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# Perceived Overqualification and Withdrawal Among Seasonal Workers: Would Work Motivation Make a Difference?

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Perceived Overqualification and Withdrawal Among Seasonal Workers: Would Work  
Motivation Make a Difference?

by

Anthony Duy Nguyen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science  
in  
Psychology

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**Abstract**

Overqualification is a concern for both individuals and organizations in today's workforce. It has been shown to relate to job attitudes, performance, well-being, and withdrawal (Bolino & Feldman 2000; Bracke et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2010; Friedland & Price, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). While plenty of research has been done on overqualification in the workplace, there is still a gap in the literature when it pertains to the contingent workforce, especially seasonal workers. These workers do not have secure employment and research has shown that they have distinct outcomes compared to full-time workers. Findings from past research about the relationship between overqualification and job withdrawal have been mixed, and this study aims to further the understanding of this relationship by taking a self-regulatory approach and examining disposition-related and context-related motivational processes that may drive overqualified employees to engage in withdrawal. Drawing on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998), I propose that employees' intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and withdrawal. Additionally, supervisor and coworker support are hypothesized to buffer the overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship, whereas prevention focus is hypothesized to worsen it. Participants were 66 seasonal workers from an organization in the Western United States. Results did not support the hypothesized relationships, however prevention focus was a marginally-significant moderator of the overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship in the unexpected direction. I also tested several nonhypothesized relationships and found that

promotion focus significantly moderated the overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship. Implications, limitations and future research directions are discussed.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The recession of the late 2000s triggered a massive unemployment spike. Millions of people lost their jobs or were forced into part-time work as companies downsized and attempted to minimize costs. As of September 2016, the part-time employment rate in the United States is 18.2%--suggesting that nearly a fifth of the U.S. workforce is not employed fulltime (Bureau Labor Statistics, 2016). Nearly six million workers in the United States work part-time for economic reasons, while 20.6 million workers report working part-time for noneconomic reasons (Bureau Labor Statistics, 2016). Additionally, the noneconomic reasons for part-time work remain largely understudied and potentially misunderstood. By failing to identify and understand these reasons, researchers and policy-makers are unable appreciate a sizable percentage of the American workforce. In order to gain a complete understanding of the entire workforce, it is important to examine contingent workers (i.e., those who are not employed in traditionally secure jobs) and their employment-related choices.

The problem of overqualification – a situation where an individual possesses more skill, education, or ability than is required by the job (Johnson & Johnson, 1996) – becomes extremely relevant in a context where prospective employees may not have as much leverage in negotiations or flexibility in job choices. This becomes apparent when there are more qualified individuals than there are good-fitting jobs, which may lead certain individuals to settle for non-standard employment arrangements. It behooves researchers to study these employees given that such a large population of the workforce isn't classified as full-time, permanent workers. Within this context, there may be

differential effects on work processes and outcomes when compared to full-time employees. Therefore, this study aims to better understand contingent workers' experiences of overqualification in the workplace.

### **Contingent Work**

The most commonly used definition of contingent work comes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, stating that contingent work is “any job in which an individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment or one in which the minimum hours worked can vary in a nonsystematic manner” (Polivka & Nardone, 1989: p.11). There has not been a clear consensus as to which employees should be categorized as contingent workers (Kalleberg, 2000). The categorizations by Connelly and Gallagher (2004) are the most referenced in the literature; they outline four types of contingent workers. The first example is work obtained through “agencies or temporary-help firms”, which assign workers to clients, usually for a fixed duration. The second type of contingent work is the hiring of “independent contractor” or “contract” status employees. This is most visible in knowledge-based occupations, such as work in information technology. The third type of contingent work is comprised of “direct-hire” workers, in which the arrangement removes the agency component. These workers will often have some understanding of ongoing employment with the same employer (e.g. renewal of temporary status), but their hours are still considered to vary nonsystematically. The fourth kind of contingent work includes workers hired directly by an organization but working on seasonal contracts, commonly seen in the hospitality industry. While some industries offer opportunities for employees to stay on for the

following season, most contracts are short-term and fall under contingent work. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), in their 2015 report on contingency workers (Government Accountability Office, 2015), also broadened the definition to include part-time workers because it can be argued that some of these workers do not have long-term employment stability, and their hours could vary nonsystematically. Part-time work is defined as employment at less than normal work hours. In the United States, the general cut off is at less than 35 hours a week, although this does vary across countries. The GAO report estimated that in 2010 over 40% of the U.S. workforce could be classified as contingent, up from 30% in 2006.

Research comparing full-time and contingent workers has generally found that the two workforces share common work experiences but do have some differences that may be attributed to the type of work or industry (e.g., Conway & Briner, 2002; De Cuyper & Witte, 2006; De Gilder, 2003). Hence, no generalizable conclusions can be made between these two employment types. For example, De Gilder (2003) compared contingent and core hotel employees and found that contingent employees had lower affective commitment to the team and organization, as well as more destructive towards the organization, when compared to permanent employees. De Gilder posited that contingent employees may show less commitment and more destructive behaviors because they do not perceive long-term benefits of being committed to and helping the organization since they might not be around to reap the potential organizational benefits from their helping behaviors compared to permanent employees. Firms also invest in more formal training and informal learning opportunities for full-time workers compared to part-time workers

(Nelen & Grip, 2009), which may further disincentivize commitment. In contrast, De Cuyper and Witte (2006) found that permanent and temporary employees did not differ meaningfully on job satisfaction, life satisfaction, organizational commitment, and self-rated performance. However, they found that high job insecurity led to lower levels of job satisfaction for permanent employees. This relationship was non-significant for temporary employees. This provides some evidence that there are different expectations between the employee and the employer based on contract status. Job insecurity may matter less for temporary workers because they have a more transactional contract with the employer, which focuses more on economic and short-term exchanges, whereas permanent workers share a relational contract that focuses more on socio-emotional exchanges, and thus would be more affected by perceptions of insecurity on the job (Beard & Edwards, 1995). Thus, contingent workers may be experiencing the working environment differently from permanent workers.

In an attempt to further understand the experiences of contingent workers, the current study samples from a population of seasonal employees—an understudied subgroup of contingent workers (Wilkin, 2012). These particular workers are employed in the customer service industry; overqualification may be especially pertinent to their situation.

### **Overqualification**

Overqualification is defined as a situation in which an individual possesses more skill, education, and/or experience than is required or utilized on the job (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Most frequently, overqualification has been studied within the context of

employee screening and selection (i.e., from the employer's perspective), job seeking behavior (i.e., from the prospective employee's perspective), and on-the-job perceptions (i.e., from the perspective of an employee at the job; e.g. Feldman & Maynard, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Maynard et al. 2006). Objective measures assessing actual overqualification have often examined over-education as being one standard deviation beyond the level of education required for the occupation (Hung, 2008) or having education that surpasses the level identified through job analysis (Verhaest & Omey, 2006). More recently, researchers have also identified cognitive ability as a useful indicator of objective overqualification (Maltarich, Reilly, & Nyberg, 2011). Objective measures, while useful indicators, are not holistic assessments. Objective measures are limited because they focus largely on specific skills or education and do not factor in the experiences or perceptions of the individual employee (Erdogan, Bauer, Peiró & Truxillo, 2011). Due to these limitations, it is not surprising that that objective and subjective measures of overqualification share little empirical overlap (Halaby, 1994), justifying the inclusion of perceptual measures to assess if employees feel overqualified for their jobs (e.g. Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006). By measuring perceived overqualification, researchers can better predict employee attitudes and behaviors. For the current study, I have focused my research questions on perceived overqualification.

The findings in the overqualification literature generally suggest that overqualified employees have more negative job attitudes and poorer well-being than appropriately qualified employees (e.g., Bolino & Feldman 2000; Bracke et al., 2013;

Chen et al., 2010; Friedland & Price, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). However, findings on the relationship between overqualification, turnover, and performance have been mixed, as some studies showed a positive relationship whereas others showed a negative relationship (e.g., Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Büchel, 2002; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Liu, Luksyte, Zhou, Shi, & Wang, 2015; Premji & Smith, 2013).

Within the overqualification literature, there needs to be a reexamination of the relationship between overqualification and withdrawal—typically operationalized as employee tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover—because findings on this relationship are mixed. Some studies have found that perceived overqualification positively related to turnover intentions and voluntary turnover (Maynard, et al., 2006; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013), whereas others found that overeducated individuals had longer tenure, such as in low-skill jobs (Büchel, 2002). To reconcile such inconsistent findings, in this study I intend to examine potential mediational and moderational mechanisms underlying the relationship between overqualification and withdrawal.

Additionally, these prior studies have typically utilized between-person designs. Such designs investigate whether differences in perceived overqualification among employees lead to differences in job attitudes, performance, and withdrawal. However, to the best of my knowledge, there have been no longitudinal studies to examine these processes within the individual. Thus, it is unclear to what extent perceived overqualification may fluctuate within the individual, and how these changes can relate to changes in work outcomes. This study attempts to further understanding of this process by utilizing a multilevel framework, which allows for examination of employees' within-

person variations of perceived overqualification, and how that might relate to their fluctuations in intrinsic motivation and withdrawal over time.

In terms of theoretical frameworks utilized in the overqualification literature, to date, there have only been a few theoretical explanations that have attempted to explain the effects of overqualification. Relative deprivation theory and equity theory address overqualification through the employee's perspective, while person-job (P-J) fit can be applied to study objective aspects of overqualification.

Relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976) is most frequently used to explain the effects of overqualification. Relative deprivation theory states that individuals will feel deprived when they desire a particular outcome but are unable to obtain it while similar others can. For example, a college graduate who can only find a job that requires a high school education will feel deprived when they see that other college graduates are enjoying better employment opportunities. Another potential explanation can be drawn from equity theory (Adams, 1963), which states that employees will compare their input/output ratios within the context of their jobs to determine whether it is equitable or fair. If the inputs (e.g., education, skills, and experience) do not match the outputs (e.g. pay, responsibilities, and recognition), the employee will perceive unfairness and seek to change the situation. They can either change their perceptions of the situation or take action to resolve the discrepancies by reducing inputs (e.g. performance), increasing outputs (e.g. obtaining more pay), or leaving the job. Lastly, P-J fit views overqualification as a situation of misfit between a person's qualifications and the job

requirements, which leads to poorer performance and attitudes (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

Erdogan, Bauer, Peiró and Truxillo (2011) highlighted a lack of studies that have empirically examined other theoretical mechanisms aside from relative deprivation which may be better able to explain the effects of overqualification. The field would benefit from examining other potential mediating or moderating mechanisms to explain the relationships between overqualification and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Relative deprivation and equity theories focus largely on injustice as the driving mechanism to explain negative outcomes associated with overqualification. However, focusing solely on expectancy and justice perspectives may limit our understanding of the processes by which employees experience negative outcomes. Additionally, full-time and part-time workers could have different experiences at work that lead to differential outcomes (e.g., Conway & Briner, 2002; De Cuyper & Witte, 2006; De Gilder, 2003), therefore additional processes should be examined to better understand what drives the effects of overqualification on work outcomes.

