

Hours, Scheduling, and Flexibility for Women in the U.S. Low-Wage Labor Force

By

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Introduction

The problems that scheduling and work hours present to working women provide popular fodder for media stories worldwide, as evidenced recently in the U.S. by Yahoo chief Marissa Mayer's declaration that employees can no longer work from home and by a 2013 OECD report calling for Germany to remove impediments to women's labor force participation. Yet most press coverage centers on the dilemmas of women working full time in careers and relatively little centers on the work-hours dilemmas of women working in low-wage, part-time jobs. The research literature shows a similar orientation. Despite women's far greater prevalence in low-wage than high-wage jobs, studies of women's experiences with work scheduling and flexibility tend to focus on professional women in high-paying careers (see for example, Blair-Loy 2004; Roth 2006). As columnist Laurie Penny (2011) pointed out in *The New Statesman*, "While we all worry about the glass ceiling, there are millions of women standing in the basement—and the basement is flooding." The few studies that consider the experiences of low-wage women workers suggest that much-championed flexible work policies that seek to encourage women's career advancement may have little bearing on the work-hours dilemmas faced by low-wage women workers (Dodson 2007; Lambert, Haley-Lock, and Henly 2012; Lanning 2013:3).

This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the work-hours problems faced by low-wage women relegated to part-time work, problems that may be at sharp variance from the work-hour problems of women in professional occupations. How are low-income women's economic opportunities limited by work-on-demand scheduling and other features of part-time labor in the current economy, and what problems do these limitations create? Using data from 17 in-depth interviews with women employed in precarious low-wage jobs, we identify four

themes: unpredictable schedules, inadequate hours, time theft, and punishment-and-control via hours-reduction. We argue that social change efforts need to move beyond work-family policy initiatives—which are geared more to the constraints professional women face—to encompass work policies geared to low-wage workers, such as guaranteed minimum hours and increases in the minimum wage.

Literature Review

The Rise of Precarious Employment and the Bifurcated Labor Force

The rise of neo-liberalism and the shift from manufacturing to service industries have led to dramatic changes in working conditions and in the composition of the labor force since World War II. Neoliberalism centers on reducing government regulation of business, including regulation of working conditions and the right to organize (Eisenstein 2009; Kalleberg 2011). Coalitions of conservative politicians and businesses determined to discipline labor have waged devastating attacks that began in Britain with Margaret Thatcher's crushing of the miners' strike and in the U.S. with Ronald Reagan's mass-firing of air-traffic controllers, and they continue in the U.S. in recent clashes with public-sector teachers' unions. The result has been that the former power of unions to participate in setting the terms and conditions of employment has deteriorated dramatically. During the same period, the U.S. has also seen the rise of the service sector, which now employs more than 85 percent of the labor force (Kalleberg 2011:29), a development that, along with union decline, has had profound effects on working conditions.

By 2012, over one-quarter of private-sector U.S. workers earned under \$10 per hour (National Employment Law Project 2012a), the five industries most likely to pay low wages are growing faster than the overall economy (National Employment Law Project 2012a), and government estimates indicate that almost one-third of job openings anticipated through 2020

will offer median wages of around \$20,000 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012c). In the economic recovery from the Great Recession, low-wage occupations made up 58 percent of recovery growth but were only 21 percent of recession losses, further indicating that the future is likely to show increases in the number of people in such positions (National Employment Law Project 2012b).

The decrease in standard, full-time work and the increase in precarious—frequently part-time—work draw attention to a growing bifurcation in the labor force (Jacobs and Gerson 2005). The decline of the standard 40-hour work week has created two outcomes: overwork and underwork. On the one hand, more jobs require hours far in excess of 40, and many scholars have focused on the increasing number of Americans who feel over-worked (we.e., who work more hours than their ideal; see Blair-Loy 2004, 2009; Cha 2013; Jacobs and Gerson 2005; Weeks 2011). This trend is increasingly common among high-earning, college-educated professional workers, despite their higher levels of autonomy and schedule control at work (Jacobs and Gerson 2005; Kalleberg 2008; Moen et al. 2013). Overwork is particularly problematic for workers with families, whose desire for work-family balance is made difficult by requirements to work excessively long hours (Blair-Loy 2004; Davis and Treiber 2012; Maher, 2013; Moen et al. 2013; Stone 2007; but see Weeks 2011 for how workers without family obligations also suffer), and work-family conflict is associated with a desire for fewer hours (Clarkberg, and Moen 2001; Hilbrecht et al. 2008; Jacobs and Gerson 2005; Kelly et al. 2011; Maher 2013). Research has found support for the “stress of higher status” hypothesis, which suggests that high status professional workers have greater advantages and greater demands at work, which leads to greater work-life conflict and time strain (Moen et al. 2013; Schieman and Glavin 2001; Sheiman et al. 2006).

On the other hand, the rise in precarious work has also created more workers desiring a greater number of hours (Jacobs and Gerson 2005), many of whom are part-timers unable to make ends meet (Newman 1999). Their financial difficulty stems from too few hours and from the fact that part-timers earn less per hour than full-timers with similar levels of education and job experience (Tilly 1996). This problem of underwork has been gaining increasing attention in the media, as more and more Americans face involuntary underemployment (Rampell 2013). In 2011, over one-quarter of part-timers worked part-time hours involuntarily (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012a). Although traditionally many women had chosen part time work, women employed part time involuntarily has increased, as many women “settle” for the hours they can get (Caputo and Cianni 2001; Kauhanen 2008; Kjeldstad and Nymoen 2012; Newman 1999). This trend is not limited to the United States. Like the spread of neoliberalism, the bifurcation and the push for more employee availability is occurring worldwide, including for example, in Sweden (Jonsson 2011), Norway (Kjeldstad and Nymoen 2011, 2012), and Finland (Kauhanen 2008). Thus, time at work has become problematic for both the overworked and the underemployed, as the 40 hour workweek and other conditions of standard work seem to no longer apply (Kalleberg 2011; Moen et al. 30123)

Implications for Women of the Bifurcated Labor Force

Although overall earnings for women have increased more than for men in the past decades, this decline in the gender pay gap is largely due to class position; the progress of women in the working class has been much more modest compared to professional women (McCall 2012). Acker (2005) argued that the large-scale economic shift towards neoliberalism, including increased privatization and decreased union strength, is implicated in the reproduction of “inequality regimes” that create and reinforce gender, race, and class workplace inequalities.

Similarly, Williams, Muller, and Kilanski (2012: 570) contended that work practices in neoliberal capitalist economies do not play out in an undifferentiated way, and they call for “more precise ways to assess how women’s career outcomes are affected by the new economy.” Some research has responded to this call (for instance, see Cobble 2012; Eisenstein 2007).

