order to keep playing with the band. At the time of the

interview he was achieving this in part through his work as a waiter.

> Working as a waiter two nights a week, that's the bottom of the barrel, this is what I do,
>
> this is what I do, I do what I do to make money and to enable me to go play my gigs
>
> whenever I can, because you know, if I had to get a job full time I wouldn't be able to do
>
> the gigs.

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He was able to create enough financial security from working two nights as a waiter to afford the freedom to play his music. In his words, "I'd do a bunch of little things and I still play part-time which is still my passion and I still enjoy performing."

Victor has also experienced freedom to a depth that not many people will ever know. He accomplished this through his music. He explains this as follows,

> You're improvising and grooving … together, and there are people out there who are picking up on that energy … giving back that energy to you, and so it becomes a connection, a circle … like a cyclical thing that we put it out it that it picked up on it and sent it back to us which makes us play even harder which goes back to them which makes them even happier which comes back to us … for that minute or that two hours you don't think about your sore back you don't think about your bills don't think about the argument you had with your friends or your wife or anything, …it is certainly on an existential level or a totally selfish level … it's almost like meditation, if you can just let go and you close your eyes and the best part, the best time is like when you can't remember what song you're playing,

In the end, Victor has found the freedom to keep creating his music, not for financial security or to impress audiences, but because he loves it and it is a large part of who he is.

Summary of free.

The most common form of dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment in terms of freedom was not having the freedom to perform the job like one would prefer to do it. In other words, there was some form of restriction that inhibited the worker from being as productive as he/she felt possible. For example, Cameron could not find contract so that he could work and get paid. Cecelia was bogged down with contradictory policies coming down from five different

levels of management at the call center. Demi was restricted from doing more accounting and less people managing in her work as the accounting manager. Heidi was not free from harassment. Hugh was restricted by the non-transparent decisions that his supervisor would make, whether optimum or not. Victor was restricted in his attempts to lead the band because a few of its members did not like his ideas. All examples mention situations in which the worker is unable to function most effectively at work because someone or something was preventing it.

There are other concerns related to freedom that also caused dissatisfaction. Not having freedom as a result of financial security to spend more time with family. Cecelia, Danny, Demi, Heidi and Venus all referred to this phenomenon in one form or another. Closely related is not having enough freedom (through financial independence) to be able to do an activity that one loves, such as Victor and his music.

Related forms of underemployment.

Livingstone mentions the credential gap and the performance gap (1999c) in which the worker is unable to use his/her credentials or potential to perform in his/her work, although they do not investigate what the source of this restriction is. In O'Toole's definition of underemployment as "the underutilization of education, training, skills, intelligence, and other human resources" (1977, p. 36) the restriction is caused by whoever is underutilizing the workers. Within these findings, Cecelia was not being utilized effectively by her employers at the call center, Heidi was spending all of her time preparing for the harassment and might have under-planned a few lessons, and Tammy, the RN working as a PCW, was expected to work at the level of the PCW. Her employer did not make special arrangements for the skills that she had that went beyond that of a PCW.

Workers want to feel safe, valued and free

The combination of safety, value and freedom for each participant paints a fuller picture of the dissatisfaction experienced by each participant of this study (see Table 1). Adam's picture is of a man who wants to provide security for his family and live his life to its fullest but repeatedly cannot find a job to do so. Cameron could not cope with the stress of captaining a vessel in the fishing industry and discovered God as he neared his rock bottom. He went through a change from being independent, financially secure but empty and tired, to minimally secure, following the guidance of God, and happy. Cecelia always wanted independence and recognition for her talents and achievements but worked a series of short-term service industry jobs that could not provide this to her. She eventually found independence and recognition as a research assistant. Danny needs a balance of excitement and the ability to help people in his work and to satisfy his primary goal of providing financial security for his family. Demi is very dedicated to accounting and her children but not to managing people. Heidi is independent and dedicated to teaching music, both of which gave her the strength to endure two month of harassment. She would prefer to have more time to spend with her children. Hugh's passion in life became his job but before he retired he had to endure harassment and abuse of authority by his supervisor to maintain financial security for his family. Tammy wants to help people and prefers work that allows her the freedom to learn new things and also spend time with her family. Venus used to value independence and financial security but after having her children realized that they were more important. Victor has found the balance in his life whereby with enough financial security he is able to spend days with his children and still perform.

Table 2: Participants' Feelings of Safety, Value and Freedom

Participant	Dissatisfying Work	Feelings of safety, value and freedom
Adam	Librarian, Telephone Interviewer, Business Plan Writer, Bus Driver, Interpreter	Safe: sustainable career; not fitting in; no longer knew how to get a job; cannot find a job; cannot provide security for self/family
		Valued: only expected a mediocre performance; being valuable to bus passengers and the environment; valuing oneself
		Free: live your life
Cameron	Fisherman, Carpenter, Pastor, Stay-at-Home Parent	Safe: worked too hard and burned out of fishing; left fishery and financial security; had no skills other than fishing; responsibility of being boss was too much; carpentry work unavailable; needed the support and guidance that God gave him
		Valued: value oneself through hard work;
		Free: worked long hours and burned out; no contentment; couldn't find carpentry work;
Cecelia	Sushi Bar Waitress, Call Center Operator, Bookstore Entrepreneur, Research Assistant	Safe: dependable tip pay system; inadequate management; worrying about being successful; ability to work on and minimize dissatisfaction; not enough independence
		Valued: valued little or none by employer/boss; not

		included in conversations among coworkers; not valuing what you do for work; feeling appreciated; opportunity to work independently;
		Free: freedom to quit; restricted pay (once every 2 weeks vs. daily) from tip pool; lack of independence; restrictions that prevent you from doing your job
Danny	Flying Instructor Licensed Practical Nurse, Bush Pilot Trainee, Firefighter	Safe: no room to advance; unable to start career as pilot; financial security; work should also be interesting/exciting; safer career choices are ones that you research and understand before you accept them
		Valued: helping people
		Free: free to provide security to family; free to help people
Demi	Salesperson, Accountant, Accounting Manager, Stay-at-home parent	Safe: Mergers can be unpredictable and lead to reorganization and layoffs; financial security
		Valued: valuing oneself;
		Free: free to work as much as she wants, financial security provides freedom to stay home with kids; free to advance in the company; free to take advantage of extra training;
Heidi	Substitute teacher, real estate agent, Term	Safe: Lack of employment; Not enough money to invest and become a successful real estate agent;

	contractual teacher,	harassment;
	permanent teacher	Valued: not valued by her principal; not valued at home contributing to stress at work; loving your job; helping others;
		Free: free from harassment; free to spent more time with family/children;
Hugh	Canteen operator, Dishwasher, Teaching Assistant, Military Reserve Musician, Military Musician	Safe: financial security; educating boss to sustain work; harassment; boss doesn't understand his role;
		Valued: no qualification job with no investment is not valuable; applause is a show of value of the performer; creating a work atmosphere that workers value; having to convince one's boss that what one does is valuable;
		Free: not free because he has to get a job to gain financial security; free to do hobby/love as job; free from superiors making bad decisions that affect you; not free from having to do the undesirable parts of his job; free to choose where he lives and where he words;
Tammy	Hospital Nurse, Travelling Nurse, Personal Care Worker, Registered Nurse	Safe: no shifts due to administrative error; educate or recertify if you can
		Valued: not valued as a PCW; value relates to how you defend yourself; being valued by manager/employer; doing things that clients/patients

		need and appreciate; not being able to perform your job because coworkers refuse to help; Free: free to go on training courses; free to work when she wants; freedom to use any/all knowledge to help others
Venus	Geologist, Stay-at-home Parent	Safe: financial security; well-being of children Valued: Shift in value from work to family; Free: financial security provides freedom;
Victor	Touring Musician, Performing Musician, Waiter, Recording Producer, Stay-at-home parent	Safe: financial security; protection for his performance music work Valued: audience shows value through applause; not valued by coworkers (no sympathy); not valued by coworkers when you are trying to help them; value in his home life and family; Free: successful enough to sustain lifestyle; free to lead the band his way; work to generate freedom so he can play music; free to focus completely on work

Theme 1 Summary

Dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment can be expressed in terms of dissatisfaction only, or as Table 2 illustrates, a combination of an individual's dissatisfaction and preferences. Separating the sources of dissatisfaction from the response to those sources is not always a quick and easy activity because at the heart of dissatisfaction lies preference, but in

some cases identifying the preference is only possible through an exploration of the dissatisfaction.

This theme, describing how each participant wanted to feel safe, valued and free, was discovered as a result of identifying the sources of dissatisfaction for those participants, which resulted in an extensive list of how work can be deficient. The ideas of safety, value and freedom came about as a result of expressing these deficiencies in terms of personal preferences. Deficiency, after all, is an expression of value and is subject to human interpretation. Each deficiency expressed had at its core a personal preference of what satisfying work should be, so logically the most effective way to capture these forms of underemployment was to express them as personal preferences of work.

Many of these preferences are repeated across participants. For example, workers generally want financial security, want to be appreciated, and want to be able to do their job without unnecessary restrictions.

The combining of factors (see Table 1) also paints an informative picture of personal preferences. A common theme was maintaining financial security to do something of value, such as stay home with one's children, or play music. Cecelia wanted freedom and the recognition of her abilities and achievements. Danny wanted to help people in a job that was exciting. These are not only expression of a preference but a goal as well, which can be used to estimate and plan for the individual's future.

Theme 2: Workers Respond to Dissatisfaction by Quitting

When faced with dissatisfying work, quitting was a popular response among participants. It appeared easier for participants to quit when there was little or no investment in that work. Those who did not quit (in their opinion, could not quit) had to keep job for financial reasons.

Those who did not quit used different strategies in response to the lingering dissatisfaction, including standing up for themselves, finding support to help them through, taking action against dissatisfaction, and using exercise and rituals to find relief. Another theme that emerged, related to surviving dissatisfaction, was the implemented strategy used to avoid it in the form of understanding work before it was accepted.

Participants and quitting.

Adam and quitting.

In regards to Adam's dissatisfaction with work in the library, he said that

I left because I didn't really feel like I fit in there, everyone was much older than me, I was one of the only guys working there, and it didn't really seem like it was leading to anything, it wasn't, it was a dead end job and I, I wanted to pursue something that was more interesting. I guess that in simplest terms I got bored of the job, but it was compounded by the fact that there wasn't a lot of opportunity, there were already elderly women who were in line for jobs ahead of me and, there wasn't really a place for me.

Quitting was justified for Adam. His vision of satisfying work, in terms of why he quit the library job, include fitting in with respect to age and sex as well as opportunities for advancement. He went on to talk about his desire to have a stable, lasting job which would have to have opportunities to advance. "If the job doesn't have any advancement in it then there's really unlikely that I'll stay. As soon as there's a hard time I would just, be let go." For Adam, quitting was his response to finding himself in his sense of dissatisfying work.

Cameron and quitting

Cameron portrays a similar sentiment when he quits the fishery. His reason for quitting was the avoidance of something dissatisfying. In his words, "there was a small hint of trying to

get away from, from the negative side of the fishery, and from that emptiness with inside that the job could never fulfill." To make sure he was making the right decision, he appealed to God before he made it. In his words, "I would've never left unless I was certain that God had asked me to do this." He believed that God supported his intention to quit, thus making it easier for Cameron to do so.

Cecelia and quitting.

Cecelia spoke of quitting in terms of reasons to quit, and reasons not to quit. For example, it is easy to quit if you have made little investment in the job and there are lots of openings for similar jobs. She found it easy to quit one waitressing job because she had little investment into that work. She stated that "as far as I was concerned there was very little investment of my time, energy and training into the job, so, the restaurant industry in Halifax is bustling and I was employed again within like 2 or 3 days." She believed that it was easy to quit because there were always similar jobs to move into. "If you're a part time worker doing shit jobs then they're all kinds of shit jobs that you can do."

On the other hand, when life circumstances change, quitting is not so easy. She describes this shift of responsibility in her life as follows, "working at a call center, a big call center, and it was a bit later in my life, I had 2 kids so the whole job thing was more important at that time." Based on her ability to earn income as a Sushi Bar waitress, she was contented, until her employer changed her pay and thus turned her work dissatisfying, which gave her a reason to quit.

I was actually working the busiest shift, the lunch hour shift, to deal with all of the white,

upper class businessmen who eat sushi on their lunch break. There were some clients,

some of my regulars, who would tip me really well, some of them up to $15, but after

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about a week of that the owners decided that they were going to move the tip system into a tip pool, so I didn't actually get my tips until my payday, and it was prorated by hours, and I only ended up getting about 1/3 of the tips that I actually made with the rest of the money being divided into the other Japanese workers who were there in the less busy times. So that was pretty unsatisfactory for me, and the way I dealt with it was I quit.

For Cecelia finding her work dissatisfying and quitting were regular occurrences over that two year period in which she held around a dozen jobs.

Danny and quitting.

Danny did not exercise his ability to quit work in order to get away from dissatisfaction. He quit so that he could pursue something he thought would be better. For example, hit first experience with quitting a career was in his attempt to become a bush pilot. "My first career change came after five years as a nurse. I have my private and my commercial flying licenses. I actually quit after 5 1/2 years and went to Northern Saskatchewan to work as a bush pilot." For Danny, work satisfaction is very important. He researched his prospective jobs before pursuing them. His advice on this matter was the following, "if you don't enjoy what you doing any should look for something else" thus describing the rationale to quit dissatisfying work.

Demi and quitting.