The current study aims to contribute to the field by drawing from self-regulatory theories, including self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998), to examine the motivational processes that drive the effects of overqualification on work outcomes. SDT is a motivational theory that states that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (i.e. competence, autonomy, relatedness) will lead to intrinsic motivation and internalized self-regulation of behaviors; regulatory focus theory describes the ways in which

individuals approach desired end-states. Additionally, Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, and Rosen (2016) call for an integration of SDT with other popular management theories in order to advance the understanding of psychological needs research. Therefore, I plan to integrate SDT with the person-environment (P-E) fit framework, specifically the conceptualization of overqualification as P-J misfit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), to explain the processes that lead overqualified employees to become less motivated and subsequently withdraw from their work. In line with the self-regulatory framework, I will specifically examine three contextual and dispositional moderators that may explain the motivational processes underlying the overqualification-withdrawal relationship, namely supervisor support, coworker support, and trait prevention focus.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate self-regulation-related processes as potential psychological mechanisms that may be able to account for the effects of overqualification on withdrawal. Researchers have identified a need for more studies to investigate other theoretical mechanisms that could provide more explanations for the attitudes and behaviors of overqualified employees. I am using SDT as the explanatory framework to understand overqualified employees' attitudes and behaviors while integrating the process need satisfaction fulfilled through P-E fit. Thereby, I will be able to illustrate the synergies that these theories have in explaining the processes that lead to overqualified employees withdrawing from their work. In addition, I attempt to address the call for exploring workplace withdrawal from a regulatory focus perspective (Gorman

et al. 2011, Lanaj, Chang, & Johnson, 2012), which can be easily integrated with the broader self-regulatory framework of SDT.

### **Contributions**

The current study will potentially make several contributions to the literature. First, the current study will address the need for additional theoretical mechanisms, beyond relative deprivation and equity theory, to help explain the effects of overqualification (Erdogan et al., 2011). The field would benefit from going beyond justice perceptions to examine the underlying processes that drive the behaviors of overqualified employees. The current study primarily draws upon self-regulatory theories (SDT and regulatory focus theory) to take a motivational approach in explaining employee withdrawal associated with overqualification, while also recognizing the importance of the P-J fit perspective.

Second, the current study will address the issues surrounding the relationship between regulatory focus and withdrawal. Several researchers (Gorman et al. 2011, Lanaj et al., 2012) have identified regulatory focus and negative workplace outcomes as an area that needs more research. This study hopes to clarify the relationship between prevention-focus and employee withdrawal outcomes, such as absenteeism and turnover intentions. Integrating regulatory focus theory with SDT can help to further the understanding of the motivational processes that underlie the overqualification-withdrawal relationship.

Lastly, this study will contribute to the scarce contingent worker literature by examining the within-person relationship between perceived overqualification and withdrawal behaviors in a sample of seasonal workers. This particular sample is

employed in the customer service industry, where perceived overqualification has already been shown to negatively impact job satisfaction (Fine & Nevo, 2008), and so it is important to see how other employee outcomes are impacted for this particular workforce. Methodologically, studying this population longitudinally will give us a better understanding of the psychological processes that may underlie worker motivation and withdrawal over time.

In summary, this study aims to examine the motivational processes that may mediate the relationship between perceived overqualification and withdrawal in a contingent workforce, as well as the role of environmental supports and dispositional characteristics in regulating worker motivation (See Figure 1 for the hypothesized model). I will first review the literature on perceived overqualification including the definition and workplace outcomes. I will then introduce the theoretical frameworks I am drawing on for my proposed model, specifically the model of person-environment fit, self-determination theory, and regulatory focus theory. I will then draw upon the evidence in the literature to support my proposed hypotheses and report the results of the hypothesis testing and supplementary analyses. Finally, I will conclude by discussing implications, limitations and future directions.

## Chapter 2: Theory and Hypothesis Development

### Person-Environment Fit

Person-environment (P-E) fit is a framework that measures the congruence or match between a person and their environment. It represents a desired state that results in positive outcomes for individuals and organizations (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Yang, Levine, Smith, Ispas, & Rossi, 2008). Two streams of research have emerged regarding the operationalization of P-E fit; supplementary fit and complementary fit (French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982; Caplan, 1987; Cable & Edwards, 2004).

Supplementary fit exists when an individual and their social environment share similar or matching characteristics, such as shared values or goals. He or she “supplements, embellishes, or possesses” similar characteristics to others in the same work environment (Muchinsky & Monahan 1987, p. 269). Supplementary fit can be assessed by examining the corresponding value congruence that exists between the employee and a given level of the work environment. As an example, employees may choose to join organizations based on their perceived alignment in terms of values and goals as well as their perceived match with other individuals that are in the organization.

Complementary fit, in contrast, refers to a relationship where the individual’s characteristics and the environment’s characteristics both provide what the other wants. In the work context, this means that an employee brings certain skills and expertise that the organization is seeking, while the organization can provide the rewards that the employee desires. Research within P-E fit regarding complementary fit has focused on psychological need fulfillment by studying how people’s attitudes are affected by the fit,

or congruence, between what they want and how the organization is equipped to meet those requirements (Edwards, 1991). An example would be whether an organization can provide the desired amount of job autonomy for an employee who has a certain need for autonomy that he/she wants fulfilled. Complementary fit has been conceptualized as demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit. Demands-abilities (D-A) fit refers to the fit between the demands of the task or a job and the skills and abilities provided by the individual. Needs-supplies (N-S) fit refers to the ability of the environment to fulfill the wants and needs of the individual.

P-E fit can also be distinguished by conceptualizing it based on a specific aspect of the environment as referent. Person-organization (P-O) fit refers to the fit of values between the person and the organization. Person-job (P-J) fit refers to the fit between the person and the job to the extent that the individual skills match with the demands of the job and that the job supplies what the individual wants. Person-supervisor (P-S) fit and person-group (P-G) fit, respectively refer to the fit between the supervisors and their subordinates and between an individual and their coworkers, on dimensions such as attitudes, demographics, and/or values (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, Greguras, Diefendorff, Carpenter, & Tröster, 2014). P-O, P-S, and P-G fit all share characteristics that align primarily with supplementary fit, while P-J fit is more typically associated with complementary fit. For the purpose of this proposal, I will be examining perceived overqualification as it pertains to P-J fit with a specific focus on D-A fit.

### **Perceived Overqualification**

The most consistent finding in the overqualification literature points to overqualified employees having more negative job attitudes. Studies have shown across multiple occupations that perceived overqualification is negatively related to job/pay/promotion satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Bolino & Feldman 2000; Johnson & Johnson 2000; Maynard, et al., 2006; McKee-Ryan, Virick, Prussia, Harvey, & Lilly, 2009).

Employee well-being is another outcome that is negatively related to overqualification. Several studies have linked overqualification to declines in mental health and increases in depressive symptoms (Bracke et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Furthermore, employees who report being overqualified have also reported lower health and higher rates of chronic disease (Friedland & Price, 2003) and have shown an increased likelihood of injury on the job (Premji & Smith, 2013). Perceived overqualification has also been linked to performance, though the findings are mixed. Some studies using other-rated sources have shown positive effects on performance outcomes, such as increased sales, training scores, and supervisor ratings (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Fine & Nevo, 2007; 2008; King & Hautaloma, 1987). However, studies using self-report data have found negative effects on performance outcomes, such as self-rated performance, counterproductive work behaviors (CWB), and labor productivity (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Liu et al., 2015; Marchante & Ortega, 2012).

Within the P-E fit framework, perceived overqualification represents a situation of P-J misfit, where the person's skills and abilities exceed job demands (D-A misfit) and

thus they are unable to fully utilize their skills and abilities. The poor fit due to perceived overqualification may then cause employees to exhibit higher turnover intentions (Maynard et al., 2006; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009) or even exhibit CWBs (Harold, Oh, Holtz, Han, & Giacalone, 2016; Liu et al., 2015). Although research has examined these outcomes, there still is no consensus on underlying psychological mechanisms to explain why these overqualified employees are behaving the way that they are. Therefore, more research is warranted to examine potential moderators and mediators that are integral to these consequences of misfit. I adopt a motivational approach in proposing that perceived overqualification may relate to the unsatisfied needs of competence and autonomy as posited through self-determination theory, leading to lower intrinsic motivation, which then leads to employee withdrawal.

### **Self-Determination Theory**

Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) is a model developed to explain how individuals interact with the environment, and in doing so it explains how these interactions foster well-being or ill-being. Psychological well-being is determined by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The need for competence is driven by the desire to affect one's environment and outcomes and, through that, experience mastery. Relatedness need is the desire to feel connected with and experience caring for others. Autonomy refers to the desire for volition, to be in control and able to act according to one's sense of self. Need satisfaction has also been argued by Deci and Ryan to be a precursor to intrinsic motivation. In particular, cognitive evaluation theory (CET, Deci & Ryan, 1985), a prior

theory that has since been subsumed by SDT, posits that social-contextual factors that promote feelings of competence and autonomy will enhance intrinsic motivation, while factors that diminish these feelings can undermine intrinsic motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Research has shown various contexts for which intrinsic motivation can be influenced. Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999) found in their meta-analysis that tangible rewards are a method by which intrinsic motivation can be undermined. Tangible rewards were experienced as controlling by participants – undermining participant need for autonomy – thus they reported drops in self-reported interest and intrinsic motivation. A more recent meta-analysis by Cerasoli, Nicklin, and Ford (2014) supports these findings, indicating that more controlling or salient incentives are associated with lower intrinsic motivation, while less controlling or indirectly salient incentives are positively related to intrinsic motivation. Relatedly, Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) found an indirect relationship between P-J fit and job performance through need for competence, such that employees who perceive a better fit between their skills and abilities with requirements of the job will feel more competent than those who perceive a poorer fit. The satisfaction of the need for competence increases intrinsic motivation based on CET, leading to improved performance.

Similarly, I propose that a context of misfit such as perceived overqualification, as explained by the P-J fit framework, could also serve to undermine intrinsic motivation through a lack of need satisfaction. At times when employees feel overqualified, their competence and/or autonomy needs won't be met, which will then reduce their intrinsic

motivation. The need for competence is driven by having control over the outcomes as well as experiencing mastery, so during times of experiencing overqualification employees may still be able to control their outcomes at work because they possess the requisite skills. However, they will not experience mastery within these roles because they feel that they have more to offer and this need is not being satisfied. The need for autonomy is concerned with the urge to be causal agents and to act in accordance with their values and beliefs. During times when employees perceive themselves as overqualified they may feel that their need for autonomy is not met, because they aren't able to do as interesting job tasks as they would like, or that they are limited in what roles they are able to fulfill in the job due to the nature of their position.

*Hypothesis 1:* Perceived overqualification will be negatively related to intrinsic motivation.

### **Job Withdrawal**

Job withdrawal has been defined by Hulin (1991) as “a set of behaviors dissatisfied individuals enact to avoid the work situation (p. 54).” Withdrawal also represents voluntary physical and psychological removal of employees from the workplace (Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012). Voluntary employee lateness, absenteeism, and turnover are the commonly studied withdrawal behaviors in organizations. Berry and colleagues (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of the inter-relationships between lateness, absenteeism, and turnover and did not find support for an overall withdrawal construct (inter-scale correlations ranging from 0 to .25 suggest a lack of unidimensionality) but rather for a uniqueness perspective (Blau, 1998), which suggests that it may be

inappropriate to aggregate withdrawal behaviors into an overall construct. Based on these findings, it is important to recognize that perceived overqualification may impact turnover intentions and absenteeism differently.