Existing research shows that, indeed, the new economy has had dramatically different effects on women of different social classes. Professional women are consistently underrepresented in the highest rankings of corporations and continue to earn less than their male counterparts (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011c). They also face discrimination that prevents them from breaking the glass ceiling and exercising authority at the highest levels (e.g. Acker 1990; Levin 2004; Martin 2001, 2003; Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Williams et al. 2012). Scheduling pressures and long hours create inflexible, all-or-nothing workplaces that pressure professional women, especially mothers, to exit the workforce or dampen their ambitions (Moen et al 2013; Radhakrishnan 2009; Stone 2008). Most women, however, are employed in low-paying rather than in professional jobs (Jacobs and Gerson 2005; Kalleberg 2011:46, 106-108; Lanning 2013). Although women made up slightly under half the U.S. workforce in 2010, as Table 1 shows, they made up over half of workers in the 50 lowest-paying occupations (out of 840 detailed occupations used by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011a). Seventeen of the 50 lowest-paying jobs were over two-thirds female; in 14 others, women made up at least half. Even in these low paying, female-dominated jobs, women’s pay still tends to be lower than men’s (Lovell, Hartmann, and Werschull 2012).

In contrast, about 6.2 million women—roughly half as many—were employed in the 50 highest-paying occupations. Thus, women made up only 35.5 percent of elite workers. As Table 2 shows, 21 of these elite occupations were at least two-thirds male, and only five were at least

two-thirds female. These different placements on the occupational spectrum lead us to concur with Harlan and Berheide (1994) that, in contrast to professional women’s struggle to break the glass ceiling, more women are stuck to a “sticky floor” of low-wage, low mobility jobs.

Table 1: Number and Percent Female in Fifty Lowest-Paying U.S. Occupations, with Earnings, 2010 (Source: BLS 2011a)

Occupation	Percent female	Number of female workers (thousands)	Median weekly earnings
Teacher assistants	93.55%	566	\$480
Medical assistants	93.31%	293	\$522
Childcare workers	93.19%	342	\$382
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	91.84%	259	\$453
Receptionists and information clerks	91.01%	790	\$520
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	86.90%	1,134	\$453
Tellers	85.16%	241	\$492
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	84.95%	638	\$399
Hosts and hostesses, restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop	83.87%	52	\$369
Personal care aides	82.88%	455	\$412
Phlebotomists	81.91%	77	\$521
Miscellaneous personal appearance workers	76.47%	104	\$441
Sewing machine operators	75.00%	84	\$403
Miscellaneous healthcare support occupations	73.47%	72	\$487
Non-farm animal caretakers	73.17%	60	\$419
Cashiers	71.63%	962	\$383
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	70.81%	114	\$387
Waiters and waitresses	64.11%	559	\$407
Graders and sorters, agricultural products	62.35%	53	\$379
Food servers, non-restaurant	61.90%	52	\$419
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks	61.63%	53	\$423
First-line supervisors of food preparation and serving workers	58.20%	220	\$485
Telemarketers	57.97%	40	\$412
Recreation and fitness workers	57.06%	101	\$506
Food preparation workers	56.58%	202	\$384
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	55.65%	64	\$412
Counter attendants, cafeteria/food concession, coffee shop	55.17%	32	\$323
Packers and packagers	55.00%	165	\$397
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	53.67%	139	\$455
Mail clerks and mail machine operators, except postal service	51.90%	41	\$521
Bakers	50.40%	63	\$448
Electrical, electronics, and electro-mechanical assemblers	49.32%	73	\$521
Miscellaneous entertainment attendants and related workers	46.97%	31	\$424
Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators	37.60%	285	\$519
Cooks	37.11%	449	\$390
Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers	35.29%	42	\$383
Stock clerks and order fillers	33.97%	337	\$492
Janitors and building cleaners	25.67%	384	\$489
Dishwashers	23.73%	28	\$332
Butchers and other meat, poultry, and fish processing workers	23.49%	66	\$504
Security guards and gaming surveillance officers	20.13%	156	\$519
Cutting workers	18.84%	13	\$518
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers	13.89%	175	\$509
Miscellaneous agricultural workers	13.63%	77	\$419
Cleaners of vehicles and equipment	10.87%	25	\$465
Helpers, construction trades	6.00%	3	\$469
Grounds maintenance	3.81%	29	\$425
Miscellaneous vehicle and mobile equipment mechanics, installers,	2.74%	2	\$463
Roofers	2.10%	3	\$523
Drywall installers, ceiling tile installers, and tapers	0.99%	1	\$507
Total	51.88%	10,206	

Table 2: Number and Percent Female in Fifty Highest-Paying U.S. Occupations, with Earnings, 2010 (Source: BLS 2011a)

Occupation	Percent female	Number of female workers (in thousands)	Median weekly earnings
Occupational therapists	86.11%	62	\$1,189
Nurse practitioners	85.19%	69	\$1,461
Medical and health services managers	72.22%	325	\$1,252
Human resources managers	71.98%	149	\$1,331
Psychologists	71.15%	74	\$1,229
Physician assistants	63.77%	44	\$1,220
Education administrators	63.54%	467	\$1,228
Market research analysts / specialists	60.48%	101	\$1,157
Physical therapists	59.59%	87	\$1,322
Advertising and promotions managers	58.82%	40	\$1,164
Budget analysts	57.69%	30	\$1,174
Pharmacists	56.41%	110	\$1,917
Financial managers	54.31%	567	\$1,166
Purchasing managers	48.63%	89	\$1,242
Public relations and fundraising managers	46.77%	29	\$1,475
Chemists and materials scientists	45.78%	38	\$1,169
Management analysts	45.41%	208	\$1,355
Judges, magistrates, other judicial workers	44.83%	26	\$1,655
Marketing and sales managers	44.00%	392	\$1,408
Operations research analysts	43.97%	51	\$1,273
Postsecondary teachers	43.14%	399	\$1,209
Physical scientists, all other	38.35%	51	\$1,383
Managers, all other	35.95%	737	\$1,265
Physicians and surgeons	35.95%	206	\$1,860
Personal financial advisors	35.93%	97	\$1,239
Computer systems analysts	35.39%	132	\$1,328
Financial analysts	34.92%	22	\$1,737
Database administrators	34.78%	48	\$1,238
Lawyers	34.38%	242	\$1,774
General and operations managers	29.32%	270	\$1,191
Environmental scientists and geoscientists	29.07%	25	\$1,383
Computer and information systems managers	26.04%	138	\$1,579
Chief executives	24.75%	245	\$1,963
Network and computer systems administrators	22.17%	49	\$1,180
Chemical engineers	21.92%	16	\$1,757
Computer programmers	20.19%	83	\$1,277
Industrial engineers, incl. health and safety	19.10%	34	\$1,336
Architects, except naval	18.58%	21	\$1,325
Software developers, applications and systems software	18.08%	179	\$1,558
Industrial production managers	18.00%	45	\$1,211
Civil engineers	13.73%	46	\$1,398
Computer hardware engineers	13.16%	10	\$1,528
Computer network architects	12.77%	12	\$1,441
Aerospace engineers	11.94%	16	\$1,621
Engineers, all other	11.29%	35	\$1,366
Electrical and electronics engineers	9.19%	26	\$1,442
Architectural and engineering managers	7.14%	7	\$1,914
Construction managers	6.68%	31	\$1,268
Mechanical engineers	5.23%	16	\$1,374
Aircraft pilots and flight engineers	4.30%	4	\$1,461
Total	35.58%	6,200	