Demi did not quit dissatisfying work. At the time of her dissatisfaction with working as an Accounting Manager, and her pregnancy, and the merger, she was ordered by her Doctor to stay home which coincided with her employer's realization that there was only a need for a single Accounting Manager. Demi was offered retirement, which she accepted, and did not have to face the decision of quitting to avoid dissatisfying work. When asked if she quit, Demi's answer was, "well, I did and I didn't, no I didn't, I took a package."

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Heidi and quitting.

At the end of her university training as a music educator Heidi started looking for substitute teaching positions, with disappointing results. Her dissatisfaction with the unavailability of work in this field caused her to quit and try something else. She said, "I generally got frustrated with the lack of employment, so I actually left the teaching profession for a period of 2 years."

Heidi eventually returned to music education after an unsuccessful attempt to become a real estate broker. Her first year as a music educator was no more satisfying than her previous experiences, but in a different way. Initially she could not find work as a music educator, and then she could not make deals as a real estate broker, but when she finally returned to music education she was harassed and again dissatisfied. Although she knew quitting was an option, she persisted. "I came close to quitting, actually, because I've always found myself to be a person that doesn't, well I say this and I kind of chuckle, but I was going to say that I'm not really spontaneous." In her words,

> I felt like I wanted to quit, I wanted to walk out on a couple occasions, but I knew that
> this was what I wanted to do, and though I came really close to thinking 'I don't want to
> do this anymore' I tried to tell myself that this was just a negative experience, and that
> maybe next year will be a positive one and I was going to give it one more try.

After enduring a few month of harassment she reported the principal to the school board and he stopped harassing her, thus decreasing her dissatisfaction for the remainder of the school year. In the end, she did not quit. She said, "the problem was solved by me moving, at the end of the year, I stuck it out to the end of the year." This is consistent with her the motto that her father

displayed on a plaque, reading "[We] never give up" which she admitted helped her survive the dissatisfaction of harassment at work.

Hugh and quitting.

Hugh was very clear about how he responded to dissatisfying work: "if I became dissatisfied I just quit and go find something else." These jobs that he held when he was young were not valuable to him. For example, he describes the following,

> I worked as a dishwasher in a Chinese restaurant, and so really there's no qualifications, so I guess the dissatisfaction might have come from not feeling challenged, not feeling productive, didn't go anywhere, there was no progression, it was just menial labour, to, give me pocket money.

When asked what his response was to this situation, he said, "I quit."

Later in life when he was nearing the end of his twenty year military career Hugh was posted to a different base away from his family, causing Hugh intense dissatisfaction with the system. When asked why he did not quit he explained,

> Unfortunately it becomes a financial [problem]. The financial impact of quitting would be too strong at this point to have that as a solution. The nature of the job, I have another year-and-a-half of time that I have to serve to complete my contract, at which time I could receive a pension, and if I quit now, I would lose a pension and financially and economically with a family to support and a mortgage and cars to pay for and children activities and things like that, the sacrifice of having to stick it out in perhaps an unpleasant situation is … one I'm willing to make for a year-and-a-half.

Hugh shows that quitting is an appropriate response in some situations, but not for others. When the work has little or no value, and likely is easy to replace, quitting is a viable option. When quitting would result in a loss of pension and severe financial problems, quitting is not an option.

Tammy and quitting.

Tammy also demonstrates the ability to quit work in order to pursue better work elsewhere, an action she took as a hospital nurse working in Texas. She stated,

> I switched hospitals, because one of the ladies that had oriented me had gone to another hospital in the same city, and she met me one day and she said you should come to this other hospital in the city because, there is a whole different mentality, because the first hospital was run by Catholic nuns from the convent, and they were Polish nuns, and they weren't a kinder gentler nuns. There was just a lot of dissatisfaction at that hospital, and so … I quit.

She quit to avoid a dissatisfying situation and to pursue a satisfying one. At first it was satisfying, but then it turned dissatisfying. This is how she described it.

> …and then the two hospitals merged. We were expected to show up for work and we could be working at one or the other hospitals, one or the other ICUs, we never really knew, and that was going to be a job requirement. At one hospital they did open heart surgeries, and the other hospital they did other things, and they weren't going to give us an orientation, it was just going to be jump and swim. … I wasn't interested in going back to the other hospital at all, and then the nurse manager that I had really had problems with, she became the head of intensive care at the new combined hospital. So this was part of her strategy, to get people to work at the other hospital, to have us all flowed everywhere. So I quit.

After this she became a travelling nurse, working at different hospitals for short terms. Her last job in this capacity was in Chicago at a very large and busy hospital in which she round dissatisfaction again, not with the nursing manager but with the lack of support she was receiving from her coworkers, taking away from her ability to do her own work. She describes the "last straw" of her tolerance of working there in which she could not get help from coworkers to care for a back injury patient.

> I would have to leave my patient lay in whatever for two or three hours before I could finally find someone to help me turn my patient. And it just kind of drove me crazy after about two weeks of that, I called my company and I said I don't care if you take away my license, I don't care if you report me to the state board, I'm not going back there tomorrow, they thought of course that I lost my mind because, I never ever said, you know, I'd always been a happy go lucky, pretty positive and, had worked in some kind of cruddy places, but for the most part was pretty content, but they never heard me say that I wasn't going back tomorrow, I quit.

Tammy clearly demonstrates that although there are important repercussions, quitting is always an option. Tammy stated earlier that the circumstances surrounding her coming to Chicago were never ideal. She was initially supposed to go somewhere else; her sister lived in Chicago and wanted her to be closer, and it took longer than usual to get her license to practice in Illinois, so she was already tired and partially dissatisfied when she started working there. She persisted for as long as she could, but then finally had to quit regardless of the repercussions. After this posting she did not work in health care for five full years.

Venus and quitting.

Venus's experiences with quitting were not around dissatisfaction with her work. Aside from the unequal treatment she received as a woman, she enjoyed Geology. She eventually left this work because she was going through a divorce in which her husband left her with their four children and she needed to take care of them. She chose her children over her work.

She had actually chosen her family over her work when she started having children, so in a sense, her divorce gave her an excuse to quit and become a full-time mother. She said,

> I got married and in very short order within five years had four kids. So at that time after they were born I did a few consulting projects part time work, that kind of thing, but by the time the fourth baby came along, I was really winding down in the career.

For Venus, quitting was not a means to escape a dissatisfying job or to move to a more satisfying one. Quitting was a step in moving to a more satisfying life – one with her children.

Victor and quitting.

Victor naturally had experience with quitting as he held a number of jobs and played in a number of bands throughout his life. One particular instance of quitting deserves mention. In the band that toured Canada he experiences some problems with leadership and implementing his visions of where the band should be. The other front man and leader of the band and Victor would frequently disagree. The point at which Victor felt the band was no longer where he should be was when one band member gave his ultimatum. As Victor described it, "I think it came down to the bass player, saying it's him or me and they were going to have a meeting I said don't have a meeting, I'm out of here."

Victor had persisted with back pain and no sympathy, and with other band members not demonstrating enough commitment to the band or their own performances. Victor's "last straw"

came at the point when a decision had to be made as to whom was not going to continue with the band, and decided that it would be Victor himself.

Theme 2 summary.

Table 3: Participants and their Resolution of Dissatisfaction

Participant	Work	Underemployment and Dissatisfaction	Resolution of Dissatisfaction
Adam	Business plan writer	(Involuntary reduced employment) hours reduced, pay reduced	Found other work (relieving this underemployment but finding new underemployment)
	Unemployed worker	(Structural unemployment) Could not find a better job	Did not resolve – did not learn how to find work. Stayed in bus driver and interpreter work without finding anything more satisfying.
Cameron	Fisherman	He was burned out, empty inside	Quit. Went back for a few summers, then left it completely
	carpenter	Couldn't find work, hassles with working (involuntary reduced employment)	Stopped looking for consulting jobs because there just weren't enough
Cecelia	Call center operator, sushi bar waitress	Not appreciated, pay system changed without notice, unclear	Quit a dozen jobs because of dissatisfaction. Found RA work and stayed with strategies to

		management	overcome dissatisfaction
Danny	LPN	No room for advancement, or change, wanted to be a pilot but couldn't	Quit LPN to try to be a pilot. Didn't work and returned to LPN. Became fire fighter and quit LPN.
Demi	Accounting manager	Working outside her expertise, dealing with employee stress/complaints, became a mom and wanted to spend time with kids	was pregnant same time as merger, and when told she should stay off her feet while pregnant she was offered a package to retire (which allowed her to leave the account manager position) which she did and never returned
Tammy	Personal care Worker	Credential gap, no respect in "lower" position	Didn't like manager as hospital: quit. Didn't like manager at next hospital: quit. Burned out of travelling nurse: quit. Became a PCW and moved up to RN in the same business when she got her certification, then left to work at a better firm.
Venus	Geologist	Not a woman's field (opportunities denied, special preparations had to	Faced with having children and separation she diminished her work as geologist and eventually quit to

		be made when she worked in the field)	put her efforts into being a mother.
Heidi	Teacher	Bullied and harassed by principal	Did not like lack of work as a substitute music educator: quit. Didn't like being an unsuccessful real estate agent: quit. Returned to music education and was harassed: did not quit. Endured, and found a like person, they overcame the harassment together.
Hugh	CF Musician	Harassed by supervisor, posted away from family	Harassed, slandered and posted. Complained (redressed) and eventually was posted back. Retired without an apology or restitution. Would not quit because of financial obligations
Victor	Performing musician	Differences in opinion on how to lead band	Was unappreciated by band members: quit.

Decision to Quit.

Everyone has a threshold to help them decide when to quit. There are factors that come into play: investment into job, importance/value of job, relationship with coworkers, level of dissatisfaction, whether or not a satisfying alternative is available (better work)… Some

participants demonstrated a "last straw" point (threshold) that when reached led to quitting (most

notably Tammy).

Quit.

Quitting, or not surviving, was the most common reaction to dissatisfaction, most

remarkably for the participants when they were younger and just started working. Cecelia, Hugh

and Victor seemed to have the highest number of jobs such as waitress, call center operator,

dishwasher, canteen server and bookstore clerk, all of which were left by the participants

quitting. Tammy, as a travelling nurse working in the Chicago hospital, after being what she

articulated as "burned out," quit. In a sense, Cameron quit being a full-time fisherman when he

felt so empty that he gave himself to God. Danny quit his work as an LPN two times. The first

time was to pursue becoming a bush pilot but did not work out and he came back to that same

work. The second time was to become a fire fighter, where he stayed. Venus, when faced with

her husband leaving and the need to parent her children herself, quit her work as a Geologist,

although she was already "winding down in that career" as she put it. Victor again quit the

successful touring band he was in because the stress of working with the other front man was too

much. His advice was to "enjoy your work, or look elsewhere."

Stand up for yourself.

For those workers who were harassed, one option was to stand up to the harassment.

Hugh, after being harassed and slandered, appealed the decision of being posted. Heidi, in the

situation of being harassed daily as a teacher, found another teacher in the same situation.

Together they contacted the School Board and let them know the situation, which ended the

harassment situation for both of them. When Tammy was treated "like a dog" working as a

PCW, at one point she stood up for herself and said to the nurse manager, "Leave me alone!"

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Cecelia found herself in work that, to her, was very satisfying. One of the qualities of this work that contributed to her satisfaction was she could identify and work on dissatisfying situations before they escalated. This was after she had so many jobs that she quit when she was dissatisfied.

Understand work before you accept it.

One of Danny 's strategies when applying for work was to do his research and find out as much as he could about it so that he could anticipate dissatisfaction and avoid it if there was the potential. Cecelia eventually had a similar strategy. Her advice was to "not take jobs that would put you in dissatisfying situations." She also said one should "have a plan" to avoid and overcome dissatisfaction. Demi, in hindsight after receiving her retirement package when she left her work as an accounting manager, realized that she "never wanted to be in management."

Easier to quit with no investment in work.

One theme that emerged from the data was the tendency for younger people, who all happened to have little or no investment in a job, and were not in a situation where they needed the security of the job, could easily quit if it became dissatisfying. Hugh, Cecelia and Victor spoke of these situations. On the other hand, those participants who needed the security of the pension and/or the level of income were much more resistant to the option of quitting as a response to dissatisfaction with work. Hugh, when faced with being posted away from his family, did not quit but disputed the decision to post him there, which he eventually won after a year of living away from his family. Demi received a substantial severance package when she retired. She kept telling herself that after her children were born she would return to work. The severance package would allow her to stay at her leaving salary until the children were born. In

the end, she did not return to the work force but became a stay-at-home mother with a little accounting business in her basement.

Find support to help you through.

Heidi spoke of the bond that she had with her father. She could always call him and tell him how her day went, and felt supported and better about bad situations such as her dissatisfaction with work, or her failing marriage. She eventually started the process that would end her harassment when she found support in another teacher in the same situation, and that teacher found support in her. In Heidi's second year as a teacher she found another similar situation that a coworker was experiencing. She offered her support to this other teacher, and the harassing principal was forced to retire shortly thereafter. Cameron found support in God when he was at his lowest in the fishery. His relationship with God was truly a supportive one, and Cameron would ask God in the morning about his day, seeking God's guidance for the day.

Take action against dissatisfaction.

According to Cecelia, dissatisfaction should be addressed and minimized quickly. This is one of the elements of her work as a research assistant that made it very satisfying to her: she was able to address dissatisfaction because she was respected for her abilities.

Exercise and Rituals offer Relief.