For the current study, intention to return was the focus as opposed to turnover intention. This was adapted from an intention to stay measure to fit in the study context. Turnover intention is more commonly used as a proxy for voluntary turnover, but Arnold and Davey (1999) argue that measuring this variable is less helpful to organizations because when employees reach the point where they decide to leave, not much can be done about it. Measuring employee intention to stay may be better for organizations who are trying to keep their employees. It is important to recognize that intention to stay and turnover intention, while related, are distinct from each other. Turnover intention is a conscious desire to leave, and is the last stage of a withdrawal cognition process (Mobley Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Intention to stay, in contrast, refers to a conscious willingness to stay with the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Cho, Johanson, and Guchait (2009) found that organizational commitment was a determinant of decreased turnover intention but not increased intention to stay, and perceptions of organizational support decreased turnover intention and increased intention to stay, but the effect is twice as strong for intention to stay. These differences must be considered when drawing conclusions from the current study.

As described earlier, there have been inconsistent findings in the literature on the relationship between overqualification and withdrawal. In efforts to reconcile such inconsistent findings, scholars have examined potential mechanisms underlying this

relationship, specifically moderators and mediators. To date, research has shown that this relationship can be moderated by factors like employee empowerment and work values (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013). For example, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) found that perceived overqualification and actual turnover were positively related only for employees who were low in empowerment (a moderator). Conversely, Maynard and Parfyonova (2013) found that overqualified employees who highly valued skill utilization and growth exhibited more job search behaviors. To date, only a limited number of studies have examined potential mediators in the overqualification – withdrawal relationship. Studies have found support for cynicism, organizational-based self-esteem, and anger towards the employment situation as mediators between perceived overqualification and CWBs, which encompasses job withdrawal (Luksyte, Spitzmueller, & Maynard, 2011; Liu et al., 2015). Our understanding of the processes underlying the overqualification – withdrawal relationship is far from complete. This study will examine the potential mediational role of intrinsic motivation and moderational roles of coworker support, supervisor support, and trait prevention focus – the disposition of an individual to adopt certain self-regulation strategies (Lin & Johnson, 2015).

### **Intrinsic Motivation Mediates the Overqualification-Withdrawal Relationship**

Intrinsic motivation, within SDT, is the highest level of autonomous motivation (Gagne and Deci, 2005). Employees that are intrinsically motivated choose to do tasks because they find them inherently enjoyable, interesting and rewarding. Because intrinsic motivation emerges upon the satisfaction of basic needs, the extent to which the environment meets these needs will determine whether employees choose to engage in

their work willingly or feel coerced into doing it (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Vansteenkiste and colleagues (2007) found that intrinsic motivation and need satisfaction were strongly negatively related to turnover intentions, which suggests that employees who are not getting their needs fulfilled are less intrinsically motivated and will be more likely to leave their organizations.

It is also important to discuss how intrinsic motivation may play a mediating role between perceived overqualification and withdrawal. Perceived overqualification represents a misfit between the person and their job. Thus, by incorporating P-J fit with SDT, I argue that the misfit between the demands of the job and the abilities of the employee lead to unmet needs for competence and autonomy. Since it has been established that people will select themselves out of situations where they are not having their needs met (e.g. Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013), and because employees who feel overqualified are in a situation where they do not see their job as fulfilling, so it follows that the decision to stay or leave largely depends on feelings of intrinsic motivation towards the job. Overqualified employees have unmet needs of competence and autonomy due to under-utilized skills and inadequate decision latitude at their job—factors that hinder intrinsic motivation. Since these individuals feel stunted within their jobs and become less intrinsically motivated on the job, they will be more likely to withdraw from their work. Thus, I propose that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and (a) intentions to return and (b) absenteeism. Specifically, during times when employees feel more overqualified, they

will express lower intentions to return and demonstrate higher absenteeism due to lower levels of intrinsic motivation.

*Hypothesis 2:* Intrinsic motivation will mediate the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and (a) intentions to return and (b) absenteeism.

### **Moderating Effect of Supervisor Support**

I further propose that supervisor support will moderate the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation, such that employees who have better supervisor support are buffered against the negative effects of perceived overqualification on their intrinsic motivation. Theoretically, supervisor support functions as a source of need satisfaction. Supportive supervisors can help to satisfy the need for competence by providing feedback to employees on their performance. They fulfill the need for relatedness to the extent that they connect with their employees and care for them. Lastly, they can provide autonomy for employees in terms of giving them some form of decision latitude in how they carry out their tasks. Studies have found that manager autonomy support has been positively linked to intrinsic need satisfaction. Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004) found that in a sample of first-line employees from a banking firm, perceived autonomy support from managers was significantly related to the experienced satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Gillet, Colombat, Michinov, Pronost, and Fouquereau (2013) found that need satisfaction positively mediated the relationship of supervisor autonomy support with work satisfaction, job performance, and organizational identification in a nursing sample. This provides strong

evidence for the positive influence that supervisor support can have on regulating employee intrinsic motivation through satisfying their needs. When employees are experiencing more perceived overqualification, the level of supervisor support they are experiencing will impact their intrinsic motivation. Specifically, employees who perceive higher levels of supervisor support will be buffered from the negative effects of perceived overqualification on employee intrinsic motivation. This is accomplished through the fulfillment of the needs that are lacking due to the perceived misfit between the employee and their job, particularly the needs for competence and autonomy. In contrast, at times when employees experience overqualification as well as lower levels of supervisor support, their competence and autonomy needs will not be compensated for. Consequently, the negative effects of perceived overqualification will not be buffered and intrinsic motivation will decrease to a greater extent among these employees.

*Hypothesis 3:* Supervisor support will moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation will be weaker (vs. stronger) when employees experience higher (vs. lower) levels of supervisor support.

### **Moderating Effect of Coworker Support**

I also propose that coworker support moderates the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation. Strong coworker support, similar to supervisor support, may buffer the negative effects of perceived overqualification on their intrinsic motivation. Coworkers work alongside one another and could function as a

source of relatedness to the extent that they interact with and are connected with each other at work. If coworker support is high, then employees feel cared for at work and may still remain motivated despite their strong perceptions of being overqualified for their position. Coworker relationships may also meet focal employee's need for competence by being additional sources of information in order to guide employees towards mastering challenges in their work environment.

Although little to no empirical literature has directly examined coworker support and need satisfaction, there has been some literature demonstrating the potential of coworker support to act as a buffer against unfavorable workplace environments (e.g., Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2007; Rousseau, Salek, Aubé, & Morin 2009; Sloan, 2012). For example, Sloan (2012) found that coworker support buffered the negative relationship between unfair treatment by supervisors and job satisfaction and the positive relationship between unfair treatment by supervisors and psychological distress. There is also evidence that positive working relationships favorably relate to job attitudes and motivation. Liao, Yang, Wang, Drown, and Shi (2013) found that team-member exchange, a form of coworker relationships, positively predicted work engagement – a state highly related to intrinsic motivation (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011) – three months later. A meta-analysis conducted by Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) linked positive coworker relationships to reductions in role demands and increases in job satisfaction and organizational commitment among focal employees. All the aforementioned evidence suggests that positive relationships with peers can buffer against poor work situations and can also have a positive effect on employees' stress

management and motivational regulation. Thus, I contend that coworker support works to buffer the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation, particularly by meeting the needs for relatedness and competence. When employees are feeling overqualified, experiencing higher levels of coworker support will impact their intrinsic motivation by meeting their needs through positive social interactions. This buffers the negative impact that overqualification has on their intrinsic motivation. Overqualified employees who experience lower levels of coworker support will not have their needs met through these positive social interactions, and so they will experience a greater decrease in their intrinsic motivation upon perceiving overqualification at work.

*Hypothesis 4:* Coworker support will moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation will be weaker (vs. stronger) when employees experience higher (vs. lower) levels of coworker support.

### **Regulatory Focus Theory**

Within the broader framework of SDT, Deci and Ryan (2008) discuss the existence of motivational orientations, which refer to how individuals initiate and regulate behaviors across situations and domains. These orientations arise from the satisfaction of the three basic needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. However, these motivational orientations do not include strategies to attain the goal of need

satisfaction. To address this, I draw from regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998) to provide a framework of self-regulation for the purpose of goal attainment.

Regulatory focus theory (RFT; Higgins, 1997, 1998) helps explain self-regulation by describing a process by which individuals self-regulate through two coexisting regulatory systems that aim to satisfy specific needs. RFT is rooted in the hedonic principle that people approach pleasure and avoid pain, but goes further to propose that there are different strategies to regulate pleasure and pain depending on specific needs. Promotion-focused self-regulation regulates nurturance needs and concerns advancement, growth, and accomplishments. People who are promotion focused are trying to attain a desired end-state and will tend to set high goals and take risks to achieve them and gain recognition. Goals are perceived as “gains” (versus “nongains”) and are accomplishments that bring positive emotional reactions. Prevention-focused self-regulation regulates security needs and involves responsibility, duty, and obligations. People who are prevention focused are trying to avoid an undesirable end-state and will tend to be risk averse in fulfilling their tasks, preferring to maintain the status quo. Goals are perceived as “losses” (versus “nonlosses”) and are responsibilities that bring neutral or negative emotional reactions. The two foci are related yet distinct from each other, so a person can be high on one and low on the other, or high or low on both foci. Regulatory focus can be studied as a stable trait or as a malleable psychological state, but for the purposes of this proposal I will be focusing on trait regulatory focus as it has been shown to be stable across time (Johnson & Chang, 2008).

### **Moderating Effect of Prevention Focus**

Recent reviews and meta-analyses (Gorman et al., 2012; Lanaj et al., 2012) have called out a need to further examine the relationship between regulatory focus and negative workplace outcomes such as CWBs and other withdrawal variables. As mentioned in the previous section, regulatory focus largely describes how individuals orient their motivation towards specific goals based on their desired end-state (gains vs losses). It can influence how individuals view their goals and shape their goal attainment strategies. Within the context of overqualification, employees may react differently depending on how they are oriented. Since I conceptualize overqualification as a state of misfit between the person and the job, particularly instances where the person's skills and abilities exceed what is necessary and are not being fully utilized, this context may potentially act as a loss-related cue. Because prevention focus is characterized by a focus on losses, I predict that those who are higher in prevention focus may react to being overqualified on the job more strongly than those who are lower in prevention focus, due to their heightened sensitivity and subsequent reactions to loss-related cues. Specifically, prevention focus may moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that for those who are higher on prevention focus, the effects of perceived overqualification are more pronounced and lead to a greater negative effect on their intrinsic motivation. For those who are lower on prevention focus, the effects of perceived overqualification may be less pronounced and could have a weaker negative effect on their intrinsic motivation. Figure 1 summarizes all of the hypothesized relationships between the focal variables.

*Hypothesis 5:* Prevention focus will moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation will be stronger among employees who are higher on prevention focus than among those lower on prevention focus.

### Chapter 3: Method

#### Sample and Procedures

The sample for the study was collected from service employees from a local organization in the Western United States. The organization is responsible for staffing and hosting professional sporting events at a local stadium. In order to meet the demands, they employ seasonal guest service workers to work on game days throughout the year, providing services to the guests that attend the games. These tasks include ushering guests into their appropriate seating sections, enforcing rules and regulations, reporting any accidents or problems, and engaging with the customers. The typical season runs for about 8-9 months out of the year.

The study was a multi-wave longitudinal survey design. We administered four waves of surveys across the sports season, which ran from approximately March 2015 to October 2015. Research assistants arrived early on game days and handed out surveys to the guest service employees following their briefing meetings with their supervisors. Study participation was voluntary, and employees filled out these surveys and either returned them directly to the researchers or dropped them into a secured survey box if they needed more time to finish. A total of 190 employees submitted survey responses over the course of the season. The current study included employees who responded to at least three of the surveys in the analysis due to attrition. Based on this inclusion criteria, the sample included 66 guest service employees. Respondents were predominantly male (61%), the mean age was 48.27 ( $SD = 16.66$ ), and the average tenure at the job was 2.25 years ( $SD = 2.60$ ).