Despite the greater number of low-wage women workers, most studies of gender and work, including those focusing on time, scheduling, and flexibility, focus on women in elite careers, including managers (Collinson and Collinson 2004), executives (Blair-Loy 2009), Wall Street financiers (Roth 2006), stock market traders (Levin 2004), scientists (Williams et al. 2012), professors (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004), accountants (Castro 2012), and other financial executives (Hilbrecht et al. 2008).

The purpose of the present study is to focus attention on the experiences of women working in low-wage jobs and to attempt to respond to the criticism that feminist scholarship focusing on professional women isolates the feminist movement from the majority of women (Dodson and Luttrell 2011; Holvino 2010). As social scientists, we are in danger of losing sight of the larger issue of gender inequality if we study flexibility issues faced only by professional women. Upper-class women often have access to workplace policies that provide paid leave, can depend on savings accounts in emergencies, can rely on paid help to replace their household labor, and can sometimes depend on other sources of household income should they “opt out” of the labor force. These are resources that poor and working-class women lack (Dodson and Luttrell 2011; Collins and Mayer 2010; Weber and Williams 2008). We argue that the much-studied experiences of women in elite careers, although important and insightful, cannot be generalized to the majority of women. This paper provides a balance by focusing solely on issues surrounding hours and scheduling for the latter group.

What do we know about the meaning of hours-flexibility for women in the low-wage and high-wage labor force? First, unpredictability appears to be a problem for both kinds of workers. Both low- and high-wage employees often have little-to-no control over the scheduling or amount of their work hours (Bailyn 2006; Clarkberg and Moen 2001; Henly and Lambert 2005;

Kalleberg 2011:159; Levin 2004; Perlow 2012). In addition, women are less likely than men to resolve the mismatch between hours worked and preferred hours worked (Reynolds and Aletraris 2010). In a study of the long-hours work culture in an elite consulting firm, Leslie Perlow (2012) found that the inability to predict work hours was so extreme that most workers' guesses about their next day's work hours were wrong by a full hour. Levin (2004) found that female futures traders in an elite firm often worked much harder than their male coworkers during normal business hours and then left work in the early evenings. Male traders, however, tended to come in late or work less during normal business hours and stay late into the evenings, which often caught their bosses' attention. Because they were not staying late, female traders were often overlooked, even if they were more productive than their male coworkers. In a U.S.-nationally representative study, Golden (2001) found that women and minorities were less likely than their white male counterparts to have flexible work schedules, although holding a college degree and a salaried job increased the likelihood for all groups. And a French study found that professional women with undesirable schedules were not rewarded for their increased availability, whereas men were (Devetter 2009).

At the other end of the income spectrum, Williams (2006: 27) also found unpredictability. She applied for a low-wage job in a toy store and learned to refrain from specifying her availability: "We wanted flexible jobs, but the store wanted flexible workers. We learned from my experience to never limit the hours we would work on job applications. Giant retailers do not cater to the needs of employees; their goal is to hire a steady stream of entry-level, malleable, and replaceable workers." Based on her study of low-wage women workers, Dodson (2007) concluded that the lowest-paying jobs offer the least flexibility. Writing 20 years

ago about McDonald's workers, Leidner (1993: 83) similarly pointed out that unpredictable schedules were commonplace:

[M]anagers want to match labor power to consumer demand as exactly as possible. They do so by paying all crew people by the hour, giving them highly irregular hours based on expected sales—sometimes including split shifts—and sending workers home early or keeping them late as conditions require. In other words, the costs of uneven demand are shifted to the workers whenever possible.

Thus, unpredictable schedules negatively affect both high- and low-wage workers, leading to difficulty combining work and non-work life (e.g. making doctor's appointments, transportation arrangements, and childcare).

On many scheduling dimensions, the experiences of professional and non-professional workers are at variance. In a U.S. nationally representative survey, between 41-45 percent of workers reported that their attendance was tracked in such a way that they would lose their job if they missed too much time, regardless of the reason, a fear that was greater among workers with a high-school diploma or less (Hayes and Hartmann 2011: Table 7.6). Similarly, three out of 10 feared that missing work would lead to work-related penalties, a percentage that rose to one-third among the less educated (Hayes and Hartmann 2011: Table 7.6).

As for women, in particular, scheduling problems and solutions depend on their position in the high- or low-wage labor force. Professional women are often required to work long hours to prove their commitment to a firm (Blair-Loy 2004, 2009; Collinson and Collinson 2004) and feel tethered by cell phones, email, or 24/7 client demand (Hochschild 1997), while working-class women face a far greater likelihood of working evenings, nights, and weekends, a trend that is likely to grow (Presser 2003a). Both sets of hours problems create work-life balance problems,

although the specific nature of the problems differs (Henly, Shaefer, and Waxman 2006; Presser 2003b).

Solutions for the problems of one group are unlikely to work for the other. Indeed, research on women in low-paying, hourly-wage jobs suggests that flexible work schedules are not a priority, despite being desirable; instead, garnering as many hours as possible to increase paycheck size is more important (Williams 2006). Lambert and colleagues (2012) similarly found that some types of flexibility, such as reduced hours and varying work times, actually disadvantaged low-wage workers by creating wage instability. Other types of flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting and working from home, are not tenable in front-line service jobs that require face-time, and in any event, such arrangements tend to be reserved for highly-valued workers rather than for workers lower in the wage spectrum (Hochschild 1997; Russell, O’Connell, and McGinnity 2009).

This paper addresses the following question: How are low-income women's economic opportunities limited by work-on-demand scheduling and other features of part-time precarious labor in the current neoliberal regime? Results highlight four themes: unpredictable schedules, inadequate hours, time theft, and punishment and control via hours-reduction.

Data and Methods

This project is based on in-depth interviews with 17 women precariously employed in low-wage service jobs in a mid-sized city in the southeastern U.S. that the first author conducted. “Precarious” refers to jobs that lack the prospect of long-term employment or steady hours, and “low-wage” refers to jobs that provide an annual income that fails to remove a family of four

above the U.S. poverty line, set at \$23,550 in 2013, or an hourly wage of \$11.32 (see Schochet and Rangarajan 2004).