Danny found that the time he was given each day when he worked as a fire fighter helped him to deal with the stress of his work. He could relieve the stress of being on the scene of accidents as well as that stress that he felt was caused by unpopular policies at work. Heidi's ritual was to burn a candle. While the candle was burning she would think of little problems and stresses in her life and "burn them away." She found this satisfying to relieve stress and relax her.

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Theme 3: Workers did not Show the Learning Abilities to Turn a Dissatisfying Situation into a Satisfying One

Dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment was overcome by all participants in different ways. According to Theme 2, the majority of participants quit, implying that there was little or no success in overcoming dissatisfaction through learning. Learning functioned differently for each participant through his or her battles with underemployment and dissatisfaction. In some cases the learning happened during the process of overcoming dissatisfaction, and in others the learning happened afterwards in the form of a lesson to take away from the experience. In the following section the learning that occurred as related to overcoming dissatisfaction is discussed.

Participants, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Adam, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Adam had to deal with a job that he enjoyed very much, writing business plans for the environmental firm, slowly diminishing and ultimately disappearing. He learned through this experience that his credential would not lead him to a satisfying career. On the subject of his Master's degree he said, "maybe I studied the wrong thing at university."

His interim jobs of bus driver and interpreter were both part-time and ultimately dissatisfying. While working these jobs he applied for a job that he thought he was guaranteed to get, but in the end he did not even get an interview. This is how he describes it,

I'm left with a sense of confusion now because it seems very hard to say how things work, I mean, not getting an interview for a job that I thought I was qualified for and that I knew people in was a surprise, and then just, it's hard, I don't know how things really work,

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The things he knew about applying for a job, such as knowing someone that works there is an advantage, all of a sudden did not seem true anymore. He articulated his confusion in the following way,

> How does this work? … I feel like it's a huge learning curve learning how to find a job, and it's not sort of skills that someone can teach you in a book, and it's not even clear to me that it works the way people say it works.

> In this case he learned that what he had previously thought to be accurate about finding work was in fact unreliable. Again he describes his anxiety,

> It doesn't seem quite as simple as just go out and get any job. Perhaps I've got more learning to do. Am I missing the point? Maybe it is easy and I'm just making it hard but, it's really got me. I have to say I'm at a loss for how to find a job.

> Unfortunately for his working career he did not replace this vacated knowledge with other knowledge that would lead him to getting better work. He did not learn how to overcome dissatisfaction. He did learn that he does not know how to find employment. It could also be said that he unlearned an unsuccessful way to find employment. He also struggles with how to go about learning a reliable way to find employment.

> Constructivism works because of coherence and consistency. In other words, everything we construct has to make sense with other meaning that co-exists with it, otherwise we construct the new meaning differently, and/or modify the existing meaning. Adam realized that his "known methods" of finding work were not being successful. All other meaning around work seemed to remain consistent, but he realized the part about how to successfully find a job did not work. He therefore constructed a gap to replace that false knowledge, which created turmoil. He was unsettled and stressed about not knowing how to find a job, or not knowing how to go about

learning a successful way to find a job. He tried some online resources and the employment center, but those methods all were basically sitting in front of a computer to search for and apply for work, which did not bring successful.

Cameron, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Through his emptiness as a fisherman, Cameron found God. In Cameron's words, "the greatest mentor in my life … the Holy Spirit, and he's done the most in my life, the invisible Holy Spirit." Through this new relationship with God he learned to share his decisions and follow God's guidance. The stresses of bearing the responsibility of supervisor were lifted when he found that he could rely on God to help him with his day-to-day decisions. In his tutelage as a carpenter he learned that following his mentor's lead was without stress and very satisfying to him. When he started to create a career as a carpenter for himself and his family, he found that, once again, God was calling him out of it. The industry was competitive, and he was susceptible to lose money working on ill-negotiated contracts. He finally left carpentry as a career and continued as a Pastor. He describes his identity through his relationship with God as follows,

> I had to define who I was, by my relationship with God instead of what I did, and that's the perspective change … that happens to some people, and if I didn't do that, I think it would be very hard to be positive today if I didn't have the perspective change in what defined me, then I would be always looking back with regrets like 'look what I gave away,' 'look where I am now, nowhere.'

He learned to overcome dissatisfaction with work by relying on God to help him realize that he should not be in that work, as God helped him realize for the vocations of fishing and carpentry. Cameron learned that by subordinating himself to God he could defer matters of responsibility. Although he did not directly admit it, the data showed that he did not prefer to be

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in position of leading, supervising, or responsibility. He was empty as a fisherman and frustrated

as a carpenter, but happy as a pastor. He also stated that God led him out of both fishing and

carpentry (as a vocation).

As a fisherman Cameron seemed desperate in his emptiness and desperately needed a

way out. Whether he constructed or discovered God, all of a sudden God was there, guiding

Cameron, filling emptiness. In terms of constructivism, Cameron realized that he had a gap in

his life and he found something to fill that gap. He was unhappy and hopeless in the sixteen hour

days he worked as a fisherman. He did not have himself what it would have taken to abandon

the high amount of security the fishing industry supplied him. By finding God and deferring

responsibility to Him, Cameron was given the strength to face the unknown of leaving the

fishery and pursuing his relationship with God. The meaning that Cameron constructed around

his relationship with God, in addition to the legitimacy that God provided in this decision, gave

Cameron a legitimate solution to his dissatisfaction with the fishing industry. Clearly giving

himself to God was not just a temporary thing as he pursued two university degrees in Divinity

as well as became a pastor. His identity became fundamentally about his relationship with God.

Cecelia, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Cecelia worked at a dozen jobs over a two year period that all ended with her quitting,

citing dissatisfaction as the reason. In response to one of those jobs she said, "there was very

little investment of my time, energy and training into the job. … The restaurant industry in

Halifax is bustling and I was employed again within like 2 or 3 days." The fact that there were a

dozen jobs that all ended up the same begs the question of whether she learned anything from

these experiences that would help her overcome the dissatisfaction she experienced in these jobs.

She did admit to learning a few things throughout these experiences such as not liking sushi, not

liking certain parts of work as an entrepreneur, and not wanting to work in an environment where she is a minority: "I would never want to work in a position or live in a position or be in a position where being a white female I was a minority group." As an RA she learned that she is satisfied working in an environment in which she was respected for her intellectual decision-making and contributions, and that she liked working on her own with little supervision. Aside from quitting, she did not learn how to overcome underemployment. She described this work as follows,

> working and being confident in knowing that you do have the authority to make the decisions but also in a consistent dialogue with the other team members so that you know what expectations are there and they know what expectations are there and just so that there is that mutual agreement, so dialogue and confidence building.

Cecelia did not change her behaviour during those twelve jobs over two years. They all ended with her quitting due to dissatisfaction. As an RA she felt valued and respected and had more freedom. The differences can be expressed as value and independence. In the dozen jobs she was at the lowest level in all of these firms, basically working at what she was told to do. In the Sushi Bar, when she showed promise in the form of larger tips, they were taken away and shared among her coworkers. She could excel but was not rewarded for it from her employer. At the call center she was "tethered" to a cubicle, working from the manual that she was given to deal with customers. She described this situation as follows,

> The most important lesson that I've ever learned for anything, that I do not ever, ever, ever, ever want to work in an organization, in a heavily organized, micro managed, human resources driven corporate atmosphere or environment where I am tethered to a

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cubicle and having to endure all kinds of crap to make some big corporate … head

billions of dollars.

She had no chance to excel, and was not valued by both the customers and management. As an

entrepreneur she loved books but did not like, nor would admit that she was good at,

administration and accounting. She described it as follows,

I'm a really crappy business person. That unless there's a second income coming in, I'd

love to run a bookstore again, but unless I know that I don't need to make money from it,

or that there's someone else taking care of the books and the money management, I'll

never, there's no way it can happen. I've learned that I'm not a very good entrepreneur

Her freedom to enjoy the books was stunted by the overwhelming responsibility towards running

the business.

In her work as an RA she had to prove herself. She said, "I worked my ass off for the last

2 years and I've proved that I can do it. … I proved that I do think about things and that's been

rewarded and I've been given a little bit of license." It was then that she felt valued for her hard

work, and was given freedom to work on her own on larger tasks given to her. She did not have

to run the business and was technically the lowest level of employee as an RA, but respected and

allowed to make larger contributions to projects.

Another factor that may have contributed to this shift in her satisfaction was that as an

RA she had two children whereas she had none during those two years and dozen jobs. The need

for her to maintain a regular income had increased as she was now feeding more than herself.

She was able to stay in that job longer. She referred to it as that "longest job that I've ever had."

From a constructivist's view, Cecelia might have come to believe from previous experience and

meaning construction that as a worker she was entitled to a certain amount of respect from

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employers. Perhaps this respect took the form of freedom to earn based upon performance, or

freedom to find her own way to do her job better (for both her and the company). She found

neither of these things at the Sushi Bar or call center. From her entrepreneurial experiences

running bookstores she was given the freedom to run the business her way, but she did not have

the skills to administer and budget effectively and thus disliked those tasks. In her words, "in

terms of management and organization, … I was dissatisfied that I had to do that because I didn't

have the skills to do it, and I also don't really care about that kind of stuff."

By the end of that first two years she had constructed the belief that she was not satisfied

with any of those jobs. In these three examples there is no evidence that she attempted to

compromise with employers or to learn about running businesses to help avoid the dissatisfaction

that brought her to quit.

She did not admit to dissatisfaction as an RA. She said that this was "the only job where

dissatisfaction is easily identified and worked on so that it is minimized", something that she did

not admit to being able to do in previous jobs. Although it is unclear what she learned, she

seemed to have acquired the ability to avoid or overcome dissatisfaction at work, an ability that

was not apparent during her first few years of work.

Danny, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

As an experienced LPN, Danny was no longer challenged. He wanted to be a pilot, and

quit his LPN work to pursue a career as a bush pilot. He learned not long after starting on this

road that it was a much longer process than he thought, and he returned to his former LPN work.

Again he was presented with an opportunity to pursue work as a Canadian Forces pilot, the

application process of which he knew would be a hefty commitment with no guarantee of

success at the end. Through these experiences Danny learned to research work that he was

interested in to understand it better and avoid potential dissatisfaction. As Danny was also

presented with an opportunity to become a fire fighter at the same time, a vocation that he

researched and found to be suitable, he chose the path of the fire fighter over that of the pilot. As

he put it,

> my brother was taking a stab at getting into the fire department and he suggested I try to
>
> which I did I was unsuccessful but through the process and the following process of
>
> learning about firefighting I became better prepared for the next time that I applied.

He overcame the dissatisfaction he felt along the path of the bush pilot by abandoning that path

to return to the security of his former LPN work. Although he thought he knew what the process

was to become a pilot, he was unpleasantly surprised by the exaggerated time it would take, with

no guarantees of a job at the end. He decided, when he applied to become a firefighter the

second time, that he would know as much as he could about it. He described this in the

following way. "As a firefighter I could handle my job fine but then after a couple years if I

witnessed a horrific accident in your car crash if I can't handle that that's not good job for me."

He also knew that this research would *not* give him a complete picture of what it would be like

for him to work as a firefighter. Danny said, "you can have an idea of what a job will be like in

how you like it but until you're actually doing the job and exactly happened in the job you don't

really know." In the end he successfully applied and accepted a position as a fire fighter. At the

time of the interview he had been in this job for years and was not dissatisfied.

Danny's learning in the face of dissatisfaction included learning that the road to

becoming a pilot is not as short and straight as he initially thought, or hoped, it would be. He

also learned, likely in response to this, to research and understand a job before he commits to it

as a career, which he did when he applied to the fire department. In terms of overcoming

dissatisfaction, Danny left the LPN work partially because he was dissatisfied but also because he was able to take some time and pursue what he really wanted to do: become a pilot. His first attempt failed and he returned to LPN work for five more years, and then quit to become a firefighter. Changing careers for Danny was not based upon fleeing dissatisfaction but rather pursuing a longstanding desire (pre-dating his LPN work) to become a pilot. In a sense, the LPN work was never permanent but basically to provide security to himself and his family until the opportunity arose to move into something more desirable.

Demi, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

As an accountant, Demi was always satisfied. She was continually presented with opportunities to do further training, and to advance in the company. Ultimately she advanced to the position of Accounting Manager, which unfortunately for her involved a shift away from accounting and into managing people. She learned that she did not like this side of accounting, and became dissatisfied with this work. At this time her company merged with a similar company and her new role involved layoffs. She described the merger as follows,

> The organization I work for merged with its competitor, so we went from being enemies for years and years and competitors, to having to become this one happy family, and at that time also we had to streamline, and we had to go from two buildings to one, from 200 people to 150 people or 125 people.

She found it difficult telling her workers that they were losing their jobs. As she was pregnant at this time, and her physician recommended that she stay home from work for her health and the health of her babies, the company decided to offer her a retirement package in order to reduce the number of people doing her job from two to one. She happily accepted, thinking that after her children were born that she could return to accounting work. After her

children were born she ended up staying home with them and starting her own little one-person accounting firm in her basement.

Demi learned that she prefers accounting work over manager work, and that she liked being a stay-at-home mother. Overcoming dissatisfaction with work for Demi was serendipitous to the merger. In the end, as a result of her newfound awareness of her preferences, she became a full-time stay-at-home mother and started a small accounting business out of her home office. She had found the balance that allowed her to be satisfied at work and home.

Heidi, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

When she completed her studies to become a music educator, Heidi found little work available. She knew the process was to substitute teach and then work a few terms before she would be eligible to apply for permanent work. As the availability of substitute teaching work was inadequate, she left to retrain to become a real estate agent. She did this work for a few years unsuccessfully and was pleased when she was asked by a potential employer if she was still teaching music. She returned to this work and in a short time had secured her first one-year term appointment as a music educator in a local elementary school.

Through her survival in his highly dissatisfying situation of harassment she learned many things, not only about teaching but about herself as well. At first, as a new teacher, she was confused in the contradictory information she was receiving from her new principal, as opposed to her Music Education professors. She was told by the principal to make her activities longer, which was contradictory. "It was frustrating to me because … I was told by my supervisors and my professors, in this field, in music education, [that] kids … lose their attention so often." She did not know to question her professors or the principal, and the basis of everything she knew as

a music educator had come into question. On top of that, she said "I was stressed out all the time."

Heidi is not only self-directed, but persistent as well. She said, "I like to think that I try to handle my problems on my own. I think I'm a bit stubborn like that." On solving problems she said,

I don't think you feel the rewards of dealing with actually issues unless you actually have the desire to want to deal with them, and I have the desire to want to deal with it, but I also know when I need help, too. … Do I feel more rewarded if I solve my own problems? Yeah, for sure.

In addition, her father's motto was "[We] never give up." With these characteristics Heidi was armed to face the harassment.

She learned to better prepare for her classes and to predict when her principal was going to show and what he wanted to see.

I build myself up in preparing what I expect to happen, like I would not, nothing would surprise me, so if he came in with a clip board I was ready for it, I mentally prepared myself. … I try hard to predict some of the things that he would try to say or do, so that when he actually did them I would be ready for them.

This was a very tough time for her. She wanted to be a music educator, but not this way.

I knew that this was what I wanted to do, and though I came really close to thinking 'I don't want to do this anymore' I tried to tell myself that this was just a negative experience, and that maybe next year will be a positive one and I was going to give it one more try.

She had a ritual that helped in this situation in which she would light a candle and lay down beside it, forcing herself to think through the situation until the candle had melted away. She added, "as an inch would go I'd solve another problem in my mind, just giving myself a time to sort it all out. That's how I solved a lot of things, a lot of those kind-of overwhelming things." During one of her breakdowns at school one teacher suggested she speak with another who was going through a similar situation.

> I ran down to her room and I found her down there and we talked and we talked and we talked, and I called her that night and we talked the next day, and it was just so wonderful to hear that I wasn't the only one, that I wasn't by myself, and she was going through the exact same thing, so we talked and tried to figure if there was some sort of common bond, why we were the only ones that seemed to be picked on.

Heidi realized that what she was enduring was inappropriate, and together they would work to stop it for both of them. "Once we discovered we weren't the only ones, we decided to take action." They learned the procedures to submit complaints and ended up stopping the harassment for the rest of the year. This knowledge was put to the test the following year when she encountered another teach going through the same situation, and helped her submit a complaint which led to the forcible retirement of that principal, and the elimination of this other teacher's harassment.

Rather than quitting, Heidi endured the harassment. Perhaps she was unsure of the difference between the music education she learned at university and actual music education in the schools. The harassment did not start as such, but as more frequently occurring observation sessions with the principal, and slowly increasing requests from the principal for lessons plans and such. Initially Heidi did not know if it was her that was deficient as a teacher, or if the

principal was being excessive. The meeting Heidi had with the other teacher was the moment in which she realized that it was the principal at fault. The legitimacy that came with consensus was more meaningful than that of the principal. This helped her quickly review her experiences and realize (construct the meaning) that she was being harassed. After this realization, it was inevitable that she and the other teacher would take action against the principal, thus removing the harassment experienced by a number of teachers at that school.

In her next term assignment Heidi met a teacher experiencing something similar and spared no time to tell her story and what she did. Shortly thereafter this principal was forced to retire. Heidi clearly learned how to overcome her work dissatisfaction while staying in the same job. The key for her was in making sense of the principal's behaviour, which she did by realizing that it was not just Heidi who was the victim and that the principal was at fault, not her.

In the end, Heidi learned how to recognize and respond to harassment. She also learned how to be a better teacher.

> That event has changed my life, has changed how I look at my teaching right now, and has changed how I view people. … [I've changed,] not just the way I teach, it's the way I perceive other people. The way I look at people and expect people to do things. I don't assume a whole lot much more. I don't assume that all professionals are professionals. … I've learned that you're not alone out there. I've learned especially in my profession, there's 10 thousand teachers in Nova Scotia, I learned that this is a problem. … I've learned to remind myself that … I'm a good person and I continually remind myself of that.

Hugh, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

In his youth Hugh held many jobs for the purpose of "pocket money" all of which he

quit. Hugh made the following statement in regard to what he learned working as a dishwasher,

labourer and running a hockey canteen in his youth,

> I'd have to say I learned something from all of them. … All of those different
>
> experiences certainly, in hindsight, enriched me, perhaps from a skill level because now I
>
> know how to lay a stone floor, I know how to run a hockey canteen, and I know how to
>
> wash dishes. … But, the things I learned in all those jobs weren't really related to the
>
> actual tasks that I was supposed to be doing. You know, working in the Chinese
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> restaurant, it was owned by a family, and so I learned cultural things, about Chinese
>
> people. … It may also enhance me because they are laborious, they don't pay well, and
>
> some of them were really hard work. It certainly makes me more empathetic to people
>
> that are stuck in jobs that they feel that they have to do, so they can put bread on the
>
> table.

He did start university studies in psychology, education and music because those were his

passions, and held jobs within all of those fields, but became a professional musician in the

Canadian Forces when the opportunity presented itself. He worked for years as a clarinet player,

and eventually accepted a posting as a bandmaster in an Air Force volunteer band; a position for

which he was partially qualified.

He knew the music very well, but needed to learn more about administering a band. "I

knew very little about the job when I took it, or when I requested it, but … I understood that my

job was just to run a band, I didn't know about the obstacles that I would face." This work, aside

from parts of the administration side, was very satisfying for him, but eventually his relationship

with his supervisor weakened and he was transferred (posted), which he found extremely dissatisfying. He believed his supervisor was slandering and harassing him, and commenced appealing the transfer through legitimate military means. After a year he did get posted back, but not as the bandmaster. He was never satisfied with any resolution to the slander and harassment complaints that he lodged, either before or after he finally retired from the Canadian Forces.

Hugh did not admit to learning how to overcome dissatisfaction in his youth: he would just quit. At the end of his career when he was harassed and posted, he was reminded of the extremely unbalanced power relation between the Canadian Forces and its individual members. He also learned how to redress a decision to the fullest, which, aside from helping him receive another posting back to his home after a year, did not otherwise lead to any satisfying resolution. As an afterthought, Hugh admitted in so many words that perhaps he could have avoided the incident in his advice to his replacement.

> In the event that a replacement did come, my advice would be to … encourage him to develop a good relationship with the supervisor, but keep it on a very professional level, and I would also encourage him to … take care of small problems before they become big problems.

Aside from the unfortunate nature of the end of his military career, Hugh has had overall success with his career. He managed to turn one of his passions in life, performance music, into a career that spanned two decades. This melding of hobby and vocation helped him to maintain a high level of satisfaction throughout his career. When asked about advice he could offer to youth on work and income, Hugh had this to say,

> I tell my young kids now that they're getting to an age that they want pocket money and they have big class trips to pay for and things like this and you know they're asking me to

give them a job and stuff like that and I sort of encourage them, my slogan that I lay on them is, 'figure out what you're good at, and then figure out a way to earn an income from it rather than searching through the want ads and spending your time doing something that could be dissatisfying and you're going through the motions.'

Tammy , Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Tammy has held a number of dissatisfying jobs. Her first was as a hospital nurse in Texas which ended with her quitting because of her dissatisfaction with her manager. She went to another Texas hospital which she found very satisfying, in particular her new manager. "This woman was my boss and she was just big on education and learning, and I felt like I'd fall into heaven." Tammy always preferred new experiences and opportunities for education in her work.

The two hospitals merged and her first manager became her new manager, so she quit. On her nursing work in Texas she said, "I had been in Texas for six years, and I had kind of learned all I had needed, I needed to go see different things." She moved into work as a travelling nurse.

> I … did travel nursing, which I loved. I enjoyed it because I got to go to different hospitals and, big hospitals and little hospitals, and learn and do and get back into bed teaching hospital, which is where we were, there were sort of teaching hospitals, but not on the same scale as the VG. And every day was, it was hard work, but every day you learn something, or you did something new, I enjoyed that a lot.

The new experiences and frequent opportunities to learn were satisfying for Tammy. She described this work in the following manner. "Wherever I went I could get along with people, because I'm pretty good at figuring out how to fit in. I'm pretty quiet in the beginning, I ask questions, I try to help, I've never had a problem with that before" until her work in Chicago.

This work was so dissatisfying to Tammy, and she was so tired and burned out, that she quit regardless of the probability that she would probably lose her license.

Tammy was comfortable moving into new positions and becoming familiar with the people and procedures. She seemed excited about these new opportunities. In spite of this, Tammy did not demonstrate the ability to turn a dissatisfying situation into a satisfying one, aside from quitting. In fact, she quit the Chicago job with a high probability of losing her license and thus her livelihood. She did not learn how to face and overcome work dissatisfaction as a result of this experience.

After a five-year break from nursing she started the re-certification process and chose to work as a PCW to re-familiarize herself with the health care system. In her words, "because I'd been out of nursing … that I should probably reacquaint myself with taking care of people." She was dissatisfied in this work in terms of not being able to use her nursing knowledge and skills, and by how she was treated by nursing staff and in particular the nursing manager at one nursing home in which she was treated "like a dog." Throughout this dissatisfaction Tammy remained calm and patient. Perhaps this was due to the temporary nature of her work as a PCW, or perhaps because she had five years to contemplate how she left Chicago. She eventually overcame the PCW dissatisfaction when she eventually re-qualified as an RN and started that work again, leaving the PCW work behind her. Through these experiences she learned how hard PCWs worked and how badly they were treated. She vowed to not treat PCWs any different than other health care workers. Tammy had the following to say about returning to work after re-qualifying as an RN. "When I became an RN and I would go back to the nursing home, I would try to treat everybody with respect … and make their lives a little easier because I know what it's like."

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Of particular note in Tammy's experiences with dissatisfaction with work is how credentialing plays such an important role in the work she can do. She had to re-qualify to work as an RN even though she still had most of that knowledge. She was judged by others based on her position as a PCW, not by her expertise, which was as much as some of the nursing staff. In Tammy's words, "it motivated me to study at my reentry program so that I can get my qualification back, because, with more qualification and more education you have more control." On her return she also came in contact with the nursing manager who treated her like a dog, and found that she was now treated with respect, based on her position.

Venus, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

After graduating from Geology school in Nova Scotia Venus had to move out-of-province to find work as a Geologist. When she did she learned that Geology was not very inclusive of women, which was the crux of her dissatisfaction. When her and her husband started having a family, she learned that she loved being a mother, and started reducing her works as a Geologist to spend more time with her children.

> I got married and in very short order within five years had four kids. So at that time after they were born I did a few consulting projects part time work, that kind of thing, but by the time the fourth baby came along, I was really winding down in the career. … I didn't know though at the time when I had them that my career would take second place, everything would be not the same passion as an interest as the children would be for me.

She left Geology to become a full-time stay-at-home parent after her husband left her, thus ending her dissatisfaction with geology work.

Venus did not learn to overcome dissatisfaction as a result of her work as a Geologist. She had already turned her attention to her children before she had to address this dissatisfaction.

It is as if her love for her children pre-existed before her work as a Geologist, and she only realized it when she started having a family.

> Venus loved to learn, and would take university courses just for the sake of learning. I decided about halfway through that three-year period that I would go back to school, which at that time with no major end result in mind, I just knew that I loved being in school and needed something kind of positive to focus on and take my mind off … I was taking mostly sciences which have always been my interest, it was the stuff that interested me, but I would happily go back to school and stay there for the rest of my life taking courses, I love being in school.

As for her future plans, she mentioned that "once I get the kids through school I might see about just having the one job. I would love to take more courses at university as well, it will happen but I'll be like 65 when it does." At the time of our interview two of her children were in university and the other two were in high school, and she was still devoted to them beyond anything she had for her work as a pharmacist.

Victor, Learning and Overcoming Dissatisfaction

Like Cecelia and Hugh, Victor also had a number of jobs as a young person, all of which he quit with no hesitation when they became dissatisfying, or inconvenient. He had an interest and natural ability in music and started as self-taught. "I wasn't the type of person to take lessons, I taught myself, but I had a bit of a talent for it … and an okay voice to sing." He eventually became a successful musician which he found very satisfying.

> I just was gliding on my natural ability although I did take a few lessons, stuff like that, but I never really worked hard to be able to what I did it just came naturally and I was always in debt I was not very handy around the house.

He finally quit a very successful band in order to overcome the dissatisfaction he felt working with some of his band mates. Part of the problem was a disagreement between band members as to the direction that the band should take. Another problem was Victor's inability to let things go, which he describe overcoming in the following way.

> I've learned to let things go. I would say things to people on stage which is a total no-no. You cannot tell someone to slow down on stage, 'hey man what are you doing, don't play those notes, those are bad notes,' or, 'it's your turn to play man and you're not doing what you're supposed to do.' It's no good. It's anti-productive. People would tell you to go screw yourself. … I still don't have a great bedside manner but I've made huge progress with it but I'm still not the greatest band leader although I have had this band for 12 years and we're all still together. I've had some problems with the bass player in this band and we've ironed them out and we've moved on and now we get along great … I feel I have made a lot of progress since then.

Since quitting that successful band he has worked in a number of bands as leader, singer, conga player, and manager. As a manager he felt dissatisfaction when he would make a deal with the venue's representative, book the musicians and the gear, and then have to listen to the representative tell him that the gig was cancelled. He describes one instance,

> [The venue manager] had already given me the 'wind of change,' the mutterings of some people, … it's a few people saying 'well maybe they played too much.' For every one of those people I guarantee there's two that are really looking forward to seeing the band, and I happen to believe that, because that's what I do.

Although he felt this very unfair, he accepted this as part of the industry. Victor learned that bands and musicians have to evolve in order to change with the industry and the fans. He also

learned that he had a tendency to react, which eventually led to him quitting the band. He has since learned to "let things go" which has decreased his dissatisfaction as a musician.

Victor, like Cecelia and Hugh, most likely learned nothing about overcoming work dissatisfaction as a young worker. Victor learned, as a professional musician, that it is not productive to comment on other musicians' mistakes. The eventual end of his role in the successful band was related to this as well as the band members not sharing a mutual vision of how the band should evolve. Perhaps this is related to the dual leadership of the band, attributed to dual front men. It went unresolved and Victor quit that band to stop the dissatisfaction. He eventually learned to give smarted feedback. He also understood about the "winds of change" concept in music, most likely from such a long and varied career in performance music. Lastly, he knew how to negotiate with venue managers, and was prepared for the out-of-the-blue aforementioned cancellation of a gig before it happened. Although he did not seem to learn anything from this dispute, he asserted his interpretation of what the crowd wanted. In a follow-up discussion he described how the gig was a big success: how he was correct. He also expressed that he would probably not be doing the same gig next year.

Theme 3 Summary

Changing one's work from dissatisfying to satisfying.

Only one of the ten participants overcame dissatisfaction intentionally and independently. There was no evidence that anyone employed a self-directed learning project. Heidi overcame because she did not give up, and she communicated with another person in the same situation of harassment. Also, nobody pursued their own solution by first contacting a counselor or advisor to express their dissatisfaction.

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Not one of the participants in this study overcame their dissatisfaction by making a plan and carrying it out. Adam no longer knew how to get a job. Cameron quit his job because God "led him out of it" and pursued a degree in Divinity. Cecelia finally found that she liked working as an RA. Danny quit work as an LPN but failed to become a bush pilot, and then quit five years later to become a fire fighter. Demi realized she wanted to be an account and a mother, not a manager, and was offered a retirement package so she did not have to quit. Heidi found someone else being harassed, helping her realize it was the principal and not her that was out of line. Hugh did not quit but eventually retired to leave the dissatisfaction. Tammy endured dissatisfaction in a temporary job. Venus quit a job that was not too dissatisfying in order to spend her time being a mother. Victor quit but realized after that he was bossy and inappropriate with his comments sometimes. Aside from Heidi, no participant found a way to overcome dissatisfaction at work while keeping the same job and lifestyle.

Learning about themselves

Many participants learned something about themselves through the process of overcoming dissatisfaction. Adam learned that he really did not know how to find work. Cecelia learned that she preferred work in which she was free to be successful in her own way, and that she like to be respected and valued. Cameron learned that he preferred to subordinate himself to God and let God guide him rather than being the boss and the responsible one. Demi changed her identity when she was pregnant with her second and third children to include being a mother, sharing that space with "accountant," and removing "manager" completely. Heidi learned to be more professional and learned to be a better judge of people. Hugh learned that he would be better served dealing with problems quicker rather than letting them grow into bigger problems. Tammy realized what it was like working as a PCW and vowed to treat them better in

her role as an RN. Venus learned that she preferred being a mother over being a Geologist. Victor realized that he did not treat people as well as he should, and this probably contributed to his leaving the band.

Learning about work

There was also learning about work. Adam did not know how to get hired. Cecelia realized she did not know how to run a business, which contributed to hers failing. As youth, Cecelia, Hugh and Victor found it easy to quit work in which they had made little or no investment, and did not value. Danny learned that researching work before pursuing it would help a person understand how potentially good of a fit that work would be for him/her. Possibly Cecelia, and definitely Hugh, realized that it is much harder to quit work when you are responsible for the security of your family than not. Hugh came to better understand the language and culture of the Chinese people he worked with. Hugh and Tammy came to appreciate those people that work in low-paying, laborious jobs out of necessity.

Other Learning-Related Findings

Returning to formal education was not the strategy to overcome dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. Only Heidi returned to formal education after unsuccessfully attempting to become a music educator. She did a weekend course on becoming a real estate broker, which eventually failed after three years, in which time she returned to music education.

A very common response to dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment is to return to formal education. This is what schools advertise, and the solution for everyone in my pilot study. Curiously, only one participant of this study had this response to their dissatisfaction. Venus took university courses while she was at home with the children, but did so because she loved to learn things. She also returned to Pharmacy school, but this was not a response to the

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dissatisfaction she felt as a Geologist. In fact, it was years after she stopped working as a Geologist that she started Pharmacy School. Cameron also returned to school but not as a response to his dissatisfaction as a fisherman. His dissatisfaction with the fishery was overcome when he gave himself to God and was gone when he started Divinity school.

Sometimes as life changes, people's identities and needs change, changing the condition of work, underemployment and dissatisfaction. When Demi and Venus became mothers their dedication to their work diminished and was replaced by the dedication to their families. In both cases it was easier to leave their work because work was no longer such a defining feature of them.

In many cases, overcoming dissatisfaction is not accompanied by learning, specifically learning how to overcome dissatisfaction. Everyone in this study overcame dissatisfaction, but the only participant that came close to doing so as one would successfully take action against a problem was Heidi. For Cecelia, overcoming dissatisfaction was accomplished through quitting, but then she found another job, similar to the one she just quit, which led her to a repeat of the dissatisfaction.

The learning that occurs as a result of overcoming dissatisfaction is not necessarily about work, underemployment, and avoiding future dissatisfaction. In some cases it is about understanding oneself a little better, such as what one's preferences or limits are.

Overcoming dissatisfaction with work is not as simple as changing one dissatisfying element of work. Based on how easy it was to find participants to do this study, and how many people admit to dissatisfaction who hear about this study, a great many of us experience dissatisfaction at work. Many factors have to contribute to make work itself dissatisfying. The solution not only involves addressing these dissatisfying elements but oneself and the unique

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combination of factors that sum to one's reality. To complicate this, sometimes the solution to

dissatisfying work seems to appear from nowhere unexpectedly such as Demi's retirement.

There is no formula to follow that will lead to satisfying work. Rather, accept that life is a series

of experiences that keep us constantly evaluating and changing ourselves and our realities:

hopefully for the better.

Chapter Summary

The themes that were discussed in this chapter were the following:

1. Workers want to feel safe, valued and free.

2. Workers respond to dissatisfaction by quitting.

3. Workers did not show the learning abilities to turn a dissatisfying situation into a satisfying

    one.

These themes are closely related in patterns unique to each participant, just as each participant

experienced underemployment and dissatisfaction in unique ways.   The first theme related

closely to the forms of underemployment experienced by participants. In many cases, these

forms of underemployment related more to a deficiency approach to work than previously

identified forms from the literature.

The second theme identified a trend in which workers, based upon the ten participants of

this study, tend to quit when dissatisfaction is present. Each participant experienced this in

different ways, including: repeatedly quitting the same type of job with no apparent change in

behaviour; quitting to avoid a dissatisfying situation; quitting to pursue a satisfying career

choice, and not quitting because of financial reasons. Only one participant did not quit any

work, but ended up accepting a retirement package which severed the tie between her and a

dissatisfying job.

The last theme, related to learning, was a discussion of how no participant successfully created and carried out a plan to reduce or eliminate dissatisfaction while staying in the same job. The only participant who came close was Heidi who was enduring harassment with a high level of anxiety and accidentally found out about another teacher experiencing the same thing. Once they discussed the situation they realized it was harassment and pursued a resolution successfully. If another teacher had not connected the two, Heidi may have quit in order to escape the harassment.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to better understand the learning that takes place as underemployed people overcome dissatisfaction with work. The research questions driving this study were:

1.   How do participants make sense of their perceived underemployment?

2.   How do participants make sense of their work dissatisfaction?

3.   What role does learning play for people attempting to overcome work dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment?

The Proposal

The dissatisfaction that many people have with their work leads to many different problems, including unhappiness, discouragement, stress and anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem and confidence, and loss of identity (Dooley & Prawse, 2004; Kessler, Turner & House, 1988). There are many different ways that workers experience dissatisfaction, as are the problems that result from the experience. Work dissatisfaction may lead to problems with depression and loss of creativity, one's sense of self-esteem, confidence (Livingstone, 1999b), overall mental health, security, wage stagnation, and eventually loss of job and career identity (Dooley & Prawse, 2004). Some people base their sense of identity on their work (Dooley & Prawse, 2004) and their ability to obtain appropriate work.

This study focused on workers dissatisfied with work as a result of underemployment. Underemployment has been defined in terms of the worker's wasted potential. O'Toole defines underemployment as "the underutilization of education, training, skills, intelligence, and other human resources" (1977, p. 36). Some have taken this wasted potential and expressed it as a gap between educational attainment and job entry requirements (Diamond & Bedrosin, 1970;

Livingstone, 1999b); or between educational attainment and the actual knowledge and skills required to do a job (Berg, 1970; Collins, 1979, Livingstone, 1999b). There are a number of definitions.

When people believe that there is a proper match between one's skills and knowledge and a job, there will be people who become disappointed when they cannot find the proper job. A potentially risky belief that some underemployed and dissatisfied workers hold is that they *deserve* better work. The determination of *satisfying* is subjective and thus different for everyone. Dissatisfied workers who recognize that they are by definition underemployed likely feel that they *deserve* better work. When these dissatisfied workers cannot find suitable work, or find themselves in work in which they are dissatisfied, some of the aforementioned ill effects can come into play. This study explored the dissatisfaction of ten people who overcame it in order to better understand workings with dissatisfaction as well as the role learning plays as people overcome it.

There are a number of adult learning theories that are utilized to explain learning. A number of these were mentioned in chapter two but radical constructivism, the theory that people construct their realities to best match their experiences, was chosen to serve as the lens through which to make sense of all learning that occurred as these participants overcame dissatisfaction. One tenet of radical constructivism is that meaning and reality are temporary, only lasting until better meaning and more up-to-date realities present themselves. People can change. People can change as a response, and people can change in order to cause a response.

There was no evidence in the literature describing how one can overcome dissatisfaction with work, so if someone who was actually dissatisfied sought help with a counselor or

employment worker, there would be no evidence-based solutions available for him/her to attempt.

This study used a basic interpretive qualitative design that relied on interview data to explore how people experiences underemployment, dissatisfaction with it, and learning as they attempted to overcome it. The theoretical framework of the study was radical constructivism, which emphasizes individual uniqueness and the use of all experiences in meaning making. Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning making of its participants. This study was designed to focus on the meaning construction of its participants around their work, underemployment, dissatisfaction, and overcoming it. The meaning that was constructed and re-constructed through this process evidences the learning that occurred.

The form of validity used is validity as the incitement to learn, designed to be consistent with the subjective, constructivist nature of this study. The write-up and findings are presented to show their trustworthiness, but the ultimate test of validity is if the participants' stories and findings resonate with the reader in such a way that the reader considers, learns from, and changes as a result of experiencing this write-up.

Data was collected through interviews in which the researcher and participant discussed work, learning, dissatisfaction and learning. Openness and reciprocity were emphasized in order to welcome and capture the subjective nature of the participants' description of his/her reality.

The Participants

The following is a summary of each participant's experiences around work, underemployment, dissatisfaction, overcoming dissatisfaction, and the learning that was involved. Adam had earned a Master's degree and had a job he found very satisfying, but the work diminished to nothing. He then worked in a number of low-wage jobs, some of which he

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found dissatisfying and some of which he quit. At the time of the interview he had just found out that his application, which he thought was a sure thing, was not successful for another job that he was really looking forward to. He learned that he did not actually know how to successfully apply for and get hired in a desirable job. Nothing he knew to try was working, and he was left with his two part-time jobs to provide security for his family.

Cameron worked long hours in the fishery, all of his life. It came to the point where he felt empty and burned out. It was at this point that he found God. He studied Divinity and became a carpenter, which did not work out. He eventually became a Pastor, making a very low wage, but very satisfied. He learned that he was more satisfied at work and in life when he subordinated himself to God, relying on God to guide him in his decisions.

Cecelia worked a dozen low-wage service-industry jobs in her first two years in the workforce. In each job she would find herself dissatisfied, sometimes from feeling like a minority, or not happy with treating books like profit-generating products, and ultimately quit. She eventually completed a Bachelor's degree and found work as a research assistant in which she was very satisfied because she felt respected and valued, and was extended freedom in how she completed her tasks. She learned about her preferences for work, which included being valued and respected, and having the freedom at work to make decisions and excel.

Danny spent five years working as a Licensed Practical Nurse, at which time he quit to pursue a career as a Bush Pilot. Once committed to this career he found out that it would take much longer to actually become a pilot, so he returned to his family and LPN work. Five years later he was offered the opportunity to pursue a career as a pilot in the Canadian Forces (which involved a lengthy screening process with no guarantees) or join the fire department. He chose the latter and found himself very satisfied, even though he did not get to become a pilot. He

learned to research jobs that he was interested in and successfully prepared for a career as a fire fighter.

Demi worked continuously at the same firm from the time she graduated. She took advantage of training and advancement opportunities, and eventually became accounting manager. This work involved the added responsibility of managing people and reduced the actual accounting she did. When her company and another merged, at the same time she was pregnant, she was offered a package to retire, which she happily accepted. At the time of the interview she was a stay-at-home mother with a small accounting business in her basement. Demi learned that she liked accounting and being a stay-at-home parent with her daughters. She also learned that she did not like being a manager.

Heidi graduated from university with music and education degrees and eventually secured a term position as an elementary school music teacher. Within a couple months in this position she realized that her principal was harassing her. This was a very stressful time for her as a new teacher, and one day she found out that another teacher had been experiencing the same thing for years. They teamed up, filed a complaint against the principal, and ended the harassment for both of them. Heidi, through her patience, the anticipation of the principal's demands, and communication with coworkers, learned how to survive and overcome the dissatisfaction she experienced from the harassment.

Hugh worked many jobs as a young person, eventually quitting all of them when he felt dissatisfied. He became a professional musician in the Canadian Forces and near the end of this career accepted a posting as bandmaster. After seven years in this role his supervisor posted him under suspicious conditions (no opening in the band that he went to, no replacement for the position he left, and he was undergoing full dental treatment that prevented him from playing his

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instrument.) His complaints of slander and harassment were eventually answered and he was posted back home after a year away. Through this process he learned how to redress undesirable decisions by his superiors, although he never did get as much as an admission of guilt by the Canadian Forces. On afterthought he also realized that letting small problems build into big problems was not desirable: small problems should be solved to avoid them becoming big problems.

Tammy worked as a hospital and then a travelling nurse until she became burned out at a very busy hospital and quit. When she returned to re-certify as a nurse she worked as a Personal Care Worker, with nurses, and was treated with disrespect. Tammy learned what it was like to work as a PCW and thus to treat PCWs with respect when she returned to work as an RN.

Venus studied to become a Geologist but realized that the work was male-oriented. Special arrangements had to be made for her when she was in the field, being the only female there, and some opportunities for work and travel were not made available to her because she was a woman. When she started having children she also started winding down the Geology career. Shortly thereafter, with four young children, her husband left her and she decided to stay at home full-time with the children. A few years later she returned to university to study to become a Pharmacist, which she did successfully. She learned that her preference in life was not work as a Geologist, but to be a stay-at-home mother.

Victor has been a successful singer, musician and front man for years. At the peak of his success he and another musician were dual front men for their band, which ultimately ended because Victor's ideas about evolving the band were not accepted. When it came time for the band to pick only one front man, Victor quit. From this experience he realized that his criticisms

and feedback were excessive and bossy, and that this contributed to if not caused his separation from the band.

In each of these descriptions the participants had started work with satisfaction but eventually became dissatisfied. Many cases of dissatisfaction were overcome just by the participant quitting, but most of the situations of dissatisfaction, and the solutions, were unexpected.

Review of the Findings

The ease of which participant recruitment occurred might be a signal that underemployment is a common condition of work as is dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. Each participant was recruited after an informal conversation about the study turned into disclosure of underemployment and the resulting dissatisfaction. In addition to the forms of underemployment found in the literature, a number of new forms emerged from the data: Other forms of underemployment from the data: Disrespect, harassment, lack of opportunity for further training or advancement, unchallenging work, lack of support to perform one's job from coworkers, no support from firm in dealing with problems, penalties for quitting before retirement, lack of dependable rules governing pay, and lack of contentment.

Dissatisfaction was found to be subjective and the courses of action participants took to survive, reduce and eliminate dissatisfaction varied. They included quitting, standing up for oneself, finding support, and performing exercise and rituals to reduce stress. Quitting was by far the most popular response to dissatisfaction, and was easier when participants had little or no investment in the work. Alternatively, one participant found that dissatisfaction could be reduced by understanding a job before starting it, although every case of dissatisfaction in this study started after the participant was already working in the job.

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Much learning took place through the process of overcoming dissatisfaction: some in the form of what to do to survive, reduce and eliminate dissatisfaction; and other in the form of lessons learned that will help in avoiding future dissatisfaction. Overall, no participant of this study overcame dissatisfaction through his/her own efforts alone (i.e., all either had help or dissatisfaction was overcome accidentally or serendipitously).

Overall it appears that quitting was the easiest response to dissatisfaction, which is evidence that workers tend to not search for solutions to the dissatisfaction so that they can stay in that particular job. This was not the case for a few participants because one did not realize the harassment she was experiencing was inappropriate, and the other could not quit because he would have lost his pension. They both tried to reduce the dissatisfaction they were experiencing with minimal success.

Participants learned the following through the course of their dissatisfaction: working different jobs can help one understand what one prefers in work; God can provide support and relieve the burden of responsibility; sometimes the industry in which you work cannot support as many workers as there are; work changes, sometimes away from your preferences for work; letting little problems become big problems may cause a lot of dissatisfaction with work; working in another position can give a person a different perspective on interpersonal dynamics and power relations at work; changes in priorities, such as starting a family, can override reasons for feeling dissatisfied at work, and/or one's need to commit to work; and sometimes it is better to just let things go rather than keep fighting for one's opinion of what is "best." One participant clearly demonstrated that she did not learn anything from the twelve jobs she quit in the span of two years to change her habit of taking on a minimum wage service industry job and quitting

when she became dissatisfied with it. Overall, none of the participants stayed in the same job and changed the situation from dissatisfying to satisfying.

By collecting all participants' responses to dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment the following gives a sense of what the participants of this study learned about how to respond to dissatisfaction. If the worker has little or no investment in the work, quit. Otherwise, the worker can do the following to survive within a dissatisfying situation: focus on work (and not the dissatisfying aspects of the job); find support through family and coworkers, engage in rituals and exercise; or stand up for oneself and face dissatisfaction head-on. No participant of this study returned to formal education as a direct response to dissatisfaction with work, either during or directly after quitting. Two participants did return to formal education: one after two years of stay-at-home parenting; and the other after finding God and relieving the dissatisfaction (he went to Divinity school). Nowhere in this collection of responses is the response of creating a self-directed learning project with the goal of overcoming dissatisfaction with work, because nobody in this study did so.

The idea of the source of the dissatisfaction (independent of the worker, or dependent upon the worker) emerged. Dissatisfaction with work itself, independent of the worker, includes forms of underemployment such as structural unemployment and involuntary reduced employment as well as dissatisfaction in the form of unreliable pay structures, lack of advancement opportunities, overly demanding or harassing boss, and work lacking a support structure to help workers deal with stress and conflict. Dissatisfaction dependent upon the worker includes forms of underemployment such as the credential and performance gap as well as dissatisfaction with not being respected or valued as a worker, not being paid enough to maintain a reasonable quality of life, and not finding the work fulfilling. Knowing the source of

dissatisfaction helps counselors and educators to better equip workers to identify, address and overcome dissatisfaction at work.

Overall, it was found that work is not perfectly predictable, so you have to either anticipate change, or be able to address it as it happens. In some cases these changes lead to dissatisfaction (for example, a change in pay system, a reduction in hours, the inability to get contracts, a change in supervision, and a change in location.) The largest source of dissatisfaction in this study was change in the work environment after the worker had already been working there. The most common response to dissatisfaction with work was to quit.

Implications of the study's findings

Every participant in this study had his/her own ways of interpreting priorities, identity and reality, all of which factor into how he/she responded to dissatisfaction at work. Individually, the following are descriptions, interpretations and a discussion of the implications of each participant's overcoming dissatisfaction.

Adam liked his work writing business plans but unfortunately the work lessened and eventually there was nothing for him to do. He also worked in a series of jobs that were dissatisfying. His idea was to be a master, which, by his own admission, did not require high credentials, but a commitment to live life and work the job to the extent of one's ability. Ultimately he realized that he no longer knew how to successfully apply for work, and, at the time of the interview, had not figured it out. In a follow-up interview Adam admitted to still working as a bus driver and an interpreter, and although neither leveraged his credentials, he was content as he worked towards attaining his Master ideal. Adam questioned his decision to study what he did in school, calling it a "generalist degree." It is unfortunate that Adam was unable to secure satisfactory work at the time of our interview, but he did manage to keep two part-time

jobs and continue to provide for his family. The fact that he felt that he did not know how to find work is a criticism that should be leveled at the local employment center, which he visited with very little success. His experiences there were basically sitting at a computer and searching for work. Perhaps he could have been offered more and different help, and had someone explain to him why he had been unable to find satisfactory work.

Cameron worked hard as a fisherman but eventually became burned out. In his desperation to find a solution he found God as a source of guidance in his life. As the boss in fishing and carpentry he was stressed, but when God guided him, and when he apprenticed to the carpenter and Divinity school student, he was stress-free and happier. Ultimately he ended up very satisfied working as a Pastor for very little pay, which forced his wife to return to work. With God providing daily guidance, Cameron overcame his past dissatisfaction. Because Cameron found God and relief from work dissatisfaction does not mean that this is a viable solution for everyone. Cameron, after leaving the fishery, devoted a large part of his life to God. Cameron did find guidance to relieve the stress that he felt in providing for his family. There are many routes workers can take to pursue the relief of stress, which should start with a visit with one's family practitioner. Stress was listed as an ill-effect of underemployment and should be taken seriously before its effects have serious implications on one's life.

Cecelia worked in a number of low-investment jobs, and quit them all when they became dissatisfying. In the end she worked as a Research Assistant in which she admitted to being respected because of her abilities. She liked this work because she was not micro-managed and felt that her contributions were important. When she finally found work in which she was valued, she became invested in that work. In regards to the Research Assistant work she admitted to having the opportunity to work on dissatisfaction before it intensified, an opportunity

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which she did not have in the earlier work. Cecelia had evolved from a minimum wage, minimum investment worker to one that was valued and respected, and thus overcame her dissatisfaction. Finding out what one's preferences are for work is important for one's satisfaction, and one's overall health. Many people have high tolerance for less-than-satisfactory conditions, but everyone has a threshold as to how much they can survive before work dissatisfaction starts to affect health and family life. A responsible act would be to discover what one's preferences and thresholds are before embarking on a new job. Cecelia worked through a dozen jobs, quitting each one, but eventually found one that suited her and gave her satisfaction. Hugh found his preferences in music performance. Demi found hers in accounting. Tammy was satisfied working as a nurse. Venus liked Geology. None of these participants had problems with the job, but found dissatisfaction through other factors of work, including disrespect from employers, an unfair supervisor, promotion into an undesirable position, uncooperative coworkers, and a change of heart towards family. Everyone is different, and work is full of changes. Knowing thyself will help to reduce the stress of these changes.

Danny wanted to be a pilot and attempted on a few occasions to do so, but the end of that road was much longer than he expected, and on two occasions he abandoned his pursuit of that dream. He left his work as an LPN two times to try other things, and ultimately became a fire fighter for the same reason he did not fully pursue becoming a pilot: security. He found firefighting exciting with opportunities to train, whereas he seemed to be at the end of available opportunities as an LPN. He always put the financial security of his family first, and was finally satisfied as a fire fighter with his well-paying and secure career. Unfortunately he had to abandon his efforts to become a pilot in the process, but with the security he found, it was an easy choice for him to make. Danny's act of researching a job to make a judgment on suitability

is a wise one. It helped him prepare for firefighting, which turned out to be very satisfying for him. Again, as discussed earlier, judging how good of a fit there will be between you and your work is very important for anticipating and avoiding dissatisfaction.

Demi identified with being an accountant and committed to one particular firm for a number of years, accepting opportunities for further training and advancement on a number of occasions. She eventually secured a position in which her accounting work was reduced and replaced by people-managing work, which she found dissatisfying. When her firm merged with another firm she accepted a retirement package which resulted in her becoming a stay-at-home parent with a small accounting business in her basement. She ended up with everything she wanted and overcame her dissatisfaction by leaving. Demi was fortunate in that she not only was relieved of the burdens of accounting manager, but she was given a severance package when she left. She was probably considering quitting so that she could bring her life into a more satisfying state. This resolution of her dissatisfaction is not the norm. According to this study, the norm is to quit. Demi discovered her two priorities were her family and accounting, not managing, and she was given an excellent opportunity to pursue her priorities. At the time of the interview her youngest daughters were four years old, and Demi was still very happy with the arrangement.

When Heidi started as a music teacher she was unfamiliar with the work culture, and initially did not think it odd that her principal was observing her teach. This eventually became harassment and during one staff meeting in which Heidi broke down and cried she became aware of another teacher in the same situation. Together they took action against the principal and overcame the harassment and dissatisfaction. As Heidi learned more about what it was to work as a teacher in a school, she built her self-confidence and learned how to fight for her own

satisfaction. Heidi overcame her dissatisfaction by stopping the harassment that caused it.

Remaining in a situation of harassment is a difficult venture. It knocked and kept Heidi down for

two months. She would break down and cry in the principal's office and at staff meetings. It

had a profound effect on her entire life. It was fortunate that her coworker connected her to the

other harassed teacher because that was the beginning of the end of the harassment. The final

realization that she was actually being harassed, and that it was not her fault but his, was the

turning-point. Any work environment would do well to be prepared for this type of situation in

terms of the recognition that someone is being harassed, or that someone is harassing.

Hugh had worked as a professional musician in the Canadian Forces for many years

when he was subject to what he felt was an illogical and malicious posting. He attributed the

posting to the slander and harassment that he was subject to from his supervisor. After a year of

complaining through proper channels he was returned to his former location and shortly

thereafter retired when he was eligible. Although his complaints against his supervisor were

never fully realized by the military, he was able to reach voluntary retirement and put his

dissatisfaction in his past. The advice Hugh gave in regards to this situation was to not let small

problems grow into large problems. This is excellent advice, in particular when there is such an

uneven power relation present as there is in a hierarchical organization such as the military. The

lesson from Hugh's situation for other workers is to work things out. If there is a problem

between workers and/or their boss, communicate about it and resolve problems.

Tammy had worked as a hospital and travelling nurse for a number of years when she

finally became burned out. She left not only nursing but the country for a number of years, and

then decided to return to nursing and re-certify. While she progressed through the recertification

process she worked as a personal care worker and learned how hard they work as well as how

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mistreated they are. When she finally became an RN she vowed to treat her PCW co-workers with respect. Although Tammy overcame her initial dissatisfaction by quitting, she returned to health care in a profession (Personal Care Worker) that she would knowingly be underemployed and once again overcame the dissatisfaction by quitting. She did, however, learn a lot about respect and hard work, and changed as a nurse because of this experience. The implications of Tammy's situation to other work situations is to respect and value all other coworkers, just as Hugh realized about the people who had to work in those laborious jobs. Most likely the person working that job does so to provide security for his/her family. For example Adam works as a bus driver because he has to work, and he finds ways to connect to the kids on the bus every day for fifteen minutes. Adam has a Master's degree and would prefer to work in a job more appropriate to his credentials and experience, but he needs the security and this was the best job that he could find. He was certainly making the best of it.

When Venus qualified as a Geologist there were no jobs in her community, so she had to travel halfway across the country to work in her field. She found that Geology was difficult for her as a woman because special arrangements had to be made for her accommodations, and she was denied some work opportunities for the same reason. After she started having her family her identity shifted from Geologist to parent and she eventually stopped Geology and became a full-time parent. She eventually became a Pharmacist, working a full-time job and a part-time job to pay for her children's' educations. Venus always put her children before herself. This is a difficult thing to do. Given the choice of working a good job that pays well and putting your children in daycare, vs. taking care of your own children and thus surviving on less income with fewer luxuries, many people choose the good job. What workers should do is to fully evaluate the implications of this decision, and everyone's reality will be different. Some people will

always choose to live poorer and happier while others will insist that more money provides opportunities to be happier, and that it is difficult to feel secure when one can barely afford the mortgage or rent payments and bill payments. It is an individual choice that should be made in consideration of the benefits to all involved.

As a front man, singer and percussionist in his successful band, Victor accepted the responsibility of helping the band progress, although the other front man had different ideas about how the band should accomplish this. In the end Victor quit the band because he felt he was constantly working against the band to help it evolve, which elevated his stress level. Years later, in another band, he found dissatisfaction in negotiating a gig with a club manager who decided to not honor an agreement in which Victor had already made arrangements, hired musicians and gear, and made commitments. Fortunately, by this time, Victor had already learned to let things go, so he accepted this situation and moved on. From the situation of leaving the band Victor realized that he was being overly critical and bossy to his band mates. Unfortunately he had to leave the band as a result. The lesson here is that how we treat our coworkers has a profound effect on our satisfaction at work. Victor's work became so dissatisfying that he had to quit. By treating his band mates nicer, he might have stayed with that band and created something more amazing than he had up to that point.

Table 4: Forms of Learning Utilized by Participants

Participant	Learning Theory: Evidence
Adam	Transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991): He learned that he did not really know how to find a job
Cameron	Transformational Learning (Mezirow, 1991): He overcame his disorienting dilemma about

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	being a fisherman with a hole in his soul to accept God as his guidance
Cecelia	Incidental Learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 1990): She learned she does not want to work as a member of a minority group
	Incidental Learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 1990): She learned she does not like sushi
Danny	Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984): He learned the value of researching a job before applying for it to make sure it is a good fit with his needs and personality.
	Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984): He learned that working as a bush plane packer was more work than he could offer along the road to becoming a bush pilot
Demi	Incidental Learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 1990): She learned she does not like working as a manager
Heidi	Incidental Learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 1990): She learned that her situation was harassment and not her own shortfalls as a teacher when another staff member told her to seek out another teacher experiencing a similar problem.
	Incidental Learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 1990): She learned to behave more professionally as a music educator.
Hugh	Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984): He learned to not allow small problems to turn into large problems.
Tammy	Transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991): She learned what it was like to be the subordinate in the nurse-pcw relationship by working within that position.
Venus	Incidental Learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 1990): She learned that she did not like being the only woman at the firm
Victor	Transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991): He learned to let things go and to not let little things give him a disproportionately high amount of stress.

Each participant's experiences with overcoming dissatisfaction with work are unique. For the most part, dissatisfaction was overcome through either quitting the work, or something else happened for which the participant was not the cause. Work and working are thus dynamic, changing parts of one's life. The implication of this interpretation of work and working is that it is a good skill for workers to be able to realize and adapt to change. In other words, with or without self-directed learning projects designed to help the worker overcome work dissatisfaction, workers must be good learners in order to cope with change that leads to dissatisfaction.

Quitting work, although seemingly popular among young people who keep jobs for mainly pocket money, is not always the solution to dissatisfaction. Hugh is a prime example in which if he quit to avoid the dissatisfaction and stress and resulted from his harassment he would also sacrifice his pension and thus the guaranteed security of his family. He had to thus find strategies to resist the negative effects of the dissatisfaction, which he did with moderate success. He also fought the harassment and ended up having his posting reversed, and was able to spend the last months of work in his home community before he retired.

In all cases the participants of this study seem to prioritize possible choices, and act consistent with these prioritizations. Adam stayed at work but made the best of it; Cameron got to the point where his health and well-being was more important than earning $200,000 per year as a fisherman, and gave up the salary to eventually become a pastor; Cecelia initially prioritized her work low, and left it easily. When she eventually found a job that gave her respect, she prioritized staying in this work higher and found strategies to meet dissatisfaction head-on and thus reduce it to prolong her time in that position. Danny always put the security of his family before his own need to become a pilot, and never did start a career as a pilot. Demi, when her

children were born, changed her personal priority from accountant to share that with motherhood. Heidi persisted and eventually fought for better working conditions. She prioritized creating a safe work environment for herself and other teachers. Hugh prioritized the security of his family and thus endured prolonged dissatisfaction as a result. Tammy prioritized working in the healthcare system over working an easy job. In the process she learned to respect PCWs more, and thus changed how she treated them when she became an RN again. Venus prioritized her family above all. And Victor had his priorities firmly set in the improvement and evolution of the band, but eventually changed his top priority to letting things go.

Contributions

No study was found in the literature review that explored in-depth how people dissatisfied with their work through reasons of underemployment made sense of it and eventually overcame it. This qualitative study was subjective in nature with the emphasis on individual participants' experiences, allowing for a deeper understanding of what it is to be underemployed and dissatisfied, leading to a better understanding of work that is believed to be deficient. Dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment is clearly a subjective problem. The solutions that participants in this study experienced, although involving quitting work in many cases, required a negotiation of the worker's preferences, including respect, value as a person and worker, support structures, security, pay, and personal investment in the work.

As a result of this study a number of new forms of underemployment were identified as well as a model of Satisfying Work and the distinction between types of dissatisfaction (independent of the worker, or dependent upon the worker). The deficiency approach to underemployment, derived from those forms found in the literature, was helpful in identifying further forms that emerged from the data. Having all of these forms of underemployment begs

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the question of function. How are these identified forms of underemployment used in the literature? The earliest forms function within the realm of economics, up to Livingstone's definitions that include the performance gap, credential gap, structural unemployment, involuntary reduced employment, and talent use gap. These all pertain to economics, but Livingstone's sixth form, subjective underemployment, departs from this tradition as it addresses worker dissatisfaction. These latest forms of underemployment, as identified in this study, grow out of the work deficiency tradition, but also seem to fit a deficiency in the worker's satisfaction with work. Rather than focus on what the literature deems appropriate (or deficient) in work, the satisfaction deficiency approach allows the worker to subjectively identify what is deficient with work in terms of what is satisfying. For example, a bartender with a Ph.D. exists within a large credential gap, which some would find dissatisfying and others not. The only way to determine dissatisfaction is subjectively. The more interesting question is why do some deem this gap dissatisfying and others not? The answer to this question would inform counselors and educators abilities to help others identify sources of dissatisfaction and make plans to overcome it.

Another contribution of this work is the topic of dissatisfaction with work. No studies were found that addressed the many forms and characteristics of being dissatisfied with work, although this appears to be a common situation. Perhaps people are not initiating self-directed learning projects to overcome dissatisfaction with work, perhaps because "dissatisfaction" is not yet a legitimate complaint that a worker can make about work.

With these new areas of study, the phenomena of underemployment and dissatisfaction with work can grow into productive areas of scholarship and practice which may lead to a better understanding of the relationships that workers have with their work. Another theme that emerged from this research was the idea that workers may not understand the perspective that

employers have towards them. Some workers believe that it is their right to work in a job that is satisfying. From the point of view of the employer, if a worker does not contribute to the generation of profit, that worker is not productive and may eventually lead to the ruin of the firm. If employees can have a better understanding of the employer's perspective rather than holding onto the false reality that the employer is there to provide satisfying work, perhaps people will be better equipped to deal with unemployment, involuntary reduced employment, and the reality that there are many gaps between what workers want in a job and what employers want from workers.

Building on the idea of creating a more transparent relationship between workers and employers comes the idea that employers could provide counseling and support to workers that would help them deal with stressful situations and relationships, help them budget their money better, and help them deal with dissatisfaction at work. The discussion on Human Capital Theory includes the question of who should pay for further training for hired workers. If the worker who receives the training stays at the firm, the firm will benefit and thus should contribute. The worker who receives the training and quits to accept a better job elsewhere should pay for the training him or herself. In terms of counseling, who should pay for that? If a staff counselor or educator can help workers reduce stress through financial advice, interpersonal skills training, and rituals to lower stress level, workers will most likely be more productive, so employers should share at least part of the costs. On the other hand, if, through counseling or education, workers come to realize that their dissatisfaction is due to the working conditions and that they should rightfully quit, who should pay for that? Is the employer better off hiring a worker that is not dissatisfied than keeping dissatisfied workers? Do workers and employers alike benefit from workers being satisfied with their jobs?

Lastly, in terms of learning theories, radical constructivism was affirmed as a productive way to make sense of learning and meaning making as underemployed workers overcome their dissatisfaction. Such a subjective area of study as this requires a learning theory that values individual experiences and knowledge construction to help make sense of what and why people do what they do. Dissatisfaction is a very subjective area of study and difficult to make sense of, as evidenced by the lack of literature that explains dissatisfaction at work.

Malcolm Knowles wrote that adults like to engage in self-directed learning projects that have real importance to the learner. The evidence of this study suggests otherwise, that even though the adult learner (worker) has a need to overcome dissatisfaction, workers tend to quit or stay in their jobs rather than initiate a self-directed learning project with the goal of overcoming the dissatisfaction.

A New Model of Satisfying Work

This study has confirmed the literature on underemployment by showing that many forms of underemployment exist and that they caused ill-effects among the participants of this study. It has also added theoretical by enlarging and deepening what we know about perceived underemployment not only in terms of Livingstone's work on subjective underemployment but also in terms of the meaning construction seen through the radical constructivist lens. As people perceive underemployment in various ways, the new model of satisfying work provided a medium to present a wider sense of perceived underemployment in terms of what workers desire from work that is satisfying.

A synthesis of the forms of underemployment found in the literature and the new forms of underemployment that emerged from the data is the basis for the following model of *Satisfying Work*. Taking all forms of underemployment and reversing them to express non-

deficient, or satisfying, components of work has resulted in a representation of what satisfying

work might look like. The purpose of this representation is not to suggest a target that employers

should aim for, or to create unattainable expectations for workers. It is rather to provide a

simulation of satisfying work that workers, employers, counselors and educators can use, build

upon, and personalize as they make sense of work, underemployment and dissatisfaction.

The Model of Satisfying Work

This model, termed *Satisfying Work* was conceived as a response to the plethora of

dissatisfying elements of work expressed by the ten participants of this study. Many of these

elements were initially identified as forms of underemployment, both emerging from the data

and found in the literature. Combining all of these elements has resulted in this Model of

Satisfying Work.

The model has five sections: Finding it; the Firm; Management and Administration;

Coworkers; and the Worker. After collecting all items that participants expressed as dissatisfying

and then reversing the sense to indicate what is *satisfying* about work, the elements were grouped

into the five sections that became apparent after reviewing the collection repeatedly. Each

section is expressed as a collection of satisfying elements of looking for work, the place of

employment, the boss, coworkers, and the employee him or herself.

The intended function of this model is to provide a starting point for discussions about

work, including what is appropriate for the employer to provide, what is appropriate for the

worker to expect, and what a worker might find satisfying or dissatisfying about work.

Finding it.

The job market in which satisfying work can be found is not so competitive that a worker

cannot actually find an opening for suitable work. People looking for contractual work, such as

carpenters and substitute teachers can find as much work as they need. The process that he or she follows to acquire this job is clear, reliable, and can be learned and used reliably.

The firm.

For those who need it, full-time, benefitted work is available. Within satisfying work there are opportunities for further training and advancement. The pay structure is clear and reliable. In this work there is no discrimination, harassment, slander or bullying. When problems arise, such as interpersonal problems, health problems, or stressful situations, counselors and other mechanisms are in place to help keep workers satisfied. If workers need other support, such as budgeting of personal finances or when things just are not going well, it is available. This is a place where workers feel appreciated, valued and respected. If the circumstances of work change and the worker feels the need to quit, there will be no penalties with pension accrual or transfer of skills. Worker success, however workers define it, is attainable.

Management and administration.

The management and administration staff members are skilled and reliable, professional, respectful, and when they make mistakes that affect the worker they admit it and appropriate compensation is offered. They do not pick on or bully workers, and they are not excessively demanding. Criticisms and feedback are given respectfully. Their decision making process is transparent, and they welcome feedback on questionable decisions. Overall they believe that all workers are valuable to the firm and warrant the utmost respect.

Coworkers.

Among coworkers at satisfying work there are mechanisms in place to address negativity and low morale such that it does not hinder anyone's work or workers' abilities to get along with each other. They all fit in with each other and the firm. There are also mechanisms in place to help workers with tension, conflict and stress. All workers have a sufficient work ethic, and everyone supports each other productively in situations where support is required to do one's work.

The worker.

Satisfying work is at an appropriate level in terms of credentials, knowledge, skills and need according to each worker. It is satisfying in terms of how challenging it needs to be, and how productive the worker wants to be. The worker is skilled, knowledgeable and competent in all aspects of the work. The worker is fully capable of carrying out all of the functions and responsibilities of his/her position. At any time the worker can take advantage of employer-offered upgrades and training in order to change and grow this scope of work. The worker has skills to address, reduce, and eliminate stress that may arise. Ultimately, the worker likes the work, is happy doing the job, cares about the work and the firm, and is committed to doing a good job. S/he has committed to the productivity of coworkers, management, and the firm. The worker finds the work fulfilling and finds true contentment working at the firm. If s/he has to make decisions that affect other workers' security and personal lives, there are mechanisms there to support both workers. All workers understand that the firm is both a business driven by profit, but also a community of people who work together in a comfortable and fair environment. The firm is committed to the workers as much as they are committed to generating profit.

No participant of this study created a self-directed learning plan to help them overcome the dissatisfaction they were facing at work. This may be partially because they did not know

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where to start. With this model of satisfying work there is now a starting point for workers and their counselors to define how the work is "deficient" (in terms of the model) and what parts of the work are dissatisfying. From these ideas they can at least formulate a goal of the learning project.

Limitations

In terms of gathering data on how individual people define, survive and eventually overcome dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, this study would have been better served with a series of more in-depth interviews, resulting in richer data. People in general are unable to comment on how they experience, reflect, make meaning and construct reality. This study would have benefitted from methods that led to better data addressing these areas.

As this study was set up from the beginning to gather participants' subjective descriptions and interpretations of their work, underemployment and dissatisfaction, the interpretation of these stories is limited by the relatively small amount of data collected around each participant's experiences. Interpretation, like the knowledge construction as well as the constant comparative method, is most successful with more consistency between themes which is easier to identify with a larger amount of data to support the concepts that emerge. In this study the data was limited to a one hour interview and, in some cases, follow-up questions.

In terms of gathering data that describes the population in general, ten participants is a very low number of participants from which to generalize about a population. In terms of generalizing about how people in general overcome dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, this study serves as an informative pilot study from which to design a larger research project to explore this topic on a grander scale.

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Critiques

The main critique that had the largest effect on this research was the misalignment of the goal to make sense of participants' learning with the qualitative design (data collection and analysis) to find and explore the data that would inform this. As this study relied upon a radical constructivist view of learning in which participants constructed their own realities to best align with their experiences, much more data would have been required to better explore these experiences and to identify the reflection and decision-making within the process of knowledge construction in order to make better sense of the learning that occurred as the participants overcame dissatisfaction. As the study was carried out, the analyses of the data did not result in a clear picture of what learning each participant was involved in, what was learned, what the motivation was for the learning, and how the learner changed as a result of the learning.

In this study the ideas of underemployment, dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment, and learning to overcome this dissatisfaction were identified, expanded upon, and rearticulated in preparation for future research and better understanding.

Recommendations for Future Research

To better understand individual experiences with underemployment and dissatisfaction, future studies could be designed to explore the following:

1. To analyze the data through a Career Development theoretical lens such as Donald Super's Career Development theory (Super, 1985; Super, 1990; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). This approach will illustrate how the participants of this study went through changes as they matured within their jobs and to use the model to explain the behaviour of the participants as they encounter and overcome dissatisfaction from perceived underemployment.

2. To better understand the nature and ubiquity of specific forms of underemployment, specifically credential underemployment (a common form in this study) a quantitative study should be designed to target a large sample of a specific demographic such as young people or workers approaching retirement. Underemployment, dissatisfaction, and quitting were most common in this study with young people. On the other hand, nobody in this study who was approaching their retirement actually quit their job to overcome dissatisfaction.

3. It would be very informative to design a longitudinal study and follow people who are dissatisfied with work to find out what the ill effects of their dissatisfaction are, how they survive with those ill effects, and what they do to reduce/eliminate the ill effects as well as the dissatisfaction. It would be interesting to see what the differences were between young people and near-retirees in how they define work and underemployment, how they experience and resist dissatisfaction, and how they eventually overcome that dissatisfaction.

4. The field of adult education has a high potential to encounter and help people dissatisfied with work. With the Model of Satisfactory Work in hand, a two phase study should be designed to first explore adult educators' and counselors' experiences with helping dissatisfied workers face and overcome their dissatisfaction. What options do the workers believe they have, and what forms of advice and help do the adult educators and counselors offer them? The second part of the study would involve taking the findings of the first study in addition to the Model of Satisfying Work and design a program that could be first used to assess the dissatisfied worker's situation and determine forms of underemployment, if any, and the causes of the worker's dissatisfaction.   Secondly, this program would help the worker plan a self-directed learning project with the goal of reducing or eliminating the worker's dissatisfaction.

What this study did not find.

Livingstone (1997) suggests that solutions to underemployment should address the redistribution of paid work and the democratization of the workplace. The nature of underemployment, according to the findings of this study, implies that underemployment cannot be solved by either of these approaches. Underemployment can be based on a wide variety of factors, many of which pertain to personal preferences about work. Redistributing paid work and democratizing the workplace will not alleviate a high number of identified causes of underemployment, such as harassment, unsupportive coworkers, the talent use gap (one of Livingstone's own identified forms of underemployment) and many others. Underemployment relates to the perception of a deficiency in work in many instances. One approach that could be taken to start developing a solution to underemployment is to help workers become acutely aware of their work. Much like Danny's suggestion to research work thoroughly before applying, the more a worker can understand about their work before they decide to pursue it, the less likely that underemployment will cause dissatisfaction. The assumption is that if the worker identifies a "deal breaker" with the work, he/she will likely not apply and thus avoid the dissatisfaction.

This study also did not find that adults typically engage in learning projects to successfully overcome dissatisfaction with perceived underemployment. This idea was not identified explicitly in the underemployment or work dissatisfaction literature but emerged as a possibility from within the Self Directed Learning literature. This study found that when faced with dissatisfaction, people tend to quit their jobs. It also did not find a situation in which a worker who was dissatisfied with his/her work sought help with a counselor or therapist to successfully overcome the dissatisfaction. Perhaps quitting and not seeking help were the most

popular options because no other choices presented themselves. In order to create a self-directed

learning plan, workers would have to know what one is and how to go about planning one. In

order to seek help the worker has to know that help is available. One of the characteristics of

satisfying work is the availability to workers of counseling to help with the typical worker needs

to stress and anxiety relief, personal finance budgeting, and help with interpersonal

communication.

Conclusion

There is a strong theme in adult education today about self-direction, critical thinking and

liberation. At the outset of this research project I anticipated the possibility of finding that

participants would be critical about their dissatisfaction and underemployment situations and

take action through self-direction to liberate them from the dissatisfaction. The literature did not

state specifically how people tended to overcome dissatisfaction at work. Not one of the ten

participants in this study did so, which begs the question, "If they had help and support, what

strides could they have taken to overcome their dissatisfaction?"

In terms of adult learning, people are always adapting to change in their environments

and in their realities. This is one of the most admirable qualities of human beings. When faced

with adversity people are capable of identifying problems, weighing the options, making plans,

and changing what needs to be changed to survive. Overcoming dissatisfaction at work is just a

specific case of this. The participants of this study faced a wide range of conditions that led to

dissatisfaction, and they all overcame that dissatisfaction in different ways based upon the

conditions of their lives. Anyone facing underemployment and dissatisfaction at work has the

potential to overcome it. In some cases things will change and the dissatisfaction will end. In

other cases change should be well-planned and carried out with the goal of reaching specific outcomes.

Many factors contribute to dissatisfaction at work. The combination of factors and the solution are unique to each worker. This being the case, the solution that applies to everyone does not exist. Dissatisfaction with work is a subjective problem and thus overcoming it is a task subjective to each individual worker. Everyone in this study overcame dissatisfaction, although in some cases it was accidental or serendipitous. Anyone can overcome dissatisfaction by quitting, but the problems that arise from this action may greatly outweigh the problems of not quitting. Realistically, only the worker can find his/her unique solution.

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APPENDIX 1: RECRUITMENT POSTER

Invitation to Participate

Have you ever felt dissatisfied with your work? Have you ever felt that you deserve a better job?

If so, then I would like to talk to you.

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate how you overcame dissatisfaction with your work. If

you can talk about what it was like to be dissatisfied with work and what you did to make the

frustration go away, you may be a good candidate for this study.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is voluntary.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You may have the opportunity to take part in a 60-minute interview in which you will be asked

questions about your experiences with work dissatisfaction and what you did to overcome that

dissatisfaction. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview as well. If you are

willing to show your experiences with work and learning in other ways, for example with

documents or photographs, that would be very helpful as well.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You might learn something about your understanding of work and learning, and think differently

about work and learning as a result of taking part in this study.

What are the possible disadvantages/risks of taking part?

You might learn something about your understanding of work and learning, and think differently about work and learning as a result of taking part in this study.

Will my taking part in the study be anonymous?

Yes.

For more information please contact the primary researcher, Derek MacDonald, by phone at (902) 820-2580 or by email at derekmac@eastlink.ca

Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study titled "Learning to Overcome Subjective

Underemployment", which is being conducted by Derek MacDonald, Department of Adult

Education, University of Georgia, research contact number (902) 820-2580 under the direction of

Dr. Robert J. Hill, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy, University of

Georgia, (706) 542-2214. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part at any

time without giving any reason, and without any penalty. I can ask to have information related

to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

Study Description:

There are many underemployed people in Canada. An underemployed person can be currently

out of work and looking for a job, or can be working but at a job that is part-time, seasonal,

casual, below their education and/or below their skill and knowledge level. This study is

investigating the everyday activities the people participate in that help them get a job, help them

get a better job, or help them to make their current job more satisfying.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to better understand the value of learning in overcoming subjective

underemployment

Benefits of participating in study:

I will not benefit directly from this research. However, my participation in this research may

lead to information that could help other people acquire and retain a job.

Procedures:

If I volunteer to take part in this study,

I will be asked to give an audio-recorded interview lasting approximately 90 minutes,

I may be asked to be observed taking part in a learning activity. The duration of this activity is not expected to go longer than 2 hours.

Discomforts or Stress:

Some people feel discomfort when they talk about their employment. I am aware that I will be asked about my past and current employment. I am aware that if I feel discomfort as a result that I can choose to withdraw from the research.

Risks:

No risks are expected.

Confidentiality:

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with me will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law. The principal researcher ensures that audio recordings of interviews, and all of the researcher's notes, will be transcribed with pseudonyms to remove any identity links to me. The principal researcher ensures that these audio recordings will be destroyed soon after transcription.

Further questions:

The researcher, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course project, and can be reached by telephone. Derek MacDonald's home phone number is (902) 820-2580.

Final Agreement

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date:_____

Derek MacDonald. Home phone number: (902) 820-2580. Email: derekmac@eastlink.ca

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:_____

Additional Questions of problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The IRB Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address IRB@uga.edu. This form last updated December 6, 2006.

Interview Protocol

Thank you for participation, and Purpose of Research

* Thanks for your willingness to participate in this interview.

* This study is for my doctoral dissertation, required for a Ph.D. in Adult Education.

* This interview is to gain knowledge about work and learning

Preparation before interview

* It is estimated that the interview will take about an hour.

* I will be recording your answers with audio tape. I will also be taking notes throughout the

interview.

* You are free to terminate this interview at any time.

* Your answers will be kept confidential as will your identity. There will be nothings to identify

you labeling the tape, in my notes, nor in the interview transcription. The audio tape will be kept

by the primary researcher in a secure, locked place

* Do you have any questions about this study or the interview?

Start Interview:

* You are now being recorded.

Question #1: Work

* Tell me about the work you have been involved in.

Probes:

1. First job … last job – get a handle on the order of jobs and how to refer to them

2. Positions within those jobs: bosses, responsibility, getting the jobs, productivity potential,

credential gap…

3. What work did your parents, friends… have?

4. Have you taken part in career counseling? Used career software? What were you told? How

did that affect your career?

Question #2: Subjective underemployment

* Tell me about a time when you were dissatisfied with your work.

* How did you overcome this dissatisfaction?

Probes:

1. What do you believe about job satisfaction?

2. Should people work?

3. How do you know which job is appropriate?

4. What do you value in a job?

5. What is the difference between (employed, unemployed, underemployed) (working, not

working)?

6. Should people have work that is (full time, part time, salaried, hourly wage, minimum wage,

benefited, seasonal, fitting their education, fitting their ability)

Question #3: Learning

* What did you learn in overcoming this dissatisfaction with your work?

* Tell me how you changed as you overcame this dissatisfaction.

Probes:

1. Did you have any help from friends or coworkers?

2. Did you get more training or education?