**Measures**

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-5. All scales were measured at each time-point. The regulatory focus scale was the exception as it used a 6-point Likert-type scale and was only measured at one time-point. Respondents were instructed to reflect on the past month when responding to all items except for those of the trait regulatory focus scales. See the Appendix for a full list of the scale items and response options used. Both within- and between-person Cronbach's alphas were reported consistent with multi-level analyses.

**Perceived Overqualification.** Perceived overqualification was measured using a four-item subscale from Johnson and Johnson (1996) that measured the perceived mismatch between an individual and their job ( $\alpha_w = .67$ ,  $\alpha_b = .79$ ). An example item is “Based on my skills, I have felt overqualified for the job I hold.”

**Intrinsic Motivation.** State intrinsic motivation was measured using an adapted four-item scale from Grant (2008) ( $\alpha_w = .89$ ,  $\alpha_b = .96$ ). We changed the wording of the leading questions to be specific to working at this guest service job. An example item is “Over the past month, why have you been motivated to work at (this organization)? Because I find the work engaging.”

**Supervisor Support.** Supervisor support was measured with four items from a supervisor support climate scale developed by Bacharach and Bamberger (2007; ( $\alpha_w = .77$ ,  $\alpha_b = .85$ ). Because the original scale referred to company officers within a firefighting unit, these items were modified to refer generally to supervisors. An example item is

“Have you felt your supervisors could be counted on to listen, show understanding or show they care when things get tough at work?”

**Coworker Support.** Coworker support was measured with three items from an acceptance by others scale developed by Fey (1955; ( $\alpha_w = .83$ ,  $\alpha_b = .91$ ). These items were modified to refer to coworkers explicitly. An example item is “My coworkers have seemed to respect my opinion about things.”

**Prevention Focus.** Prevention focus was measured only at the second time-point using a three-item subscale from Lin and Johnson (2015; ( $\alpha_b = .40$ ). The authors shortened the measure from the original 18-item scale developed by Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda (2002) and adapted the questions to the work context. An example item is “At work my major focus is to avoid failure.”

**Promotion Focus.** Promotion focus was measured only at the second time-point using a three-item subscale from Lin and Johnson (2015;  $\alpha_b = .75$ ). This measure was drawn from the same original scale as the prevention focus measure. An example item is “At work my major focus is to achieve success.”

**Intention to Return.** Intention to return to the organization was measured at with two items adapted from an intention to stay measure developed by Lyons (1981; ( $\alpha_w = .78$ ,  $\alpha_b = .83$ ). These items were modified to reflect the desire of the respondent to return to working at this organization as opposed to continuing to work. An example item is “If I were completely free to choose, I have felt that I would prefer to return to (Organization) next season.”

**Absenteeism.** We obtained objective counts of absenteeism from the organization for all employees who had worked during the season. This included data for all the games throughout the season and which games each employee was scheduled to work. Missed attendance on game days were coded as “1” and attendance was coded as “0”.

**Covariates.** I controlled for age, gender, job tenure, and promotion focus in my analyses. Research has linked older workers with different career motives as well as stigmatization. As workers age, their job priorities shift from promotion opportunities to work consistent with their values and talents (Shultz Olson, & Wang, 2011). Finkelstein (2011) also proposed that older workers also suffer from stigmatization, as the term “overqualified” may in fact be a euphemism for “too old” to be hired when referring to certain age groups. Gender is being controlled for because past research has indicated that women are more vulnerable to experiencing overqualification than men are (Büchel & Battu, 2003; Feldman, 1996). Tenure on the job is included because past research has shown that the longer a worker is employed in an organization, the less likely it is that they will feel overqualified and leave the organization (Frei & Sousa-Posa, 2012). Finally, promotion focus is controlled for because it has been found to predict job satisfaction and work engagement (Gorman et al., 2011; Lanaj et al., 2012), which are relevant to motivational processes—the focus of the present study.

### **Power Analysis**

Statistical power in studies employing multi-level designs is determined by the number of observations at level 1 and level 2 as outlined by Kreft & de Leeuw (1998). They suggest that in order to detect small to moderate effect sizes with sufficient power,

researchers should aim to have at least 30 level-2 clusters and 30 level-1 observations within each cluster. The current study had 66 level-2 units (employees) with 3-4 observations (time) within each unit—a total of 228 observations, which was insufficient to meet this requirement, and so more conservative estimates must be made. Although it was not ideal to have so few observations for a multilevel analysis, most of the hypotheses that I tested were among level-1 variables, with the one exception being the cross-level moderation hypothesis (H5 – prevention focus at level 2). Simulation studies conducted by Mathieu, Aguinis, Culpepper, and Chen (2012) to determine statistical power for cross-level interactions indicate that with the current parameters of this study, we have a power of less than .20. However, a similar study involving repeated measures (Barnes, Ghumman, & Scott, 2013) found significant within-person mediational effects with 85 participants and 330 total observations, while other studies proposing cross-level moderation effects (Binnewies & Wornlein, 2011; Ilies, Dimotakis, & de Pater, 2010) found significant results with 64-90 participants and 326-354 observations. Therefore, while power was a concern, my design may still be able to detect small-medium effect sizes.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Preliminary Analyses

To examine potential nonresponse biases, I tested the final study sample against the excluded sample to assess for any differences between the two groups. Before beginning hypothesis testing, I examined descriptive statistics of the final sample to assess for potential outliers for the focal variables. I computed mean scores for each variable, and reverse-coded pertinent items prior to mean computation. I computed zero-order correlations between all pertinent variables at both the time-level and person-level to examine whether they are related in the expected directions. I also computed the intraclass correlation coefficients to confirm the multilevel structure of the data.

I performed statistical tests to identify any differences between the final sample and the excluded sample on focal and demographic variables. A chi-square test was performed to assess for gender differences between the final sample and excluded sample. The results indicated that there were no significant gender differences between the two groups,  $\chi^2(2) = 3.572$ , ns.

Independent *t*-tests were conducted to test for differences between the two groups on focal variables. The significant results are reported first. Age was tested and was found to be statistically significant,  $t(180) = 3.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $d = .50$ , which indicated a medium effect. The final sample ( $M = 48.27$ ,  $SD = 16.66$ ) was significantly older than the excluded sample ( $M = 39.75$ ,  $SD = 18.82$ ). Intrinsic motivation was tested and was found to be statistically significant,  $t(185) = 2.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $d = .34$ , which indicated a small to medium effect. The final sample ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) perceived more intrinsic

motivation than the excluded sample ( $M = 4.27, SD = .64$ ). Supervisor support was tested and was found to be statistically significant,  $t(173) = 3.26, p < .05; d = .47$ , which indicated a medium effect. The final sample ( $M = 4.24, SD = .55$ ) perceived more supervisor support than the excluded sample ( $M = 3.93, SD = .78$ ). Intention to return was tested and was found to be statistically significant,  $t(183) = 3.34, p < .05; d = .47$ , which indicated a medium effect. The final sample ( $M = 4.65, SD = .49$ ) had greater intentions to return than the excluded sample ( $M = 4.32, SD = .83$ ). Lastly, absenteeism was tested and was found to be statistically significant,  $t(161) = 3.41, p < .05; d = .51$ , which indicated a medium effect. The final sample ( $M = .09, SD = .19$ ) reported less absenteeism than the excluded sample ( $M = .23, SD = .33$ ).

Job tenure was tested and was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(172) = 1.29, ns$ . The final sample's job tenure ( $M = 2.25, SD = 2.60$ ) did not differ from the excluded sample's job tenure ( $M = 1.76, SD = 2.27$ ). Perceived overqualification was tested and was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(157) = .98, ns$ . The final sample ( $M = 2.84, SD = .81$ ) did not perceive overqualification differently than the excluded sample ( $M = 2.97, SD = .98$ ). Coworker support was tested and was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(185) = 1.11, ns$ . The final sample ( $M = 4.20, SD = .55$ ) did not perceive different amounts of coworker support than the excluded sample ( $M = 4.10, SD = .64$ ).

When interpreted as a whole, the differences between the final and excluded sample were consistent with the reasons for survey attrition. As the inclusion criteria was the completion of at least three of the four surveys, those participants with less intrinsic

motivation, less supervisor support, and lower intentions to return might have been at a greater risk of attrition. The results must be interpreted while considering this limitation.

Next, I examined all variables for potential outliers in SPSS using univariate and bivariate boxplots in SPSS. Several variables had outliers, but I decided to include them in the analyses as removing them would have reduced our sample size and potentially reduced statistical power in my hypothesis testing. Additionally, individual responses from the qualitative data as part of the larger research project were not indicative of any outliers in the survey participation process. Absenteeism in the current study was measured by counts or frequencies across the season. The variable is known to have issues with stability, and tends to be positively skewed and truncated by 0 values (Hammer & Landau, 1981). I examined the variable and determined it to be positively skewed (skewness = 2.10,  $SE = .30$ ), so I took additional steps in order to properly analyze the data. First, I conducted various transformations on the absenteeism variable to attempt to normalize the data. Square root, log, and natural log transformations did not significantly change the skewness of the data so I made the decision to keep the variable as is. Sturman (1999) conducted simulations to compare various models analyzing count data, and his findings suggested that both ordinary least squares (OLS) and negative binomial models yielded low type-1 error rates. Therefore, I have chosen to analyze and report the mediation results for the absenteeism outcome using both methodologies consistent with best practices.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and intercorrelations between the theoretically relevant focal variables and control variables at the within (above the

diagonal) and between (below the diagonal) levels. Most of the correlations were in the expected directions, however not all of them reached significance. A few correlations were in the opposite direction than expected (e.g., perceived overqualification and absenteeism); however they did not reach significance.

I computed intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC (1)) in order to determine the appropriateness of multilevel modeling. ICC (1) values measure the proportion of variance of a variable that is explained by the clustering (or grouping) of the data points (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). ICC values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating more dependence of observations based on clustering. Computing 1-ICC(1) will yield the remaining variance to be explained at level 1 after removing the variance explained by the clustering of observations. The 1-ICC(1) values for perceived overqualification, intrinsic motivation, intention to return, and absenteeism were .46, .28, .54, and .82, respectively, which indicated that a substantial portion of the remaining variance remained to be explained at the within-person level, supporting the use of multilevel modeling for hypothesis testing.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

I conducted hypothesis testing using Mplus (version 5.21; Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2013). The time- and person-level variables were set at levels 1 and 2, respectively. I used person-mean centering for the level-1 predictor (perceived overqualification), mediator (intrinsic motivation), and moderators (supervisor support and coworker acceptance). By doing this, the time-level effects (level 1) will not be confounded with person-level effects (level 2; Algina & Swaminathan, 2011). I used grand-mean centering

for the level-2 moderator (prevention focus), and I left the level-1 outcome variable (intention to return) uncentered to allow for variance partitioning across the two levels. For all hypothesis testing, I used data from all time points with missing data specified in order to maximize the use of the data collected. Specifically, pairwise deletion was used in all analyses. I entered gender, age, and job tenure as covariates in the analyses, and tested all models<sup>1</sup> using maximum likelihood estimation.

Hypothesis 1 stated that perceived overqualification will be negatively related to intrinsic motivation. A baseline multilevel model regressing intrinsic motivation on perceived overqualification at Level 1 tested this hypothesis. The results indicated that there was a nonsignificant relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation,  $B = -.05$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns, indicating a lack of support for Hypothesis 1. Because the first path of the mediation was not supported, statistical testing should cease as a mediational effect is unlikely. However, consistent with the hypotheses proposed and for the purpose of my thesis project, I conducted a full test.