Respondents were employed in a variety of low-wage precarious jobs (see Table 3). Five were servers at national-chain moderately-priced restaurants; three worked in fast food restaurants; four worked in retail (an ethnic beauty supply store, a hardware store, an electronics store, and an adult toy store); two were clerks in convenience stores; two worked as grocery-store cashiers; and one worked as an inventory-counter. Only one regularly worked a 40-hour week, although 10 stated a preference for full-time work. Only two worked for more than one employer. Five respondents, all waitresses, earned sub-minimum wage (between \$4.65 and \$6.00 per hour) plus tips, as is allowable by law; for the others, hourly wage ranged from the federal minimum of \$7.67 to \$10.00 an hour, with a median of \$7.96. Only one received healthcare benefits from her job, and no one had union representation.

Respondents ranged in age from 20 to 67, with a median of 24. Five identified as Black, one as Hispanic, one as Asian, one as bi-racial (Black and White), and nine as White. Twelve respondents had no children, one respondent had one child, two had three children, and one had four. As for education, two respondents lacked a high school diploma; one had a high school diploma; six had completed some college (three were enrolled at the time of the interview and three had dropped out); three held Associate's degrees; two held technical degrees; and two held bachelor's degrees.

Table 3: Participant Characteristics

Participant	Job Characteristics				Time - Related Problems at Job				Demographics				
	Job Title	FT / PT	Requested Full-time	Hourly Wage	Unpredictable Schedules	Inadequate Hours	Time Theft	Punishment control via hours-reduction	Age	Race	Education	Class*	Number of Children
Beth	Waitress	PT	X	\$4.65 [‡]	X	X			22	White	No HS	Lower	1
Brianna	Waitress	PT		\$4.65 [‡]	X	X	X		23	Black	Some College [†]	Middle	0
Cassandra	Convenience Store and Retail	PT		\$7.67	X	X		X	21	Black	Some College	Middle	0
Celeste	Convenience Store and Retail	PT		\$8.20	X	X		X	20	Black	Associate's	Middle	0
Darlene	Waitress	PT	X	\$4.65 [‡]	X		X	X	23	White	Associate's	Lower Middle	0
Evelyn	Retail- Beauty Supplies	PT	X	\$8.25	X	X		X	22	Black	Some College [†]	Lower Middle	0
Frances	Grocery Store	PT		\$10.00	X	X	X	X	67	White	Bachelor's	Upper	3
Gabrielle	Inventory Counting	PT	X	\$9.50	X	X	X	X	24	White	Bachelor's	Lower Middle	0
Jane	Retail- Novelty Store	PT	X	\$7.67	X				30	Hispanic	Technical Degree	Lower	4
Malee	Retail- Electronics	PT	X	\$9.04	X		X		26	Asian	Bachelor's	Lower	0
Mary	Retail- Hardware Store	FT	N/A	\$10.00	X	X	X	X	41	White	Technical Degree	Lower Middle	3
Nancy	Fast Food	PT		\$7.67	X				22	White	Associate's	Lower Middle	0
Natasha	Fast Food	PT	X	\$7.72	X	X	X	X	29	Black	No GED	Lower	0
Sandra	Grocery Store	PT		\$8.25	X	X	X	X	19	Bi-racial	Some College [†]	Middle	0
Tessa	Waitress	PT	X	\$6.00 [‡]	X	X	X	X	20	White	Some College	Lower Middle	0
Veronica	Waitress	PT	X	\$4.65 [‡]	X		X	X	32	White	Some College	Lower	3
Wendy	Fast Food	PT	X	\$7.67	X	X	X	X	22	White	Some College	Lower	0

Notes: * Class denotes the subjective class category in which the respondent was raised. † Currently enrolled in college. ‡ Subminimum wage earners also earned tips

The sample selection process had three stages. In the first stage, the first author employed a purposive sampling strategy to recruit low-wage working-class women. She recruited the first participant by approaching her at a bus stop near her work when she had finished her shift and was waiting on her bus. Three respondents were introduced to the first author through a mutual friend who knew about the project, and a fifth recruit was a woman the first author personally knows. In the second stage, the first author employed a snowball sampling strategy to network with other potential participants without having to approach women at work. She accomplished this by asking each participant if they could refer us to anyone they knew who may be interested in participating. In the third stage, she employed theoretical sampling to develop any “emerging theoretical categories” (Charmaz 2006). Theoretical sampling continued until new respondents and new data failed to reveal any new theoretical categories or any new categorical properties or dimensions (i.e., informational redundancy or theoretical saturation) (Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2008).

Before interviews began, the first author obtained IRB approval through our university’s Human Subjects Committee (see Appendix A). The biggest ethical concern was the protection of precariously employed women. With this concern in mind, she recruited and interviewed participants away from their jobs to avoid suspicion and minimize the risk of reprimands. In addition, no interviewees worked at “big box” supercenters because, when approached, all such women said they would be fired if they were found to have discussed their work experiences. She also ensured confidentiality by changing their names and the names of their places of employment. All interviews were securely stored in a password-protected laptop. Interviewees were compensated \$20 for their time.

Seventeen semi-standardized interviews were conducted: 15 in person and two over the phone (see Appendix B for interview guide). In-person interviews were conducted at a place of the respondent's choosing, typically their houses or apartments, although a few were in a university office or a coffee shop. Two respondents elected to do over-the-phone interviews. Interviews averaged one-and-one-half hours and covered job characteristics, shifts and schedules, pay, and relationships with supervisors. Respondents' names have been changed and their places of employment disguised. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Although our sample size (N=17) may be thought of as small in some respects, Guest and colleagues (2006:59) note that "Guidelines for determining nonprobabilistic sample sizes are virtually nonexistent." Saturation is the standard for sampling in grounded theory (as described above). While the point of saturation clearly varies from study to study, Guest and colleagues (2006:59) report that data saturation can be achieved with as many as twelve interviews. Sandelowski (1995:179) explains that "Determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put, the particular research method and purposeful sampling strategy employed, and the research product intended." With all of these reasons in mind, articles and chapters are regularly published with sample sizes ranging from one to in the hundreds.

Data analysis followed a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006), whereby each transcript was initially coded line-by-line and themes generated. After several themes had emerged, we recoded the interviews, focusing on themes of scheduling and time.

Results

All interviewees reported experiencing unpredictable schedules and too few hours to make ends meet, and many additionally reported working unpaid hours and having had employers curtail their hours to control or punish them. This section details these schedule-related problems and how they negatively affected income security and personal-life stability.