Hypothesis 2 stated that intrinsic motivation would mediate the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and (a) intentions to return and (b) absenteeism. I tested three models and Table 2 provides the results of these multilevel regressions. The results for Hypothesis 2a indicated that perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation,  $B = -.06$ ,  $SE = .09$ , ns, but intrinsic motivation was a significant predictor of intention to return,  $B = .32$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ .

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<sup>1</sup> I planned to run random effects models, however most of them were unable to converge. According to Beal (2015), if the inclusion of random effects causes nonconvergence it may be omitted. Additionally, baseline random-effects models for the IV-mediator path had nonsignificant variance at level 2, therefore I've reported all fixed effects models for consistency.

Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intention to return after controlling for intrinsic motivation,  $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .06$ , ns. The indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = -.02$ ,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI = [-.07, .034]. These results do not support Hypothesis 2a.

I tested Hypothesis 2b using two models, and have presented these results in Table 2 (Models 3a and 3b). In the first model, I utilized OLS regression, and the results indicated that perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation,  $B = -.06$ ,  $SE = .09$ , ns, and intrinsic motivation was not a significant predictor of absenteeism,  $B = -.09$ ,  $SE = .05$ , ns. Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of absenteeism after controlling for intrinsic motivation,  $B = .001$ ,  $SE = .06$ , ns. The indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = .004$ ,  $SE = .61$ , 95% CI = [-.005, .010]. In the second model, I utilized a negative binomial regression, and the results indicated that perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation,  $B = -.06$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns, and intrinsic motivation was not a significant predictor of absenteeism,  $B = -.99$ ,  $SE = 11.88$ , ns. Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of absenteeism after controlling for intrinsic motivation,  $B = .09$ ,  $SE = 1.63$ , ns. The indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .01^2$ . These results did not support Hypothesis 2b.

For Hypotheses 3-5, Table 3 provides the results of the moderated regression models. Hypothesis 3 stated that supervisor support would moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that the negative

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<sup>2</sup> The Mplus output did not provide confidence interval estimates for this model.

relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation would be weaker when employees were experiencing higher levels of supervisor support compared to times when they were experiencing lower levels of support. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between perceived overqualification and supervisor support,  $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns, indicating a lack of support for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 stated that coworker support would moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation would be weaker when employees were experiencing higher levels of coworker support compared to times when they were experiencing lower levels of support. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between perceived overqualification and coworker support,  $B = -.02$ ,  $SE = .12$ , ns, indicating a lack of support for Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 stated that prevention focus would moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation such that the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation would be stronger among employees who were higher on prevention focus than those lower on prevention focus. For this hypothesis, I included promotion focus as a covariate. The results indicated that there was a marginally significant interaction between perceived overqualification and prevention focus,  $B = .13$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .10$ , in the unexpected direction, indicating a lack of support for Hypothesis 5. Simple slopes for the association between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation were tested for lower ( $-1 SD$  below the mean) and higher ( $+1 SD$  above the mean) prevention focus. The simple

slopes tests revealed a significant negative association between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation for those lower in prevention focus ( $B = -.13$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but there was no association for those higher in prevention focus ( $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .06$ , ns). Figure 2 provides a plot of the interaction. Specifically, for those with higher prevention focus, having higher perceived overqualification did not relate to their intrinsic motivation levels. However, for those with lower prevention focus, having higher perceived overqualification related to somewhat lower levels of intrinsic motivation.

### **Supplementary Analyses**

In addition to the hypothesized relationships, I ran several additional analyses to examine unhypothesized relationships. Specifically, I tested promotion focus and age as moderators in the perceived overqualification – intrinsic motivation relationship. Conceptually, employees with higher promotion focus are focused on advancement and achievement, therefore having this disposition may buffer the negative relationship between overqualification experiences and intrinsic motivation as they may find ways to satisfy their nurturance needs despite the limitations of their position. Employees lower on promotion focus don't prioritize achieving positive outcomes to the same extent, therefore being in an overqualified situation may hurt their motivation more as they will not seek ways to get the most from their job.

Research on the aging workforce has shown that as employees age, they tend to prioritize intrinsic work-related motives such as a sense of accomplishment, connecting with others, and autonomy over extrinsic work-related motives such as compensation,

benefits, and promotion (Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, & Dikkens, 2011). Therefore, age may moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation in such a way that perceived overqualification may be more demotivating for younger workers as they prioritize extrinsic motives such as promotion opportunities. In other words, a work situation where younger workers have excess skills that aren't being utilized and cannot contribute to job or career advancement may hurt their intrinsic motivation more so than older workers. This is supported by CET (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which states that emphasis on extrinsic rewards (e.g. monetary compensation, promotions) is likely to decrease intrinsic motivation in work tasks. Older workers may be protected from this as they value the intrinsic components of a job, therefore being overqualified may not matter to them as much.

In addition to the within-person level relationship, I also tested Hypothesis 2 at the between-person level to see if perceived overqualification related to intrinsic motivation and withdrawal across different employees. Lastly, I tested level-2 procedural justice, interactional justice, and distributive justice separately as competing mediators in the hypothesized mediational model. I made this decision because conceptually, perceived overqualification may lead to negative withdrawal outcomes due to perceiving a lack of organizational justice in response to unfavorable outcomes or poor interpersonal treatment. Past literature (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001) has demonstrated unique relationships between procedural, interactional, and distributive justice on withdrawal outcomes.

**Results for Supplementary Moderations.** The last two columns in Table 3 present the results from the supplementary moderation analyses. I tested promotion focus as a moderator between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation while controlling for prevention focus. The results indicated that there was a significant interaction between perceived overqualification and promotion focus,  $B = .16$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .05$ . Simple slopes for the association between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation were tested for lower ( $-1$   $SD$  below the mean) and higher ( $+1$   $SD$  above the mean) promotion focus. The simple slopes tests revealed a significant negative association between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation for those lower in promotion focus ( $B = -.17$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but there was a nonsignificant association for those higher in promotion focus ( $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .06$ , ns). Figure 3 provides a plot of the interaction. Specifically, for those with higher promotion focus, having higher perceived overqualification does not relate to their intrinsic motivation levels. However, for those with lower promotion focus, having higher perceived overqualification relates to lower levels of intrinsic motivation.

Additionally, I tested age as a moderator between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction between perceived overqualification and age,  $B = -.07$ ,  $SE = .11$ , ns, indicating lack of support for the relationship.

**Results for Mediation at Level 2.** Table 4 presents the results from the supplementary analysis conducted to test Hypothesis 2 at the between-person level. I tested an additional mediational model on the proposed relationships between perceived

overqualification, intrinsic motivation, intentions to return, and absenteeism examined across employees at Level 2. The results indicated that perceived overqualification was not related to intrinsic motivation,  $B = -.11$ ,  $SE = .15$ , ns. Intrinsic motivation was a significant predictor of intention to return,  $B = .84$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .01$ . Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intention to return after controlling for intrinsic motivation,  $B = -.07$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns. The indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = -.18$ ,  $SE = .12$ , 95% CI = [-.407, .057]. The results for both models with absenteeism indicated that intrinsic motivation was not related to absenteeism,  $B = .32$ ,  $SE = .21$ , ns (NB;  $B = .40$ ,  $SE = .51$ , ns). Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of absenteeism after controlling for intrinsic motivation,  $B = .24$ ,  $SE = .23$ , ns (NB;  $B = .26$ ,  $SE = .47$ , ns). The indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = -.07$ ,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI = [-.195, .059] (NB;  $B = -.09$ ,  $SE = .20$ , 95% CI = [-.474, .292]). While the results indicated stronger relationships in the proposed directions compared with the within-person results, none of the coefficients reached significance.

**Results for Alternative Mediators.** Tables 5-7 present the results from the supplementary analyses conducted to test for competing mediators. I tested three separate models to compare distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice as competing/alternative mediators, in addition to having intrinsic motivation as a level-1 mediator in each model. I made this decision because in our larger project we only measured these alternative mediators as between-person level variables.

Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intention to return after controlling for distributive justice,  $B = .01$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns. The specific indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = .01$ ,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI = [- .037, .054]. Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of absenteeism after controlling for distributive justice,  $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns. The specific indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI = [- .054, .125].

Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intention to return after controlling for procedural justice,  $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .07$ , ns. The specific indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = -.09$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI = [- .218, .030]. Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of absenteeism after controlling for procedural justice,  $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns. The specific indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = -.01$ ,  $SE = .11$ , 95% CI = [- .226, .209].

Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of intention to return after controlling for interactional justice,  $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .07$ , ns. The specific indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = -.05$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI = [- .136, .041]. Perceived overqualification was not a significant predictor of absenteeism after controlling for interactional justice,  $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .08$ , ns. The specific indirect effect was computed, and the coefficient was not significant,  $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .08$ , 95% CI = [- .080, .218].

In summary, none of the mediational analyses were supported. While it is important to note that the initial path between perceived overqualification and both procedural and interactional justice were significant, both types of justice were not significantly related to intention to return or absenteeism. Table 8 reports all of the indirect effects for the mediational models in the current study.

### Chapter 5: Discussion

While the current study's hypotheses were not supported, some of the explanations may be derived from the theoretical framework used for the study. As discussed in the introduction, most of the previous research on overqualification has drawn on relative deprivation theory to explain its effects. The current study sought to extend the literature by taking a motivational perspective to explain the effects of overqualification on employee withdrawal. However, the testing of Hypothesis 1 revealed no significant effect of perceived overqualification on intrinsic motivation, and by extension did not support Hypothesis 2, the mediation between perceived overqualification and withdrawal through intrinsic motivation.

This null finding for the overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship suggested that the perceived overqualification did not negatively impact employee intrinsic motivation as much as was hypothesized based on SDT. The variables were related in the expected direction ( $r = -.04$ ) at the within-person level, but were not significant. While running the full mediation, I found that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted intention to return, so it may be that intrinsic motivation does play a key role in withdrawal, however there may be stronger antecedents other than overqualification that better account for this intrinsic motivation-withdrawal relationship. Additionally, the supplementary analyses that tested these relationships at the between-person level revealed a stronger relationship in the expected direction but it still remained nonsignificant.

The nature of the study sample may have contributed to the nonsignificant findings. According to the qualitative responses that our larger project team gathered at the end of the first survey, many of the participating employees indicated that they stayed at this job due to reasons such as getting along with the people they work with and because of a love for the sport. These reasons could explain why intrinsic motivation was generally high across the sample and across time points. As a result, it was more difficult to establish a significant relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation due to potential range restriction and lower within-person variability. As potential evidence for this explanation, I found that levels of intrinsic motivation in the final sample were significantly higher than those among the excluded sample, and the percent of within-person variability for intrinsic motivation was the lowest among all level-1 variables included in this study (28%). Future research utilizing samples that are employed in more traditional customer service oriented jobs may yield different findings.

Futhermore, I conducted additional analyses to test for competing justice-related mediators in the model. Particularly, I tested distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice as mediators in separate models while including the mediation of intrinsic motivation. I found no significant mediational effects through any of these alternative mediators, but I found that perceived overqualification predicted procedural and interactional justice at the between-person level, while intrinsic motivation still predicted intention to return at the within-person level when included simultaneously with each alternative mediator. These findings could be supportive of prior theoretical frameworks used to study overqualification, namely relative deprivation theory and

equity theory. Those who experience overqualification may then perceive less fairness in the organizational process of allocating resources or feel that they've been unfairly treated interpersonally, although the results do not support a claim that this influences their withdrawal.