Unpredictable Schedules

The most frequent problem was scheduling: all interviewees strongly disliked being assigned erratic and unpredictable hours each week. Gabrielle, a white, 24 year old inventory counter, was typical in noting that the worst part of her job was the varying hours:

You never really know how long [counting inventory] at any particular store is going to take, so you never have any idea what time you're getting home. This coming weekend I have a triple shift. I'll work Sunday morning, Sunday night, and then Monday morning. Other times, I get no hours. I've had a couple weeks where I only worked two days! And when I asked my boss for more hours he just said, "There's no work."

Interviews indicated that management also often sought to change already-scheduled shifts, sometimes at the last minute. Celeste, a black 20 year old retail worker at a clothing store, reported being frequently called in at the last minute or released part way through a shift: They *ask* me if I would come in early or stay longer, but I know they're *telling* me "Stay."

Flexibility for management shifted the risk of instability onto the low-wage worker (see Henly et al. 2006; Lambert 2008). Frances, a white 67 year old who had cashiered at the same grocery store for 15 years, noted how her schedule was designed for the employer's flexibility:

They have these tracking systems on the computer. They actually can track sales, availability of products, and the hours people are working to the actual time when we are needed the most. So I literally will have a shift from 11:15 to 3:45—crazy little weird shifts. It used to be that the manager decided your hours, and you could give your input. But now it's the computer. It has a mind of its own.

This last-minute rearranging was hard on workers, as Darlene, a white 23 year old waitress at an all-night diner described:

I was supposed to work last night from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. I left here [my house] at 7:10 to catch the 8:00 bus, so it took 50 minutes, and then I walked the rest of the way to work from where the bus dropped me off. The manager said that they hadn't reached the sales they were supposed to and that I should leave. I wish I would have called before I even went.

Because Darlene lacked a guaranteed minimum number of weekly shifts, the manager was within his legal right to cut her shift without notice, leaving her with a two-hour commute and no paycheck for hours she had counted on working.

Not surprisingly, the most common reason for distress over unpredictable schedules was the financial insecurity it created. Income insecurity stemming from too few slots on the schedule is obvious. Less obvious is another form of income insecurity: Ever-changing schedules that prevent workers from holding second jobs, making them dependent on one paycheck that can vary wildly in amount. Veronica, a white 32 year old, explained her attempt to hold two jobs that both employed automatic scheduling:

I was working two waitressing jobs, and that was really, really, really hard, because it's two service jobs where both schedules are changed every week. That only lasted three

weeks. I got fired because I got scheduled at Burger Joint for a shift that the other job wanted. Someone said she would cover my shift, but she didn't show up and I got fired. If one job has a steady schedule, then maybe having two jobs is do-able. But if both of them vary? It's almost impossible.

Wendy, a white 22 year old fast food worker, also had tried to juggle two part-time jobs but found herself forced to quit one:

I was trying to have two jobs, but the Sandwich Stop manager refused to work around the gas station's schedule and the gas station refused to work around the Sandwich Stop schedule.

The experience of trying to work two jobs that both demand adherence to last minute scheduling was common, as was the inability to make the plan work, leaving these women unable to increase their income stream.

Another reason for distress about the unpredictable schedules is that they made planning virtually impossible. Evelyn, a black 22 year old who works as a beauty-supply store cashier, expressed such frustration:

Each week the schedule is different. Sometimes I'm scheduled for 18 hours, sometimes 35. And the owner gives the schedule on Sunday when the workweek starts Monday.

It's just so annoying! I can't plan anything, and I'm mad.

Difficulty in making plans was especially true for mothers, who are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs (Lopreste et al. 2009). Although high-earning mothers also feel the stress of balancing work and family life (see Stone 2007), last minute scheduling creates worse havoc for women on the edge of poverty who have fewer financial resources to cushion the blow of a schedule change (Dodson and Luttrell 2011). Mary, a white 40 year old mother of

three who worked at a national-chain hardware store, was guaranteed a 40-hour week, but at a price: company policy explicitly holds that workers may not have steady schedules:

You never have the same schedule twice. *Never*. I *never* work the same days. Even salaried people don't have steady schedules. There is no one who gets a 9-to-5 shift. I request time off to go to all of my kids' functions, and I always used to get it. Well, last month I put in a request, and they denied absolutely everything. They are scheduling me for every period I asked to be off for, which has been pretty painful.

In sum, for these low-wage women, flexibility meant flexibility for the employer only. Workers complained of the unpredictability of their hours and the impossibility of holding a second job to bring in more income. Although many elite women struggle with unpredictable work and are required to be available 24/7, the nature of this unpredictability often lies in client demand (Perlow 2012), rather than the demands of an employer on employees. Additionally, many professionals are able to develop "time-work strategies," adaptations in response to these high-demand jobs that allow professional to manage unpredictability and 24/7 demand (Moen et al. 2013). These low-wage workers do not have the resources to employ such strategic adaptations and are often at the mercy of their employer's last-minute scheduling.

Inadequate Hours

The second most frequent problem was being scheduled for too few hours, which corresponds to employers' practices of hiring more workers (to ensure never being caught short) and reducing the hours of already-scheduled shifts. Hourly wage earners are hard hit financially when their schedules are cut, and most interviewees (16 out of 17) were not guaranteed a

minimum number of hours. Most interviewees expressed a desire to work more. Sandra, a 19 year old bi-racial cashier at a regional grocery store, begged extra shifts from coworkers:

I usually get scheduled about 26, 27 hours a week. But I have to get up to 35 or 36 hours to get by— it's not an option. I am always asking people if they need me to take their shifts. I worry a lot that I won't make 36. It's the magic number.

Many respondents claimed that overstaffing was the norm and that coworkers often sought more shifts. Some complained about how it was common for no workers to get enough hours while employers still posted advertisements seeking even more workers.

Employers' desire to avoid paying overtime wages, according to several workers, also led to shortened shifts or being taken off schedules altogether. Eleven respondents said that management reduced their hours to avoid the legal requirement of paying a premium to non-exempt workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act. According to Natasha, a 29 year old black fast food worker:

You can only get *maybe* 35 to 39 hours a week, and I think that's why they had me off this Saturday. They said I was going into overtime, and can't nobody get overtime.

Brianna, a 23 year old black waitress, spoke of the practice at her all-night diner job:

Management doesn't want anybody to have overtime. When I had 35 hours, they sent me home on Friday so I could come back Saturday [which started a new week]. What frustrates me is when they give me stupid hours. They actually gave me a few two-hour shifts to avoid overtime. You can't make money off of that!

Tipped workers sometimes suspected that because employers paid servers so little (sub-minimum wage), they had incentives to overstaff. Brianna's manager cut all servers' hours while placing more servers on the floor. She said:

We all laughed. I guess that his theory behind more servers is that we can spend more time with our customers. But . . . I'm losing money . . . and I don't have enough shifts to make up for it.

The result of too few hours was a cascade of financial problems. Natasha's tale was typical:

If I worked more hours, then I could pay all my bills on time. My rent always costs extra because I pay a late fee, and that sucks. Not having enough hours makes it kind of hard to get by right now.

Frances, a white 67 year old grocery store clerk, complained that she has seen her hours reduced in the past year, a trend she felt powerless to avoid:

People like me who work for hourly wages feel the crunch of reduced hours. Luckily I'm married, and that helps, but still I feel the crunch.

These interviewees found themselves on the too-few-hours side of the bifurcated labor force (Jacobs and Gerson 2005) and are examples of the increasing number of workers who cannot find full-time employment (Kalleberg 2011) and thus cannot make ends meet. Out of the 16 respondents who lacked guaranteed 40-hour workweeks, 10 continued to request fulltime work; the remainder wanted it but had given up asking. This problem is in stark contrast to the problem of overwork most professional women face (Clarkberg and Moen 2001; Moen et al. 2013; Perlow 2012; Reynolds and Aletraris 2010; Schieman et al. 2006), as well as gendered differences in time management of professional workers, such as female traders who worked harder than their male peers but were overlooked for not staying late (Levin 2004). Instead, these women struggle with problems of underemployment and its resultant financial insecurity and worry.

Time Theft

A third theme was time theft, whereby the employer coerced employees to work for little or no pay, using strategies such as extending unpaid breaks, pressuring them to work off the clock, and paying sub-minimum wages. Mary, 41 year old white hardware store clerk, explained her company's method of avoiding paying overtime wages:

If you go over your 40, you are told to extend your lunches. You can't just arrive later.

You still have to come in on time, but you should extend your lunches so that you eat up this time that you went over.

Three other women also described being forced to take extended breaks to prevent overtime. Frances, a 67 year old white grocery store clerk, said: "It's stupid. I'm done eating in thirty minutes. What am I going to do, walk around for another thirty minutes? No." By extending their breaks instead of sending them home early, employers have unpaid staff waiting and available in case the need arises. Thus, employers have the flexibility of enforcing longer breaks--depending on the demand for labor--while employees are stuck at the workplace, unable to leave despite being unpaid.

Another common form of time theft was pressuring workers to work off the clock (see also Leidner 1993: 78). Employers cannot force employees to work without pay, but several women nevertheless felt this pressure. Wendy, a 22 year old white fast food workers, was often scheduled to close the Sandwich Stop at night, which required a considerable amount of time for one person. Because he refused to pay overtime, the manager forced her into a dilemma:

He said, "I can't afford to be paying you overtime. You need to get out [earlier] or I'm gonna start cutting back your hours." So I just started clocking out at 9:30, 9:45. I get out about 10:00, maybe 10:30 on busy days. If the manager ever finds out I work off the

clock, he ends up yelling at me for it. And it's like, "Yeah, I understand that. But then you yell at us because we stay clocked in, too."

Wendy felt forced to choose between having her shifts—and hence pay—cut and working for free, and went with the work-without-pay option, at least in this instance. Yet, the price was high: given the hours she described, working off the clock can cost her \$40 per week—over half a day of paid work.

Mary, the 41 year old white hardware store employee, faced the same dilemma. She prided herself on her customer service delivery, and having to choose between interrupting a customer interaction to punch the time clock and getting "written up" for a breach of policy was difficult for her:

How am I supposed to take care of them? Should I say, "So sorry, but I have to punch out now?" Actually, in order not to get in trouble, when I come to work early, I put on my vest and go to work and don't punch in. So I'm not getting paid. It's a catch-22: Do I want to be written up for working overtime or do I want to be written up for a customer complaint because I stopped helping to clock out? I figure a customer complaining is worse.

Another form of time theft was uncompensated travel time. Gabrielle, a 24 year old white inventory-counter, described her employer's payment system:

There's a lot of travel, so I'll have to drive two hours a lot. A lot of times I'll leave at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning and drive a few hours and then count [inventory] for four to eight hours and drive back. We are only paid for travel time after the first hour of travel, but even then it's just paid at minimum wage.

Gabrielle earned \$9.50 an hour, making her the second-highest earning woman in the sample, but on travel days, she averaged \$7.61 per hour, a few pennies less than the state's minimum wage.

All five waitresses in the sample experienced a unique form of time theft. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, employees whose earnings derive mostly from tips must be paid minimum wage when they spend over 20 percent of their workweek performing non-tipped activities such as cleaning, setting tables, washing dishes or cooking (U.S. Department of Labor 2011). Yet, all the waitresses mentioned at least one – and often several – instances when their employer broke the law. Tessa, a white 20 year old waitress at an all-night diner, shared her experience:

One night I was doing side work that involved sweeping and mopping, and my manager saw that there was a stain on the floor. So he made me deck scrub a huge amount of the floor, and it took like an additional hour-and-a-half on top of the hour-and-a-half of side work I was already doing. I hated him a really long time for that... He wouldn't give me my credit card tips until I did the work. I walked behind him and gestured my fingers like a gun towards the back of his head. I remember that. I was very angry.

She thus earned \$9.06 less than she was legally entitled to for the time spent scrubbing--an exhausting and physically demanding chore that, at least in these circumstances, was also degrading.

In sum, interviews showed that stealing time, and by extension labor, from employees was widespread in these service-sector jobs. Many professional women may also experience a form of time-theft when they are pressured to work outside of standard hours in order to keep up, often resulting in distress, work-life spillover, and work-family conflict (Perlow 2012; Moen et al 2013). For working class women, while the demand was never directly couched as working

without pay, this was indeed the practice. This practice resulted in lost income and also the stress and frustration that accompany dealing with such coercive tactics.

Punishment and Control via Hours-Reduction

The final problem with hours was recounted by 12 of the 17 interviewees: management cut work hours as a punishment for a transgression or in order to otherwise control the worker. When an employee called in sick, showed up late, under-performed, or irritated her manager, hours--and hence paychecks--sometimes suffered. Wendy, the 22 year old white fast food worker quoted above about her dilemma of either working without pay or risking being caught working off the clock, gave an example:

The manager likes to use our hours to punish us. When he is unhappy with our jobs, we are lucky to make 20 hours. Someone told him that I was clocking out early [but continuing to work]. When the next schedule went up, I was off for four days.

Veronica, a 32 year old white waitress, told a similar story about how management cut her tables and then her hours to punish her:

My coworker came to work and got mad that I had a party of 15, and she showed her butt to management. So they took my other tables away from me and gave them to her! I ended up with just that party and one other table. I was heated. I wanted to just walk out. There is no way to make money off of that! When she and I were fighting about the tables, management cut my shifts from five days to three days for a few weeks.

Thus, employers in the low-wage labor market are in a position to attempt to punish employees who step out of line by threatening to reduce their hours and by sometimes following through on the threat.

Several women reported having their hours reduced as payback for merely having asked for minor accommodations. According to Evelyn, a black 22 year old who works as a beauty-supply store cashier, sometimes that's just the price she has to pay:

Usually if I ask for a time off the penalty is that the next week I lose hours. So it makes me not want to ask for time off, you know? All my family lives out of town, and I went to see them, and when I came back I had only 18 hours [scheduled], and I was like, “Where’s my hours?!”

Even sickness can precipitate an hours-reduction penalty. Cassandra, a black 21 year old convenience store clerk, explained:

I got sick, and I was trying to schedule a doctor’s appointment and surgery around my job, and it wasn’t happening. My manager said, “You could take this day off, but you will lose this many hours for the next two weeks.” I was pretty much put in a hell position. I brought him a doctor’s note and he completely didn’t care! He was like “Okay, you’re sick. [I believe you.] Lose the doctor’s note. You’re still not getting hours for the next weeks.”

Other observers have noticed the same tendency on the part of employers. According to researcher Eileen Applebaum, “Demerit systems that include excused absences are very common” (Brown 2013). For low-wage workers--only one of whom in the sample received health insurance benefits--each day without work was a loss of crucial income.

The final example of using work hours to control requests for accommodations comes from Mary, a white 41 year old employee of a home hardware store. She is a devout member of a religion that prohibits working on Sundays. Her employer was accommodating for the first year and a half of her employment, at which point the accommodations abruptly ended:

They gave me three choices: they said I can stay in the same department, but I have to work two Sundays a month, or I can go part time. That second option meant I would drop to 14 hours a week and would lose my benefits, so that's not an option. They said my third option is they will let me have Sundays off, but it will be mandatory to work every Saturday and they will demote me and make me a cashier. So I said "Well I guess that's what I'll take." I am sad; I love my department. My soul is disquiet... I haven't really tried to fight it too much... I figured there is really no point. What can I do against a huge corporation? They can get rid of me for any whim.

Although she faced no reduction in pay (\$10 per hour, the highest in the sample), she lost autonomy and creativity, the features that were her favorite part of the job and are well-established as promoting health and well-being (Krueger & Burgard 2011).

Many respondents experienced similar situations. One respondent, for example, was taken off of the schedule for two weeks when she took leave to attend a funeral. The possibility of having hours cut as a form of punishment or merely in order to reduce requests for schedule accommodations kept many workers feeling anxious and insecure. In sum, while women in professional careers also face their own version of punishment for hours noncompliance (e.g. Devetter 2009; Levin 2004), the threat of lost shifts, and therefore income, is unique to workers in low-wage jobs.

Conclusion

Control over work schedules is a key indicator of job quality (Kalleberg 2011; Kelly, Moen, and Tranby 2011; Moen 2013), and this paper has examined four schedule-related features of women's low-wage jobs: unpredictable schedules, inadequate hours, time theft, and hours-reduction to punish or control. These quotidian practices help create and reinforce

inequality regimes, employment instability, financial insecurity, and anxiety for women employed in low-wage, precarious jobs.

Most studies of gendered work practices, including those concerning time, scheduling, and flexibility focus on women in professional careers (McCall 2012), even though more women are in low-wage than high-wage occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011c). The much-studied experiences of women in elite careers, although important, cannot be generalized to all women workers, and yet it is easy to lose sight of the concerns of women in the lower echelons of the labor force. Flextime and telecommuting, for example, are unrealistic options for the millions of women working in big-box stores or waiting tables. Instead of seeking workweeks with fewer hours, these women want more, although they share with their elite sisters the desire for more predictable schedules. A call for shortened workweeks and more flextime for women, then, is really only a call for flexible policies for *some* women (Lambert 2008). Similarly, while professional women certainly face constrained choices—indeed, media tales of “opting out” are, in reality, more a case of being “pushed out” of jobs with inflexible hours (Moe et al. 2013; Perlow 2012; Stone 2007)—the constraints working-class women face are more severe (Holvino 2010). It can take only one minor event, perhaps a day-long illness, to precipitate a reduced schedule and hence missed rent payments and lean times (Collins and Mayer 2010). Adding to scholars’ understanding of the unique schedule-related problems of women in the low-wage labor force balances the attention paid to the scheduling problems of their elite sisters.

Just as the problems professional women face differ from those of low-wage women, so, too, do the solutions. McCall (2012:31) argued that for women in the working class, economic “progress is strongly affected by federal policies that are non-gender specific ... a burning issue for women in the middle and at the bottom is absolute job quality, including, most significantly,

absolute wage growth.” Raising the minimum wage and indexing it to inflation would help these working class women (Lovell et al. 2012), as would legislation providing a guaranteed minimum number of weekly work hours, solutions that stand in stark contrast to the shorter work weeks advanced by many policies designed with professionals in mind. Union representation would arguably benefit both groups, but there is more impetus behind organizing low-wage than high-wage workers (although organizing successes have been few in recent years). Legal challenges are another possible route for low-wage women, although the U.S. Supreme Court's denial of class-action status for female Wal-Mart workers has had a dampening effect. Nevertheless, some advocacy groups for low-wage women have scored recent successes in local arenas, such as the National Domestic Workers Alliance's win in pressuring the state of New York to cover such workers with basic wage-and-hours legal provisions.

This paper's focus on time-related job features addresses just one subset of problems low-wage women workers face, and it is critical to continue to examine the experiences of women in such jobs. More research should be done to examine women who are stuck to the “sticky floor.” What common assumptions about women's work experiences can be extended to women working low-wage jobs? What assumptions, such as the benefits of flexibility, do not extend to them? For instance, how are gendered organizations reinforced in the new economy (e.g. Acker 1990; Williams et al. 2012) at the low-wage level? Do women in low-paying jobs feel pressured to choose between being viewed as competent-but-cold or warm-but-incompetent, as do professional women (Fiske 2012)? Answering questions such as these may shed light on the interplay between neoliberalism and sexism (Eisenstein 2009) and perhaps lead to work policies that benefit all women.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

Statement of informed Consent

I freely and without any coercion consent to be a participant in the research project "Women in the Low-Wage Labor Force."

I understand that this interview is expected to take between 60 and 90 minutes.

I understand this project is performed by graduate sociology student Anna Jacobs and is related to understanding the experiences of women in the low wage labor force, and I also understand this project is related to understanding the various aspects that shape the lives of these women.

I understand I am being asked an interview regarding my experiences, past and present, in the labor force, as well as personal aspects about my life, and that, only through permission, may this interview be recorded through field notes.

I understand that no individual responses will be identified; all responses will be kept 100% confidential to the fullest extent allowed by law.

I understand there are no significant benefits from participating in this project, aside from having a place to express feelings and tell stories about my job that will be kept confidential and for which I cannot get in trouble. I also understand the risk in participating in this study is minimal; I could potentially feel discomfort when discussing discrimination and prejudice in my work experiences.

I understand my participation is completely voluntary and that I can decide to withdraw from participation at any point in time with no penalty and have the right to ask any questioning regarding the project. I am being paid \$20.00 for participating and I will be paid even if I withdraw early from the interview. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Anna Jacobs, Florida state university, sociology department, (850) 556-9745, or her major professor Irene Padavic, Florida state university, sociology department, (850) 644-6416, if I have questions about my participation.

I understand that the institutional review board at FSU has reviewed the request to conduct this project. I understand that if I have any concerns about my rights in this study, I can call the IRB at (850) 644-7900.

I agree to be audio recorded

I do not agree to be audio recorded

I have read and understand this consent form

Subject

Date

Witness

FSU Human Subjects Committee approved on 6/28/2012. Void after 6/27/2013. HSC # 2012.7957

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to talk to be about your experiences in the workplace. The University would like your signature on this consent form. Please take time to read it; it explains that everything we discuss will be entirely confidential. No one will be able to know what you said. It also says you can refuse to answer any question that you want to, or decide to stop interviewing at any time. It also gives the names of my directing professor and the department chair if you want to contact them for any reason. I will be giving you a copy of this form, too. There is no right or wrong answer, and I hope you will freely express what you think. I am interested in your experiences.

I would also like to record our interview with this pen, because it is hard to take notes and pay attention at the same time. If you want me to turn it off at any point, just let me know and I will.

Is there anything else that you want to discuss or ask me before we begin?

Okay let's start with your job.

1. Tell me about your job
 - What is your job title?
 - What kinds of things do you do?
 - How long have you been doing this job?
 - What do you like best about working here? Can you tell me about a time when you were glad you worked here?
 - What do you like the least? Can you give me an example of when this happened?
 - Do you feel over-qualified for your job? Under-qualified? Can you give me an example?
2. Were you working somewhere else when you applied for this job?
 - If so, why did you leave? [Get a story here] How did you find out about this job? Why did you apply here? What was the hiring process like? Did you apply for other jobs too? What happened with that?
3. Did you feel like you were being judged or discriminated against when you were trying to get this job? Can you give me an example of something s/he said or did?

Let me ask about problems people often have on their jobs.

Some people have problems with scheduling.

4. What shift do you usually work?

How did you get this shift? Did you choose it? What is your ideal schedule? How likely are you to get scheduling accommodation?

Are your hours flexible? How important is it to you to have flexibility?

Can you tell me about a time when your scheduling created a problem for you?

Who determines the schedule? What is that relationship like? Can you influence her/him? Tell me about a time when you got the schedule changed/didn't get it changed after you'd made a request.

How many hours a week do you work? How many hours a week would you like to work? What do you think prevents you from getting the amount of hours you want?

Some people have problems with transportation.

5. How do you usually get to work (transportation)?

Do you like your transportation situation? What would you change about it?

Does transportation affect the hours you can work?

Has transportation ever caused an issue like being late or missing a shift? Tell me about a time this happened. What did you do? What did your supervisor do?

6. Some people hide things about their lives when they apply for jobs, like that they have kids or receive food stamps or have a record. Did you leave anything out when you applied here or elsewhere?

What were you afraid of?

Do you think that helped you get the job?

Often the pay can be a problem in jobs.

7. What is pay like in this job?

8. How many jobs do you have?

9. Have you ever gotten a raise while you worked here (why, how much etc.)? Do you think you will get a raise?

How do they decide who gets raises? Do you think it's fair? Can you give me an example?

Is it the amount you make enough to get by on your own?

Do you feel like the pay you get is fair for the work you do? How so/Why not?

10. When you run into financial problems, whom do you turn to?
11. If you won the lottery, what would be the first thing you'd do?

Now let's talk about the people at your job.

12. Tell me about your supervisor(s)

What is your relationship like with your supervisor? Do you ever feel like you get treated unfairly by your supervisor?

Does your supervisor like some people more than others? What's the basis for that, do you think?

Do you think your supervisor thinks you are good at your job? Tell me about a time when s/he let you know that?

Do you think your supervisor thinks you are smart? Tell me about a time when s/he let you know that?

Do you think your supervisor thinks you are nice or friendly? Tell me about a time when s/he let you know that?

13. Some people have said they get treated unfairly when they are late or sick. Can you tell me about a time that you were late or called in sick? [do they have sick leave?]

Did your supervisor understand? How did she or he react?

14. Have you ever gotten written up, or been in trouble at work? Why? What happened? How did you resolve it?

15. Tell me about the people you work with

Are you friends with any of your coworkers?

What are the things you like about your relationships with coworkers? Can you give me an example?

Tell me about a time when things went badly. Did you ever feel like a coworker's behavior made you unsafe?

Have you ever thought that the men at your work are treated differently than you? Can you give me an example?

Have you ever thought that favoritism was shown towards some racial groups or that some racial groups were treated worse than others? Can you give me an example?

16. How do your coworkers treat you?

Do you think your coworkers think you are good at your job? Example?

Do you think your coworkers think you are smart? Example?

Do you think your coworkers think you are nice or friendly? Example?

When you ask your coworkers for help, does it work? Is there a time when it didn't work?

17. Tell me about your customers
Can you tell me about a time when a customer was disrespectful to you?
Can you tell me a time about when a customer was really nice to you?
Do customers ask you for help, or do they usually ask other people for help? Why do you think that is?
18. Some women say that if they are really good at their job, people think they are a bitch, or mean. Have you ever felt that way? What happened?
19. Some women say that when they are nice at work, everyone assumes that they are not smart. Have you ever felt that way? Can you give me an example?

Let's talk about your family life and your job.

20. Who do you live with?
What's the biggest problem you face trying to work and raise a family (if applicable).
Can you give me an example?
21. Some women have said that they feel guilty juggling family life and work. Do you ever feel this way? Can you tell me about a time?
22. Can you tell me about a time when you had a family emergency and had to miss work?
Who covered your shift?
Was your boss understanding?
Did you get in trouble?

Now I want to ask you some factual questions

- a. How old are you?
- b. What is your highest level of education?
- c. What is the highest level of education of your parents?
- d. What is the highest level of education for your parents?
- e. Do you mind telling me about how much you earn a year (before taxes)?
- f. If you get a tax refund this year, how will you spend the money?
- g. How many jobs do you have currently?

Finally, is there anything else that you want to tell me about your work life or experiences that I haven't covered?

Sometimes after an interview, I find that I didn't fully understand something. Would it be okay if I called you?

Do you want to ask for a referral to someone else who works there whose experience might be different from yours?

Thank you so much for your time today, I really appreciate it.