The current study also examined the role of social relationships in buffering the hypothesized negative effects of perceived overqualification on intrinsic motivation. However, I found no evidence to support the role of either supervisor support or coworker support (Hypotheses 3 & 4) in buffering the effects of overqualification on intrinsic motivation, which is likely due to the limited number of observations and resulting low statistical power in testing moderational effects in multilevel settings (Mathieu et al., 2012). It was expected that having social support from supervisors and coworkers would satisfy employee needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in a manner that would protect against the negative impact perceived overqualification was posited to have, keeping them motivated at work. It's important to note that both social support measures were highly endorsed ( $M = 4.24$ ;  $4.20$ ,  $SD = .55$ ;  $.55$ , for supervisor and coworker support, respectively) which may be indicative of low variability and range restriction. Range restriction could have accounted for weaker statistical power in detecting moderational effects. However, the within-person variability of these measures (53% and 38% for supervisor and coworker support, respectively) may still have been sufficient to detect an effect.

Another explanation may lie in the context of the job, which may have played a key role. As referenced earlier in the qualitative responses, many of the employees

mentioned that they enjoyed being at the job due to positive interactions with the people they work with. Therefore, social support may have been operating independently from perceived overqualification to satisfy employee needs at work. The results did indicate significant main effects for both supervisor and coworker support in predicting intrinsic motivation, which supports the existing literature that these social relationships do play an integral role in motivating employees at work.

Lastly, the current study drew on regulatory focus theory to propose that higher (vs. lower) prevention focus may exacerbate the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and employee intrinsic motivation. The findings support a moderating effect of prevention focus on the relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation, but in the direction opposite to my expectation. Specifically, the results indicated that for those with lower prevention focus, perceived overqualification had a stronger negative relationship with their intrinsic motivation, but for those with higher prevention focus, there was a nonsignificant overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship. The finding is counterintuitive to the notion of match between prevention focus and situations indicative of loss, such as perceived overqualification.

A possible explanation for this finding is that those with higher prevention focus are already focused on the prevention of losses. Being overqualified still acts as a loss-related cue, however those higher in prevention focus may be less affected because they are predisposed to behaving in ways to prevent potential losses, and thus their motivation may be less contingent on social cues from overqualification experiences. For those employees who are lower on prevention focus, the loss-related cues from

overqualification experiences may be more salient because these employees are not predisposed to be wary of negative outcomes. As a result, when these employees perceive more overqualification, their intrinsic motivation is negatively affected. Perhaps adopting a lower prevention focus allowed for employees to process the cues from perceived overqualification more thoroughly than the employees higher in prevention focus.

I also tested the moderational effects of promotion focus and age as part of the supplementary analyses. The results supported promotion focus as a moderator of the perceived overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship. Specifically, the results indicated that for those with lower promotion focus, perceived overqualification had a stronger negative relationship with their intrinsic motivation, but for those with higher promotion focus, there was a nonsignificant overqualification-intrinsic motivation relationship. This supports the theoretical reasoning that for employees lower in promotion focus, situations of overqualification may be more harmful to their intrinsic motivation since they are not focused on achievement opportunities at work and have limited ways to fulfill their psychological needs. Among employees higher in promotion focus, overqualification experiences have less bearing on their intrinsic motivation, perhaps because these individuals are more likely to seek challenges and accomplishments in their roles, which then compensates the unfulfilled autonomy and competency needs due to overqualification experiences and maintains their levels of intrinsic motivation.

The results also indicated a lack of support for age as a moderator of the intrinsic motivation-perceived overqualification relationship. These results may be due to the

nature of the sample. While age has been related to more intrinsic motives (Kooij et al, 2011), the sample did report high intrinsic motivation in general ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = .61$ ). This may have caused range restriction in the variable, which would weaken statistical power for tests of cross-level moderation (Aguinis, Edwards, & Bradley, 2017). Additionally, this may be explained by the nature of the job as well. Given the sporting context, it may be that employees are motivated at work due to their proximity to an activity they also intrinsically enjoy that is independent of age effects.

### **Limitations and future research directions**

There are several limitations to this study that may be addressed with future research. First, the interaction between prevention focus and perceived overqualification in the moderation model needs to be interpreted with caution due to the marginal significance of the interaction term and a concern regarding the lower-than-desired reliability of the prevention focus measure. Our obtained estimate of reliability was far smaller than Lin and Johnson's (2015) estimate. The scale reliability was closely examined, however even with the removal of one of the items, the scale reliability only increased to .55, which is still lower than an acceptable cut-off (.70). The moderation analyses using the 2-item scale was not significant, although this may be a result of the reduced content domain and variance from the reduction of the scale. It was possible that this specific sample did not interpret the items consistent with the full-time workers as studied in previous studies.

Second, the study was observational; it did not involve any intervention on the part of the researchers to attempt to change any variables. Due to the limitation of such a

study design, claims for causality must be limited. Future research may address this limitation by employing experimental study designs (e.g. Thompson, Sikora, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2015) that enable researchers to manipulate objective or perceived overqualification (e.g. altering the amount of responsibilities or skills required for a certain job in the laboratory or actual workplace) in order to examine the causal effects of overqualification on employee motivation and withdrawal.

Third, the study sample could have limited generalizability. Seasonal workers may have different characteristics from other types of contingent workers. I am hopeful, however, that the findings can be generalized to other seasonal and/or part-time jobs with similar characteristics, particularly those that involve customer service and social interactions. Specifically, as this particular sample works in the customer service industry, which employs about 2.7 million workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), research that focuses on this type of work may still have important implications for a large number of workers. Future research may address this limitation by implementing study designs involving two or more samples of contingent workers or comparing contingent to full-time workers. Additionally, future research would benefit from incorporating a job analysis process to identify overlapping tasks and roles in order to better compare jobs in different organizations to improve claims for generalizability.

It is important to note that most of the literature on overqualification and withdrawal recruited study participants from multiple industries and organizations. To the best of my knowledge, few studies have been conducted within individual organizations to examine overqualification and actual turnover (Erdogan et al., 2011). More studies

sampling within a single organization would be valuable because it can explain how employees with different qualifications react to the same job in identical work environments and whether the differences in actual or perceived overqualification between employees could predict subsequent withdrawal. From the organization's perspective, this can help to inform hiring and selection processes.

Fourth, our sample may suffer from selection bias during survey administration and data collection. We were limited in the number of research assistants we could send out to meet with all of the employee groups, and the survey participation was a completely voluntary. The preliminary analyses showed that employees included in the final sample differed from those who were not included on several focal variables. Additionally, if we account for employees who may have declined to participate, the potential selection bias might have been larger. Relatedly, the study design is subject to common method bias due to being comprised of self-report items (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), however the use of multiple time-points as well as an objective dependent variable (absenteeism) may have helped to reduce such biases.

Despite the lack of support for the current study's hypotheses, a future study that addresses several of these limitations may be able to establish a relationship between perceived overqualification and intrinsic motivation. Other opportunities for future research include examining other potential moderators and mediators that have been supported in the literature. In particular, length of work experience, personal initiative, career calling, justice sensitivity, culture, and peer overqualification have been found to moderate the relationship of overqualification on various workplace outcomes including

job satisfaction, subjective well-being, organizational citizenship behaviors, and task significance (Agut, Peiró, & Grau, 2009; Hu et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2015; Peiró, Agut, & Grau, 2010; Wu, Luksyte, & Parker, 2015). Thus, extending this line of research to examine withdrawal may be theoretically relevant. Additionally, financial hardship has been found to partially mediate the relationship between overqualification and depressive symptoms, so a theoretical argument exploring how financial situation could mediate the relationship between overqualification and withdrawal would be particularly applicable to contingent workers.

Future research should also address the distinction between voluntary and involuntary part-time workers. The motives behind why individuals join and remain in part-time occupations may be of both theoretical and practical importance. For instance, voluntary and involuntary part-time workers may not hold the same priorities when it comes to their willingness to stay or leave an organization. Involuntary part-time workers have lower median incomes and higher instances of poverty compared to other part-time workers (Terry, 1981). The motivational processes that drive employee engagement may work differently between the two populations. This may also impact the types of jobs these workers seek out, which has implications for job attitudes and important outcomes such as withdrawal and performance.

### **Conclusion**

Perceptions of overqualification will continue to exist as it is impractical to provide every employee with a job that perfectly matches his/her qualifications and meets his/her needs. Researchers and organizational management are tasked with finding ways

to mitigate the negative effects that have been found when employees feel overqualified on the job. The current study examined seasonal workers, an understudied subset of the workforce, and how their perceptions of overqualification might relate to their intrinsic motivation at work and subsequent withdrawal. While many of the proposed relationships were not supported, it is important to make strides towards understanding the experience of the non-traditional workforce since a key purpose of research is to provide recommendations and best practices for how organizations can best manage these employees.

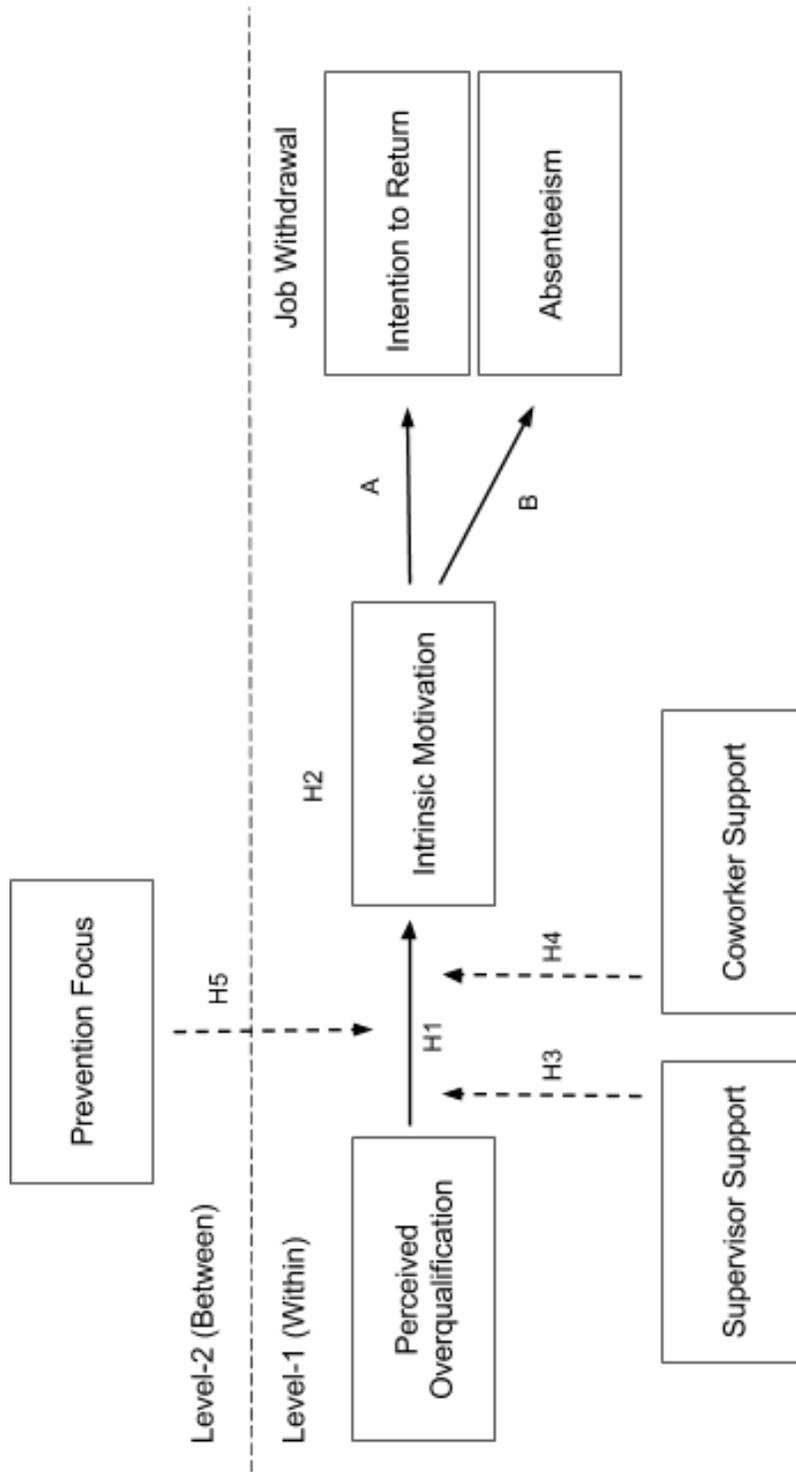


Figure 1. Hypothesized Conceptual Model

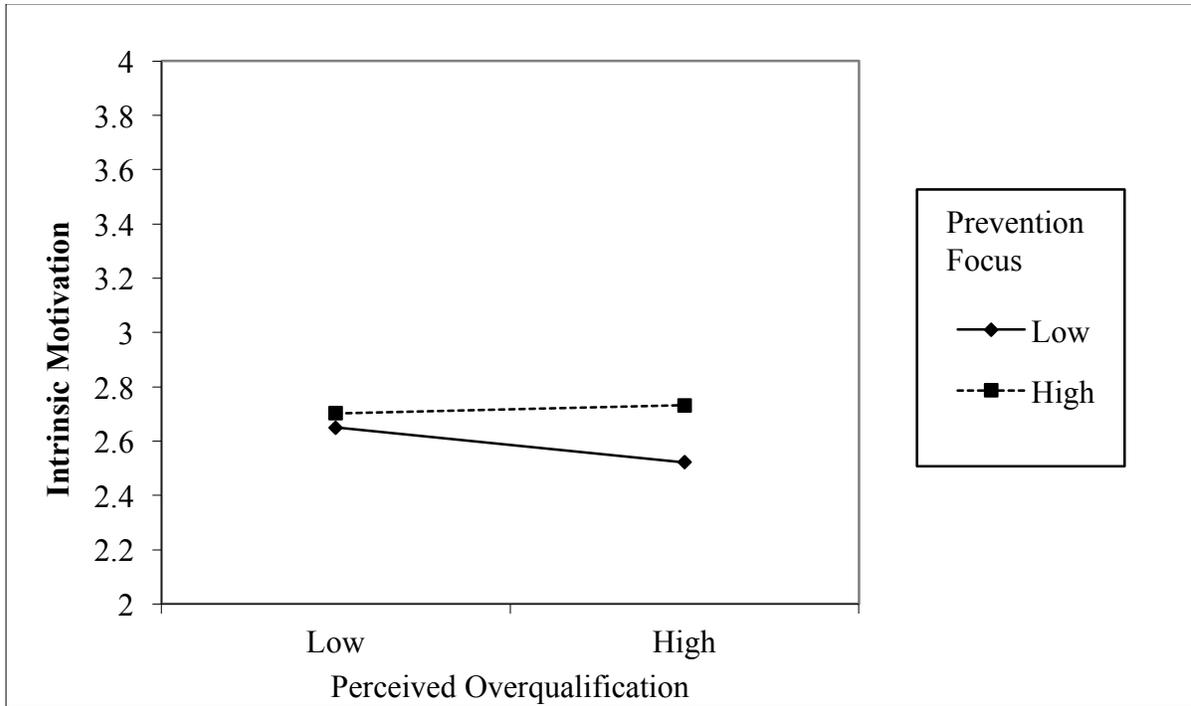


Figure 2. The Moderating Effect of Prevention Focus on the Perceived Overqualification – Intrinsic Motivation Relationship

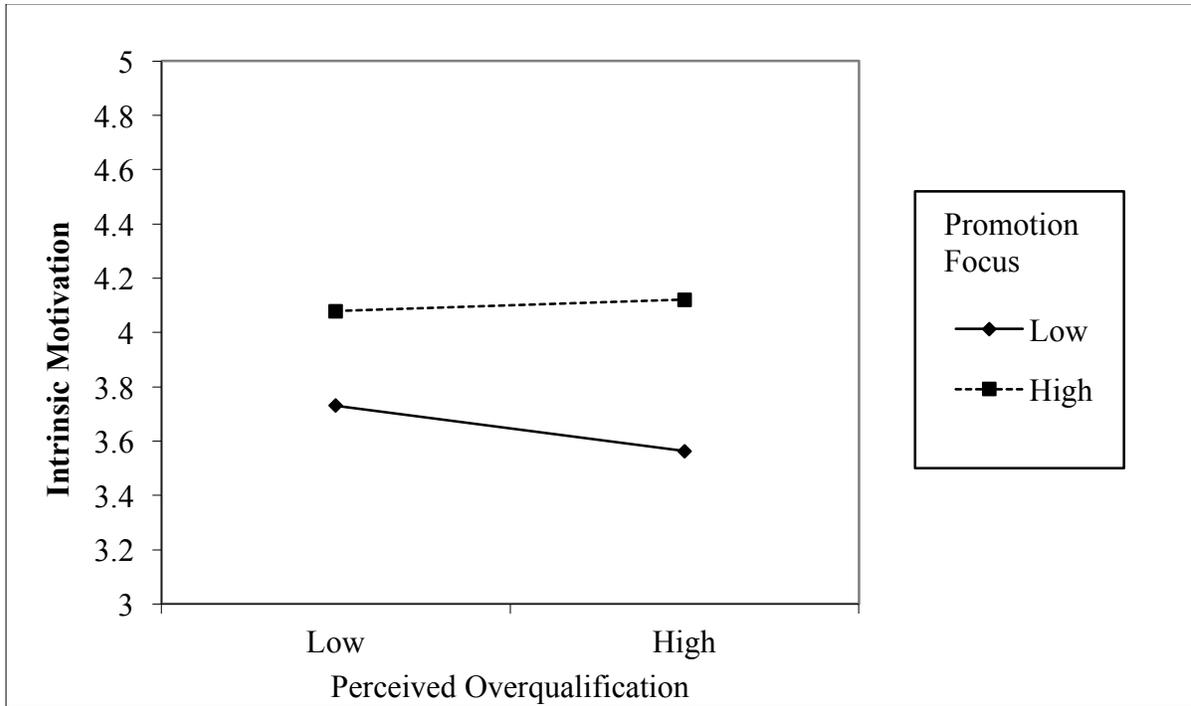


Figure 3. The Moderating Effect of Promotion Focus on the Perceived Overqualification – Intrinsic Motivation Relationship

Table 1.  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Focal Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>Within-person variables</b>															
1. Perceived overqualification	2.85	.81	—	-.04	.05	.02	.00	.01							
2. Intrinsic motivation	4.48	.61	-.23 <sup>†</sup>	—	.22**	.20**	.19**	-.06							
3. Supervisor support	4.24	.55	-.30*	.38**	—	.39**	.22**	-.03							
4. Coworker support	4.20	.55	-.17	.47**	.66**	—	.15*	.01							
5. Intention to return	4.65	.49	-.28*	.71**	.24 <sup>†</sup>	.28*	—	-.09							
6. Absenteeism	.09	.19	.23 <sup>†</sup>	.03	.01	.09	-.05	—							
<b>Between-person variables</b>															
7. Prevention focus	3.77	.97	.10	.17	-.12	-.13	.21 <sup>†</sup>	.16	—						
8. Promotion focus	5.13	.80	-.18	.47**	.20	.34**	.46**	.13	.24 <sup>†</sup>	—					
9. Procedural justice	3.25	.97	-.50**	.15	.19	.00	.25 <sup>†</sup>	-.05	.11	.19	—				
10. Interactional justice	3.60	.99	-.30*	.16	.22	.10	.21	-.13	.12	.20	.70**	—			
11. Distributive justice	3.29	1.18	-.14	.01	-.03	-.10	-.03	-.13	.18	-.00	.31*	.54**	—		
12. Age	48.27	16.66	-.24 <sup>†</sup>	.26*	.06	-.01	.40**	-.24	.00	.26*	.17	.15	.01	—	
13. Gender	.62	.52	-.30*	-.12	-.03	-.02	-.15	.03	-.19	-.10	-.09	.12	.27 <sup>†</sup>	.02	—
14. Job tenure (years)	2.25	2.60	-.03	.27*	.03	.12	.21 <sup>†</sup>	-.00	-.06	.20	-.16	-.36**	-.34*	.08	-.24 <sup>†</sup>

Note. Correlations above the diagonal represent within-person level (n = 224-228) and are pooled within-person correlations. Correlations below the diagonal represent the between-person level (n = 52-66). Variables that were measured at the within-person level were aggregated across measurement points to calculate between-person correlations.  
<sup>†</sup>p < .10 \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01.

Table 2.

*Multilevel Estimates for Models Predicting Intention to Return and Absenteeism*

Variables	Intrinsic Motivation	Intention to Return	Absenteeism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a <sup>1</sup>	Model 3b <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	7.89**(.78)	11.03**(1.25)	-.68**(.24)	-2.81(2.40)
<b>Within-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-.05(.07)	.02(.06)	.00(.07)	.09(1.63)
Intrinsic motivation	-	.32**(.06)	-.09(.07)	-.99(11.88)
Residual variance at within-level	1.00**(.01)	.90**(.04)	.99**(.01)	.00(999.00)
<b>Between-person covariates</b>				
Age	.29*(.12)	.45**(.11)	-.27(.19)	-.35(.50)
Gender	-.12(.12)	-.15(.13)	.09(.20)	.08(.42)
Tenure	.23(.12)	.17(.13)	.16(.20)	.23(.41)
Residual variance at between-level	.83**	.73**(.11)	.91**(.11)	.84*(.42)

Note. Regression coefficients were standardized estimates from the Mplus output corresponding to the multilevel model. Standard errors were reported in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>1</sup> Results from ordinary least squares regression reported.

<sup>2</sup> Results from the negative binomial regression reported.

Table 3. Moderating Effects of Supervisor Support, Coworker Support, Prevention Focus, Promotion Focus, and Age on Intrinsic Motivation

Independent Variable	Model 1 (SS)		Model 2 (CS)		Model 3 (PRE)		Model 4 (PRO)		Model 5 (AGE)	
	Step 1	Step 2								
<b>Within-person variables</b>										
Perceived overqualification (POQ)	-.06(.07)	-.06(.07)	-.05(.07)	-.04(.07)	-.07(.07)	-.07(.07)	-.07(.07)	-.09(.07)	-.05(.07)	-.03(.07)
Supervisor support (SS)	.18**(.07)	.20**(.07)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coworker support (CS)	-	-	.17*(.07)	.16*(.07)	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Between-person variables</b>										
Prevention focus (PRE)	-	-	-	-	.11(.12)	.11(.12)	.11(.12)	.11(.12)	-	-
Promotion focus (PRO)	-	-	-	-	.38**(.11)	.38**(.11)	.38**(.11)	.38**(.11)	-	-
Age	.29*(.12)	.29*(.12)	.29*(.12)	.29*(.12)	.21 <sup>†</sup> (.11)	.21 <sup>†</sup> (.11)	.21 <sup>†</sup> (.11)	.21 <sup>†</sup> (.11)	.29*(.12)	.29*(.12)
Gender	-.12(.12)	-.12(.12)	-.12(.12)	-.12(.12)	-.09(.12)	-.09(.12)	-.09(.12)	-.09(.12)	-.12(.12)	-.12(.12)
Job tenure	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.12)	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.12)	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.12)	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.12)	.17(.12)	.17(.12)	.17(.12)	.17(.12)	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.12)	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.12)
<b>Interaction terms</b>										
POQ*SS	-	.04(.08)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
POQ*CS	-	-	-	-.02(.08)	-	-	-	-	-	-
POQ*PRE	-	-	-	-	.13 <sup>†</sup> (.07)	-	-	-	-	-
POQ*PRO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.16*(.07)	-	-
POQ*Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.07
R <sup>2</sup>	.036	.038	.030	.030	.005	.020	.005	.031	.002	.006
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	-	.002	-	.000	-	.015	-	.026	-	.004

Note. Regression coefficients were standardized estimates from the Mplus output corresponding to the moderation models. <sup>†</sup>p < .10 \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01.

Table 4.

*Multilevel Estimates for Level-2 Models Predicting Intention to Return and Absenteeism*

Variables	Intrinsic Motivation	Intention to Return	Absenteeism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a <sup>1</sup>	Model 3b <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	8.39**(1.02)	5.31**(1.54)	-2.98(2.02)	-6.75*(3.26)
<b>Between-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-.11(.15)	-.07(.08)	.24(.23)	.26(.47)
Intrinsic motivation	-	.84**(0.08)	.32(.21)	.40(.51)
<b>Between-person covariates</b>				
Age	.26*(.12)	.24*(.11)	-.30(.19)	-.42(.56)
Gender	-.08(.14)	-.05(.11)	.02(.21)	.04(.49)
Tenure	.25*(.12)	.02(.11)	.05(.20)	.11(.45)
Residual variance at between-level	.82**(0.09)	.17(.11)	.75**(0.20)	.59(.50)

Note. Regression coefficients were standardized estimates from the Mplus output corresponding to the multilevel model. Standard errors were reported in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>1</sup> Results from ordinary least squares regression reported.

<sup>2</sup> Results from the negative binomial regression reported.

Table 5.  
*Multilevel Estimates for Distributive Justice Models Predicting Intention to Return and Absenteeism*

Variables	Distributive Justice	Intention to Return	Absenteeism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a <sup>1</sup>	Model 3b <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	1.18(.64)	5.57**(1.45)	-1.98(1.63)	-
<b>Within-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-	.01(.08)	.02(.08)	-
Intrinsic motivation	-	.36**(.07)	-.10(.08)	-
Residual variance at within-level	-	.87**(.05)	.99**(.02)	-
<b>Between-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-.28(.14)	-	-	-
Distributive justice	-	-.05 (.13)	-.23(.20)	-
Intrinsic motivation	-	.78**(.08)	.34 <sup>†</sup> (.20)	-
<b>Between-person covariates</b>				
Age	-.05(.13)	.26*(.11)	-.34 <sup>†</sup> (.19)	-
Gender	-.27*(.14)	-.07(.11)	.15(.19)	-
Tenure	-.27*(.13)	-.01(.11)	.04(.20)	-
Residual variance at between-level	.79**(.10)	.29**(.11)	.72**(.22)	-

Note. Regression coefficients were standardized estimates from the Mplus output corresponding to the multilevel model. Standard errors were reported in parentheses.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>1</sup> Results from ordinary least squares regression reported.

<sup>2</sup> Mplus had convergence issues with the negative binomial model, therefore results have been omitted.

Table 6.

*Multilevel Estimates for Procedural Justice Models Predicting Intention to Return and Absenteeism*

Variables	Procedural justice	Intention to Return	Absenteeism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a <sup>1</sup>	Model 3b <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	2.28(.56)	5.64**(1.42)	-3.45(2.12)	-
<b>Within-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-	.03(.07)	.03(.08)	-
Intrinsic motivation	-	.37**(0.07)	-.10(.08)	-
Residual variance at within-level	-	.87**(0.05)	.99**(0.02)	-
<b>Between-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-.51**(0.13)	-	-	-
Procedural justice	-	.18(.12)	.02(.20)	-
Intrinsic motivation	-	.77**(0.08)	.33(.21)	-
<b>Between-person covariates</b>				
Age	.09(.12)	.23*(.11)	-.36 <sup>†</sup> (.19)	-
Gender	.00(.13)	-.05(.10)	.12(.20)	-
Tenure	-.15(.12)	.05(.11)	.09(.20)	-
Residual variance at between-level	.69**(0.12)	.26*(.11)	.78**(0.20)	-

Note. Regression coefficients were standardized estimates from the Mplus output corresponding to the multilevel model. Standard errors were reported in parentheses.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>1</sup> Results from ordinary least squares regression reported.

<sup>2</sup> Mplus had convergence issues with the negative binomial model, therefore results have been omitted.

Table 7.

*Multilevel Estimates for Interactional Justice Models Predicting Intention to Return and Absenteeism*

Variables	Interactional justice	Intention to Return	Absenteeism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a <sup>1</sup>	Model 3b <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	-1.61(.60)	5.79**(1.44)	-2.10(.21)	-
<b>Within-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-	.02(.07)	.02(.08)	-
Intrinsic motivation	-	.37**(0.07)	-.10(.08)	-
Residual variance at within-level	-	.87**(0.05)	.99**(0.02)	-
<b>Between-person variables</b>				
Perceived overqualification	-.37*(.14)	-	-	-
Interactional justice	-	.14(.13)	-.20(.21)	-
Intrinsic motivation	-	.76**(0.09)	.35 <sup>†</sup> (.20)	-
<b>Between-person covariates</b>				
Age	.09(.13)	.25*(.11)	-.32 <sup>†</sup> (.19)	-
Gender	.15(.13)	-.08(.10)	.12(.19)	-
Tenure	-.33**(0.12)	.06(.12)	.02(.21)	-
Residual variance at between-level	.72**(0.11)	.28**(0.11)	.74**(0.21)	-

Note. Regression coefficients were standardized estimates from the Mplus output corresponding to the multilevel model. Standard errors were reported in parentheses.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>1</sup> Results from ordinary least squares regression reported.

<sup>2</sup> Mplus had convergence issues with the negative binomial model, therefore results have been omitted.

Table 8.  
*Model Estimates of the Indirect Effect*

	$\beta$	SE	<i>P</i>	95% CI
<b>Hypothesized Models</b>				
Perceived Overqualification → Intrinsic Motivation → Intention to Return	-.018	.022	.41	[-.061, .025]
Perceived Overqualification → Intrinsic Motivation → Absenteeism OLS	.005	.007	.48	[-.009, .018]
Perceived Overqualification → Intrinsic Motivation → Absenteeism NB	.028	.054	.60	[-.078, .134]
<b>Supplementary Models</b>				
Perceived Overqualification → Intrinsic Motivation → Intention to Return	-.175	.118	.14	[-.407, .057]
Perceived Overqualification → Intrinsic Motivation → Absenteeism OLS	-.068	.065	.30	[-.195, .059]
Perceived Overqualification → Intrinsic Motivation → Absenteeism NB	-.091	.195	.64	[-.474, .292]
Perceived Overqualification → Distributive Justice → Intention to Return	.008	.023	.72	[-.037, .054]
Perceived Overqualification → Distributive Justice → Absenteeism OLS	.035	.046	.44	[-.054, .125]
Perceived Overqualification → Distributive Justice → Absenteeism NB	-	-	-	-
Perceived Overqualification → Procedural Justice → Intention to Return	-.094	.063	.14	[-.218, .030]
Perceived Overqualification → Procedural Justice → Absenteeism OLS	-.008	.111	.94	[-.226, .209]
Perceived Overqualification → Procedural Justice → Absenteeism NB	-	-	-	-
Perceived Overqualification → Interactional Justice → Intention to Return	-.047	.045	.29	[-.136, .041]
Perceived Overqualification → Interactional Justice → Absenteeism OLS	.069	.076	.37	[-.080, .218]
Perceived Overqualification → Interactional Justice → Absenteeism NB	-	-	-	-

Note. Mplus does not provide standardized estimates for the negative binomial models, therefore unstandardized estimates are provided. For models that include justice-related variables, the specific indirect effects are reported as intrinsic motivation was included as a competing mediator.

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## Appendix

### Survey Measures

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#### **Perceived overqualification (Johnson & Johnson, 1996)**

During the past month at (Organization):

1. I have felt that my formal education over-qualifies me for my present job.
2. My talents have not been fully utilized on my job.
3. My work experience has been more than necessary to do my present job.
4. Based on my skills, I have felt overqualified for the job I hold.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

#### **Intrinsic motivation (Grant, 2008)**

During the past month, why have you been motivated to do your work at (Organization)?

1. Because I enjoy the work itself.
2. Because it's fun.
3. Because I find the work engaging.
4. Because I enjoy it.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

#### **Supervisor Support (Bacharach and Bamberger, 2007)**

During the past month, how often:

1. Have you felt your supervisors could be counted on to listen, show understanding or show they care when things get tough at work?
2. Have your supervisors gone out of their way to do things to make your work-life easier?
3. Have you felt you could rely on your supervisors for advice or information when things get tough at work?
4. Have you felt you could rely on your supervisors to assist you with practical matters/minor emergencies off-duty?

Response Options: (1) Never to (5) Constantly

#### **Coworker Support (Fey, 1955)**

During the past month at (Organization):

1. My coworkers have seemed to respect my opinion about things.
2. My coworkers have seemed to like me.
3. My coworkers have seemed to understand how I feel about things.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

#### **Promotion and Prevention Focus (Lin & Johnson, 2015)**

This next set of questions refers to how you think, feel, and behave in general.

1. At work I am focused on preventing negative events. (Prevention)
2. At work I am anxious about failing short of my responsibilities and obligations. (Prevention)
3. At work my major focus is to avoid failure. (Prevention)

4. At work my major focus is to achieve success. (Promotion)
5. At work I am focused on achieving positive outcomes. (Promotion)
6. At work I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure. (Promotion)

Response Options: (1) Not at all to (6) Extremely

**Intention to return (adapted from Lyons, 1981)**

During past month at [Organization]:

1. If I were completely free to choose, I have felt that I would prefer to return to [Organization]next season.
2. If I had to quit for a while (for example, because of personal/family reasons), I have felt I would return to [Organization].

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

**Procedural Justice (self-developed)**

The following items refer to the procedures used to allocate [organizational program rewards]:

1. Those procedures have been applied consistently.
2. Those procedures have been based on accurate information.
3. I have been able to express my views and feelings during those procedures.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

**Distributive Justice (self-developed)**

The following items refer to [rewards] you have received thus far.

1. The [rewards] I have received reflects the effort I have put into my work.
2. The [rewards] I have received reflects what I have contributed to [Organization].
3. The [rewards] I have received is justified, given my work performance this season.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree

**Interactional Justice (self-developed)**

The following items refer to the supervisor(s) who distributed [rewards]:

1. He/She has explained the procedures thoroughly.
2. His/Her explanations regarding the procedures were reasonable.
3. He/She has seemed to tailor his/her communications to individuals' specific needs.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree