



Examining Diversity in the School Nutrition Workforce

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Examining Diversity in the School Nutrition Workforce

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Institute of Child Nutrition

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EXAMINING DIVERSITY IN THE SCHOOL NUTRITION WORKFORCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this research project was to explore issues and challenges associated with managing a diverse school nutrition (SN) workforce. The research objectives and goals for this study were to identify the perceived advantages and barriers to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce; to explore optimal methods for staffing, leading, and training an SN program in a generationally and ethnically diverse labor market; and to explore other issues associated with managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.

To accomplish the research objectives and goals, this research project used a multi-phase, descriptive, case study method to examine the diversity climate in SN programs. In Phase I, researchers utilized a virtual expert panel of SN professionals to collect information supporting the research objectives that would be used to develop the case study instruments for Phase II of the project. In Phase II, a holistic, multiple-case study design with a literal replication format was used during visits to six school districts in five states, representing four of the seven United States Department of Agriculture regions. The first two case study site visits served as the pilot study to assess the case study process and instruments. Results from the pilot were used to refine the data collection process and instruments for the remaining four site visits. The four subsequent site visits were completed, and the data from all four site visits and interviews were analyzed using constant comparison methods to review the interview transcripts, observation reports, and diversity documents and policies provided by stakeholders at each case study site.

The results from each of the case site interviews provided similar themes that exist in each SN program. Some notable themes include the following items:

- All four case sites defined diversity in terms of cultural and ethnic differences.
- The common themes for the overall climate of diversity among all case sites were respectful, friendly, cooperative, supportive, and welcoming environments for all staff.
- School nutrition management tended to report experiences with issues and discrepancies in treatment of staff with generational or ethnic differences, whereas most SN staff did not.
- Multiple commonalities were identified among case sites related to the advantages and disadvantages for managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN staff. The themes for the advantages of managing a diverse staff included wisdom and knowledge gained from working with older staff, and team work. The themes for the disadvantages of managing a generationally and ethnically diverse staff included the need to provide additional training and supervisory oversight for younger employees, and the need to mediate language barriers among ethnically diverse staff.
- The optimal methods for managing and leading generationally and ethnically diverse staff included increased awareness of diversity within the SN program, creating and maintaining a diversity plan for the SN program, providing leadership with tools for effectively communicating across cultures and ethnic groups, and practicing patience and fairness toward staff members.

- The optimal methods for training a generationally and ethnically diverse staff include offering training materials in different languages, utilizing multi-lingual staff for training, understanding staff ethnicities and cultures, and being patient with a multi-ethnic and multi-generational staff.

While the results of this study may provide insight into diversity practices and the diversity climate in SN programs and school districts across the United States, the data collected is limited to the perceptions and information shared by the expert panel members and stakeholders at the six case study sites. Additional research is need to identify the true impact of diverse workforces on managing and training efforts in the SN program.

INTRODUCTION

While diversity is on the forefront of political, legal, corporate, and educational discussions, the importance of a diverse workforce in the hospitality industry has been well documented (Devine, F., Baum, T., Hearn, N., and Devine, A., 2007; Lim & Noriega, 2007). The greatest emphasis on diverse populations working in the hospitality industry has been associated with migrant workers. For example, in 2005, unauthorized migrants accounted for about 7.2 million workers, or 4.9% of the workforce in the United States. Of that 7.2 million workers, 24% are employed in farming occupations, 17% in cleaning, and 12% in food preparation industries (Passel, 2007). Although the hospitality industry has relied on a diverse workforce for some time now, the increase in the demand for a multicultural/cross-cultural workforce can be attributed to the presence of rapid globalization.

The discussion of diversity has continued to evolve in the United States and in other countries. Diversity encompasses a large spectrum of people, and addresses more than just race and ethnicity. The primary dimensions of diversity include age, race, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, and sexual orientation. The secondary dimensions of diversity are communication style, religious beliefs, ethnic customs, relationship and family status, education, income, and general appearance (Lim & Noriega, 2007; Madera, J. M., 2013; Shen, J., Chanda, A, Netto, B., and Monga, M., 2009).

The overarching supposition to attaching importance to diversity is that diversity will bring optimistic outcomes for an organization (Tuz, M., & Gumus, n.d.). Nevertheless, we know that diversity within the workplace can bring about benefits and challenges for management. Studies have found that diversity within a workplace results in greater innovation among employees, increases in bottom line returns, increases in organizational effectiveness and

efficiency, knowledge transfer, and acceptance among consumers, because it can offer familiarity to the customers. Other researchers argue that the simple act of diversifying the employee pool will not yield positive outcomes. Diversity has also been viewed as a barrier for organizations. This is due, in part, to the negative impact that often results from prejudices, stereotyping, and discrimination. Some of the challenges of diversity in the workforce include communication barriers, discrimination issues, high turnover rates, interpersonal conflicts, and training challenges. These behaviors can lead to harmful work environments, damaged morale of employees, and decreased work productivity (Gong, Y., 2008; Green, K. A., Lopez, M., Wysocki, A., and Kepner, K., 2002; Shen, J., Chanda, A, Netto, B., and Monga, M., 2009).

An organization's climate of diversity reflects the culture of the organization and the shared employee perceptions regarding the general pattern of morals, values, and beliefs of the organization. Researchers have noted that the diversity climate of an organization is largely influenced by the employee's personal experiences, observed experiences of others, and assessment of the organization's policies and procedures toward diversity (Goyal, S. & Shrivastava, S., 2013; Rio-Parent, L. & Bar, R., 2005). Understanding employee perceptions of the diversity climate can provide insight into the attitudes and behaviors of the workforce, and can assist in overcoming problems arising from diversity.

Improving the diversity climate appears to be a critical element in managing a diverse workforce. The responsibility for developing a successful, diverse workforce within an organization is the responsibility of administration. In managing a diverse workforce, the effective leader has to be willing to change the culture of the organization to allow for decreased discrimination, and to create a work environment that is inclusive for everyone (Pless, N. M., and Maake, T., 2004; Roberson, Q., 2006). While this topic has not been explored to a great degree

in the school foodservice environment, the purpose of this project is to explore issues and challenges associated with managing an ethnically and generationally diverse school nutrition (SN) workforce, utilizing the key dimensions to define diversity climate.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to explore issues and challenges associated with managing a diverse SN workforce. The research objectives and goals for this study were the following items:

- Identify the perceived advantages to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce;
- Identify the perceived barriers to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce;
- Explore optimal methods for staffing an SN program in a generationally and ethnically diverse labor market;
- Explore optimal methods for leading a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce;
- Explore optimal methods for training/developing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce; and
- Explore other issues associated with managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To accomplish research objectives and goals, the researcher used a case study method to explore issues and challenges associated with managing a diverse school nutrition (SN) workforce. The study utilized the multi-case study research methodology that followed a replication format to collect data. This type of methodology can be used to explore the differences between and within schools with diverse populations (or cases) (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). The replication protocols and instruments included in this research were structured interviews, direct observations, and examination of documentation.

In Phase I, researchers utilized a virtual expert panel of SN professionals to collect information supporting the research objectives. The information was then used to develop the case study instruments for Phase II of the project. In Phase II, a holistic, multiple-case study design with a literal replication format was used during visits to six school districts in six states (including two pilots with a small, rural school district and a large, urban school district), representing four United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regions. The multiple-case design allowed for the exploration of similarities and differences between and within each case using the case study instruments designed from information gathered in Phase I of this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003).

Informed Consent

The researcher for this project followed consent procedures established by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee at The University of Southern Mississippi. There were no identifying codes used to identify participants from either the expert panel or the site visits in Phase I or Phase II of this study. Expert panel members agreed to participate in the research

activities associated with this project, which served as consent. Each SN director and foodservice staff person who participated in the on-site structured interview signed a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

Phase I

Virtual Expert Panel

State Agency SN directors representing the seven USDA regions were asked to provide names and contact information for three to four SN directors in their state who successfully lead a diverse workforce that consists of individuals from various age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and gender. From the names provided, SN directors were e-mailed an invitation requesting their participation on a virtual expert panel. The virtual expert panel would participate in a modified Delphi process to collect data that would be used to develop the case study data collection instruments for Phase II. The invitation described the purpose of the project, the role of the expert panel, and included the researcher's contact information should questions and concerns related to the study arise. The invitation also included an informed consent statement outlining the details of expert panel members' participation in the study. A return e-mail from the expert panel candidates agreeing to participate on the virtual panel served as consent.

The modified Delphi process for the virtual expert panel process included communication between the researcher and expert panel in two rounds. These rounds were used to bring about agreement concerning issues, challenges, beliefs, and behaviors for diversity in SN programs. In round one, virtual expert panel members were asked to complete a three-section Delphi questionnaire. Section one of the questionnaire contained 16 open-ended questions designed to explore the benefits, issues and challenges, emotions, and personal involvement associated with managing diverse SN workforces. Section two of the questionnaire was designed to collect

demographic information on the panelists, including job title, years of experience, ethnic background, and age of SN staff. The final section of the Delphi questionnaire collected information related to the SN program diversity climate. Panelists were asked to return the completed Delphi questionnaires by e-mail to the researcher within a one-week time frame. Reminder e-mails were sent to all participants who did not meet the initial deadline. All data collected were summarized by the researcher. Information gathered from round one was used to create a summary list and a more complex set of questions for the virtual panel participants to complete in round two of the Delphi process.

In preparation for round two discussions, the researchers reviewed the qualitative data collected from round one and thematically coded the information to identify common themes identified by the expert panel. These themes were the foundation for the next set of questions presented in round two. The virtual expert panel members were asked to review the themes identified from round one and to identify the gaps within themes as it relates to benefits, issues and challenges, emotions, and personal involvement associated with managing diverse SN workforces. The summary included 16 questions related to panelists' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences with diversity in the workplace. Once round two concluded, draft case study instruments were created for Phase II. From the pool of SN directors participating in round one and two, potential case study sites were identified.

Phase II

Case Study Instruments

Phase II of this project consisted of data collection via structured interviews guided by predetermined questions, data collection by observation checklist, and a documentation review through the replicated, multi-case site visit methodology. In addition, each site was asked to

provide demographic data related to the school profile, including enrollment data and participation in the National School Lunch Program data, as well as personal characteristics data on each person being interviewed. A review of the diversity literature along with the information collected from the virtual expert panel were used to develop the case study instruments used in Phase II. Structured interviews were conducted with SN directors, SN managers or assistant managers, an SN site supervisor, and SN general staff members. The structured interview questions were expected to take approximately 20 minutes to an hour to complete. The Institute of Child Nutrition, Applied Research Division (ICN, ARD) researchers evaluated the instruments for the achievement of research objectives, usability, and brevity prior to the pilot site visit. Comments and suggestions provided by reviewers were used to guide the necessary revisions on the case study instruments.

Case Study Site Visits

School nutrition directors who participated in the virtual expert panel were included in the pool of possible case study sites. In an effort to select the most appropriate site, the researcher evaluated the SN director availability and interest in the discussion of diversity in the SN program. Based on information gathered, the researcher chose school districts that had a significant distribution of gender diversity and ethnic diversity in the SN staff, were willing to seek approval from the school board for a research study to take place within the school district, and were willing to allow for one day of research activities. From the group of SN directors who participated in the virtual expert panel, the six case study sites were selected and invited to participate. Final selection of the six study sites was based on the directors' willingness to participate as well as the SN program demographics, including geographic location.

An invitation was sent to all potential participants in Phase II of the project. The invitation explained the purpose of the site visit, and provided the researcher's contact information for questions and concerns. After SN directors agreed to participate in the case study site visits, confirmation letters were e-mailed with additional information. Included in the confirmation e-mail was an overview of the site visit, a school profile information form, and a personal characteristics form for interviewees. After SN directors received school district approval to conduct research at the each proposed case study site, the researcher worked with each SN director to outline the agenda for the case study visit.

Diversity in School Nutrition Pilot Study

Structured interviews, the observation process, and the process for examination of documents and archival records were field tested at two one-day site visits. The site visits were conducted in two different school district sites. The differences included geographical location, school district size, and setting. One school was located in the Southeast USDA region in a rural school district, and the other was located in the Western USDA region in a major urban school district. The pilot case study sites were chosen based on convenience, access, and school district size. In addition, the site had to have multi-ethnic and/or multi-generational staff. Each visit was scheduled to take approximately one day for review. The site visits served as the pilot to test the case study instruments and protocol. Results from the pilot site visit were used to refine the data collection instruments and process for the remaining four site visits.

Case Study

Structured interviews, the observation process, and the process for examination of documents and archival records were field tested at two one-day case site visits. The case site visits were conducted in four different school district sites. The differences included geographic

location and school district size. The schools were located in the Southeast USDA region, the Western USDA region, the Northeast USDA region, and the Mid-Atlantic USDA region. The case study sites were chosen based on convenience, access, and school district size. In addition, the site had to have multi-ethnic and/or multi-generational staff. Each visit was scheduled to take approximately one day for review. During the site visit, one portion of the day was dedicated to conducting structured interviews with the SN director, SN staff members, and other school personnel involved in SN operations in diverse school districts. Pilot interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes to one hour. The question protocol varied depending on staff title, which included SN staff, SN manager/assistant manager, SN site manager, and/or SN director. The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to explore the following topics:

- Diversity of climate in their SN program;
- Personal experiences or eye witness experience related to diversity in their SN program;
- Policies and procedures related to diversity in their SN program;
- Benefits and barriers of diversity in their SN program; and
- Diversity training.

All potential participants included in this study were working adults. An oral informed consent form for structured interviews was provided and read to participants prior to the interviews to describe the research study, the voluntary nature of their participation, confidentiality, and to provide contact information for the chair of the Institutional Review Board. A signed consent form was required for all interviews. The researcher took notes during each interview using the structured interview questionnaire instrument, and all interviews were recorded. Interview notes were given an interview code based on the case study site and role of

each interviewee in the school district. All handwritten interview notes were securely stored at the ICN, ARD office.

The second portion of the day was dedicated to the observation process and to examine information requested prior to the on-site visit regarding documents and archival records. The researcher used the documentation and observation checklist to confirm diversity characteristics of the SN program and to capture additional diversity characteristics. The observation instrument consisted of seven areas of review for the researchers to observe in real time.

Data Analysis

Information gathered from each case study was analyzed individually for pertinent data and themes. Data were categorized, cross-case tabulated, and cross-checked to identify diverse staff issues, benefits, challenges and best practices. Thematic coding of key diversity characteristics and data specific to the research objectives were analyzed from the interview notes, observations, and diversity documents for pertinent data.

RESULTS

Phase I

Virtual Expert Panel

State agency school nutrition (SN) directors from all seven United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regions provided names and contact information for 31 SN directors who manage a workforce that consists of individuals from various age groups, ethnic backgrounds, or gender make up, to participate in the virtual expert panel. Of the 31 invited to serve on the panel, 17 (54.8%) agreed to participate and complete two rounds of e-mail communication about their diversity perceptions and practices in the local SN program. In round one, panelists ($n = 15$; 88.3%) completed and returned a questionnaire created to explore issues and challenges associated with managing a diverse SN workforce. All participants on the virtual expert panel members were SN directors. The majority of the panelists had more than 10 years of experience in school settings ($n = 13$; 88.2%). Of those responding, there were four SN directors holding School Nutrition Association (SNA) certification (26.6%), three were licensed/registered dietitians (20%), four had School Nutrition Specialist credentials (26.6%), two had state department of education certification (13.3%), and one had “other” credential (certified executive chef) (13.3%), five were not certified (33.3%), and one panelist did not respond to the question (6.7%).

An Institute of Child Nutrition, Applied Research Division researcher summarized the responses from round one into primary themes under a category that met a research objective. For round two, panelists were asked to confirm their agreement to the categorized themes under each category, and to provide additional comments and suggestions if gaps were recognized, or if panelists had additional insight about diversity in SN programs. Fourteen (82.3%) participants

confirmed all of the themes identified in the round one summary, and provided comments and suggestions on the themes in round two. Presented in Table 1 are responses from both round one and round two. The information gathered from the virtual expert panel was used to develop the structured interview protocol and observation tool for the case study site visits.

Table 1

Round One and Round Two Responses from Virtual Expert Panel Members^a

Research Objectives/Goals	Primary Themes	Frequency of Responses	Response Summary
<i>Identify the perceived barriers to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Cultural Sensitivity/Competence</i>	9	Knowledge of cultural differences (i.e., work ethic and personal hygiene)
		2	Inclusiveness
		2	Discrimination
		2	Cultural acceptance; Don't get along with other cultures
	<i>Literacy and Language Barriers</i>	16	Language barrier
		2	Literacy
		3	Non-verbal and verbal communication
	<i>Limited Applicant Pool</i>	8	Skilled applicant pool (i.e., child nutrition knowledge, literacy, physical ability)
		5	Recruiting millennial, African American, and diverse workforce
		3	District location and access to job site
1		Not enough ethnic diversity in upper management	

^aPanelists provided more than one response for each research objective/goal.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Round One and Round Two Responses from Virtual Expert Panel Members^a

Research Objectives/Goals	Primary Themes	Frequency of Responses	Response Summary
<i>Identify the perceived barriers to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Work Ethics</i>	6	Attendance
		1	Company loyalty
		1	Attitude of entitlement
		2	Job expectations and work hours
	<i>Retention</i>	5	Retention/High turnover
		1	Less likely to make life-long career in school nutrition
		1	Retirement
		1	Maintain morale
	<i>Economic Issues and Changes</i>	1	Transitioning from private sector to public sector (i.e., unions)
		1	Large free and reduced population
		1	Unemployment rate
	<i>Generational Competence</i>	1	Conflict over work assignments
		2	Respect for management
	<i>Training/Staff Development</i>	1	Keeping up with technology
		3	Training staff
1		Staff development	
<i>Identify the perceived advantages to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Cultural Awareness and Acceptance</i>	10	Cultural awareness and meeting cultural needs
		1	Purchase locally-grown products
		1	Purchasing in bulk and limiting the use of individually-wrapped items
		1	Composting
		3	Workforce reflects community demographics

^aPanelists provided more than one response for each research objective/goal.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Round One and Round Two Responses from Virtual Expert Panel Members^a

Research Objectives/Goals	Primary Themes	Frequency of Responses	Response Summary
<i>Identify the perceived advantages to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Learning Opportunities</i>	3	Eliminate negative stereotypes
		1	Tolerance
	<i>Menu Development</i>	6	Develop and implement new recipes/menu items
	<i>Student Acceptance and Familiarity</i>	4	Student acceptance
		5	Students want to see SN workers that look like them/reflect their culture
		1	Sustain customer base
	<i>Professional Growth and Development</i>	2	Positive learning environment
		1	Modeling good work ethics and behaviors
		1	Team building and team work between SN staff, teachers, counselors, and administration
		1	Cross-functioning teams
<i>Explore optimal methods for staffing a SN program in a generationally and ethnically diverse labor market.</i>	<i>Demographics</i>	9	Changes in community/school demographics
		3	Immigration
		1	Influx of Spanish speaking applicants
	<i>Economy</i>	8	Job changes (i.e., job loss, company closings, company/position relocations)
		1	Type of job draws diverse applicants
		2	County and city development/changes (i.e., merging school districts)
		1	Transportation
		1	Salary and benefits
	<i>Leadership that Supports Diversity</i>	1	Acceptance of different cultures

^aPanelists provided more than one response for each research objective/goal.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Round One and Round Two Responses from Virtual Expert Panel Members^a

Research Objectives/Goals	Primary Themes	Frequency of Responses	Response Summary
	<i>Leadership that Supports Diversity</i>	1 1 1 6 1 1 4	Open-minded employers Employers willing to varied hiring practices Supporting diversity in the workplace District-wide plan (policies/practices) Equal and fair treatment for all employees Team building Diversity training and continuing education for SN management
<i>Explore optimal methods for staffing a SN program in a generationally and ethnically diverse labor market.</i>	<i>Recruiting Methods and Outlets</i>	4 3 1	Recruiting through various methods (word-of-mouth, Internet, newspaper, and school district) Open and flexible application process Recruiting student populations to utilize work-based learning and job shadowing
	<i>Applicant Pool/Application Process</i>	1 1 5 1	Hiring Pool Knowledge of how SN works Hire for talent first not diversity Hire based on background age, and skill set
	<i>Management</i>	2 1 1	Cross-functioning teams Training staff on regulations Monitoring the culture of the SN program
	<i>Retention</i>	2 1	Retirement Longevity in school nutrition

^aPanelists provided more than one response for each research objective/goal.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Round One and Round Two Responses from Virtual Expert Panel Members^a

Research Objectives/Goals	Primary Themes	Frequency of Responses	Response Summary
<i>Explore optimal methods for leading a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Best Practices</i> <i>Unknown</i>	8	Not sure/none known
	<i>Communication</i>	2	Weekly staff meeting
		1	Open door policy
1		Encourage staff to speak to students in native tongue and English Written policy within organization	
<i>Explore optimal methods for training and developing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Staff Satisfaction</i>	2	Treat staff with respect
		1	Train staff to accept change
		1	Recognize staff and staff achievement
<i>Explore optimal methods for training and developing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.</i>	<i>Best Practices</i> <i>Unknown</i>	5	Not sure/none known
	<i>Cross-Train Staff</i>	1	Cross train substitute SN staff
		1	Mix staff at each site
<i>Training and Professional Development</i>	<i>Training and Professional Development</i>	1	Develop trainers with the SN program
		2	Provide continuing education and training on diversity and inclusion
		1	Use visual aids with pictures in trainings
		1	Conduct small group trainings and short trainings
		1	Offer continuous training opportunities
		1	Utilize current staff for training
		1	Use coaching methods for training

^aPanelists provided more than one response for each research objective/goal.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Round One and Round Two Responses from Virtual Expert Panel Members^a

Research Objectives/Goals	Primary Themes	Frequency of Responses	Response Summary
Explore other issues associated with managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.	<i>Applicants Related to Students</i>	4	Family members being hired at school where their students attend
	<i>Student Population as Potential Hiring Pool</i>	1	Hiring recent graduates
		2	Student internships
	<i>Student Demographics Drive Hiring Practices</i>	6	Diverse student enrollment reflected in the SN staff
		3	Diverse staff more relatable to student population
	<i>Students Play No Role</i>	3	Students play no role
	<i>School Personnel Play No Role</i>	5	School personnel play no role
	<i>School Personnel Encourage and Support Diversity Hiring Practices</i>	1	School personnel supports diversity hiring
		1	District policy encourages diversity
		1	Personnel makes hiring recommendations
		1	HR department helpful
		1	Collaboration with staff
	<i>No Factors Impact Diverse SN staff</i>	4	No factors
	<i>Job Benefits</i>	1	Job security
		1	Job flexibility
<i>Community Demographics</i>	4	School location and community demographics	
<i>Hiring Practices</i>	2	Recruiting and hiring practices	
<i>Funding</i>	1	Needed to improve wages	
	8	Needed for Staff development and training	
	10	No funding provided	

^aPanelists provided more than one response for each research objective/goal.

Phase II

Pilot Case Study Sites

Pilot Case Study Site/Case Site A

In this study, there were two pilot case study site visits. Each visit served as an evaluation of the use of the structured interview questions and observation instrument. The idea of conducting two pilot site visits was based on the concept that diversity issues may be present in different ways depending on the school location and size. Therefore, the pilot site visits were held in a rural area with a small school district, and in an urban setting with a major city school district. The instruments served as useful tools for collecting qualitative data according to the study's research objectives and goals, and were modified based on interview responses, gaps in information gathered, and a process evaluation interview conducted at the end of the site visit.

General School District/School Nutrition Program Characteristics

Case Site A was a school district in the Southeast USDA region. The school district was located in a rural city with a population of approximately 2,039 residents, of which 50% are Caucasian/White Americans, 46.7% are African American/Black, and 3.29% of other races and ethnicity, with an average income of \$26,418 per year per household in 2013. The school district educated 495 students, with an average daily attendance of 94% in 3 schools (one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school), and with a free and reduced rate of 90% and 4%, respectively. At the elementary school, where staff interviews and observations took place, the free and reduced rates were 90% and 1%, respectively.

School Nutrition Director and Manager Personal Characteristics

The SN director had one to five years of work experience in SN programs, all of which were in the current position. The SN director was not certified in any area, but had a Baccalaureate degree. The SN manager had greater than 20 years of experience in SN programs, all of which were in the current position. The SN manager did not have any certifications, but did have a high school diploma or general education degree (GED). The SN staff did not have any certifications, but did have a high school diploma or GED.

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Director

During the structured interview, the SN director for Case Site A responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity and to the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN director were related to her understanding of the term diversity and to the presence of a diversity plan at that school district. The SN director defined diversity as “different people with different habits, different thought processes, and having different ways of doing things.” She indicated that the local SN program did not have a diversity plan in place, neither did the school district have a diversity plan in place. While the SN director did not feel there was a need for a diversity plan at that particular school district based on the idea that the area is not as diverse as places that have larger school districts, she was not opposed to the possibility of creating a diversity plan for the SN program.

The interview also addressed the diversity represented in Case Site A’s SN staff. Based on the SN director’s response, the current diversity represented in that SN program was limited to generational diversity. She reported that there were six total SN staff members including herself. The generational layout of Case Site A included 1 Millennial aged staff member (14-33

years old), three Generation X staff members (34-49 years old), and two Baby Boomers (50-68 years old).

The next set of questions addressed the climate of diversity in Case Site A. The climate of diversity was defined for the SN director as a culture or atmosphere of diversity and inclusion in an organization. The SN director described the diversity climate in Case Site A as family-oriented, real, tough, friendly, exciting, accommodating, unique, up-to-date, hardworking, intelligent, efficient, and respectful. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, the SN director indicated that she was “somewhat” comfortable with the diversity climate. The SN director shared one of her concerns with the generational differences among her staff. She stated that some staff, “want to do stuff this way and some people want to do stuff the other way. Now, that’s where that generational diversity come in.”

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN director or the SN director’s observation of the experiences of other SN staff within Case Site A. The SN director indicated that she was treated with dignity and respect by the senior administration of the school district. However, when it came to SN staff, the respect was not always given by all. The SN director believes that the reasons some staff do not treat her with respect is based on her job experience and the longevity in the position. The SN director was asked if there were times when her staff disrespected her or disregarded her authority. The SN director responded in the affirmative, and provided an example of an instance when this had taken place. The example given was about instructions the SN director gave to the SN staff to put on gloves and hairnets. According to the SN director, when staff are given instructions to put on gloves and hairnets, the request goes unfulfilled. The SN director added that it typically takes several prompts for the SN

staff to do what is asked. The SN director was also asked if she experiences bullying, discrimination, or harassment based on age or ethnicity. The response to this question was also in the affirmative. The SN director provided an example for this issue as well. The SN director noted that bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination is typically experienced at a particular time. She stated, “Most of the time that comes up when we are trying new recipes.” The SN director added that these issues typically arise because of the level of differences in experience in the staff. Some staff at Case Site A have been working in the field for greater than 20 years, and some have been working in the area for around 5 years.

With regard to the SN director’s experience in leading and managing a diverse SN workforce, she indicated that she had to change her management style when working with her current staff. The SN director admitted she initially came into the organization with the perception that “I’m the boss,” and “We are going to do it my way.” Over time, she realized, “That’s how you put the workers, everybody, against you.” Now, she says, “We are all working together as one team,” and that she listens to their opinions. She also believes that if she gets the people involved in the planning process, the attitudes of the staff change, and her program runs more efficiently.

The SN director was asked about the advantages and disadvantages to leading a generationally diverse workforce. Her response indicated that the disadvantages included disagreements between the different age groups and the different levels of job experience. The SN director noted that advantages for leading a generationally diverse workforce were that the experienced staff always had solutions to problems when they arise, while the less experienced staff may not be confident that they can resolve the issue. Support for her statement about advantages was given as an example of what can happen among SN staff. “Them [sic] older

people... the Baby Boomers... whatever pop up, ‘okay we ain’t [sic] got this, we can use this’ and they keep on going.”

The next set of questions allowed the SN director to reflect on written and unwritten organizational policies created to address generational and/or ethnic differences among staff. While generational or ethnic diversity is not discussed in the work place in Case Site A, there is some indication of variations in the way different generations should be managed. The SN director indicated that different generation groups, particularly at Case Site A, have to be instructed in different ways. The younger generations can simply be given instructions to do a specific task, but the Baby Boomer staff have to be approached with a level of respect that differs from the Millennials and Generation X members. In addition to respect, the SN director noted that the Baby Boomers must be given the reasons why the instructions are given.

When asked about policy creation in the SN program based on issues associated with diversity, the SN director indicated that there have been no direct policies created or changed. However, there have been some changes in the process of staffing the serving line. This included increasing the number of staff on the serving line from two to three staff members during the lunch hour, because younger workers don’t work as efficiently as the older workers.

As the SN director responded to the questions related to training in diverse workforces, she did indicate that there are barriers or challenges that exist for developing and presenting trainings for generationally diverse staff. Some of the barriers to developing and giving trainings to a diverse staff include funding, resistance from older generations toward the use of the computer, and resistance from older staff to obtain certifications. The SN director stated, “Like [sic], I’m trying to do ServSafe. It’s hard trying to get everybody ServSafe certified ‘cause [sic] I know the older group probably not gonna’ [sic] want to do all that.” She believes that the older

staff may be thinking about retirement and are not interested in achieving additional certifications. The barriers for presenting trainings to a diverse generational work group is that the younger generation staff members are eager to learn new information, and the older generation staff are eager to end the discussion. In addition, the older staff appear to be less interested in the topics presented. The SN director surmised that the underlying issue with the older generation in Case Site A is that they are not interested in change and would prefer that all processes and procedures remain the same.

As a part of the interview process, the SN director was asked to provide photos of staff in action at Case Site A. As we reviewed the photos, the SN director provided a narrative to what had been photographed. She noted that different generations on the SN staff were represented in the photos. She added that the photographed images portrayed the team work practiced in the SN department. The SN director elaborated on one image and noted that the Baby Boomer, who is also the SN manager, was giving instructions to the other staff.

The SN director was asked to provide advice to other directors who are managing and training a diverse workforce. The director thought it would be important for others training a diverse workforce to be patient, because every staff member may not understand the concepts presented initially. The director also stressed that you should be positive when addressing staff, be patient, and remain professional at all times, and said, “You have to have the half-full mentality.”

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Manager

During the structured interview, the SN manager for Case Site A responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity, and to the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN manager were related to her understanding of the term

diversity, and the picture of diversity at that local SN program. The SN manager defined diversity as, “basically how things are run [sic] or how you can make things better.” The SN manager describe the diversity climate in Case Site A as down to earth, accommodating, hardworking, and tolerant. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, the SN manager indicated that she was “very” comfortable with the diversity climate.

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN manager or the SN manager’s observation of the experiences of other SN staff within Case Site A. The SN manager indicated that she felt that she was treated with dignity and respect by the senior administration of the school district. However, when it came to SN staff, respect was not always given. The SN manager added that the lack of respect might not be observed in all staff at all times. The manager also noted that some of the issues related to respect are more about personality and not about age. When asked about personal or observed acts of harassment, bullying, or discrimination in the workplace related to generational or ethnic diversity, the manager stated that she has had the personal experience of harassment, bullying, or discrimination, nor has she observed other’s personal experiences with harassment, bullying, or discrimination. When asked if the SN manager had to modify her leadership style to manage generationally or ethnically diverse staff, she stated that she had not.

The next set of questions were related to written or unwritten organizational policies with regard to diversity in the workplace. As noted by the SN director, the SN manager at Case Site A noted that generational nor ethnic diversity is discussed in the work place. The SN manager also noted that there have been no direct policies created or changed as a result of ethnic or generational issues in the workplace.

As the SN manager responded to the questions related to training in diverse workforces, she did indicate that there are barriers or challenges that exist for developing trainings for a generationally diverse staff. The barrier is there is a limitation to methods or teaching available to train some SN staff at Case Site A. The SN director noted that some staff must receive instructions through on the job training and hands-on teaching. No other training methods are effective.

The SN manager was asked to provide advice to other managers who are managing and training a diverse workforce. The manager thought it would be important for others training a diverse workforce to be positive, patient, and confident. As for managing a diverse workforce, the manager's recommendations were to work together, stay focused, and have a positive attitude. These attributes were similar to what was noted by the SN director.

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Staff Member

During the structured interview, the SN staff member for Case Site A responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity and the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN staff member were related to her understanding of the term diversity, and the environment of diversity at that local SN program. The SN staff member at Case Site A was unable to provide a definition for diversity. However, the SN staff member was able to describe the environment of diversity at Case Site A. She described the diversity climate as supportive, sincere, cheerful, young, up-to-date, independent, hardworking, intelligent, successful, leading, and respectful. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, the SN staff member indicated, "Yes, I'm comfortable."

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN staff member, and her observations of the experiences of other SN staff members within Case Site A. She indicated that she felt that she was treated with dignity and respect by the senior administration of the school district and by fellow staff. When asked about personal or observed unfair treatment in the workplace based on generational or ethnical differences, she reported she has not experienced or observed issues of unfairness related to generational or ethnic differences.

The SN staff member responded to questions about the organization's policies toward diversity. According to the staff member, nothing has kept the SN program at Case Site A from embracing diversity. Furthermore, she noted that no written or unwritten policies have been created to address ethnicity or generational issues.

The final questions the SN staff member was asked to respond were about training and training opportunities in this generationally diverse workforce. Overall, the SN staff member noted that all staff are given the opportunity to be trained and promoted, regardless of age and ethnicity. She added that the current trainings meet the needs of the staff, in most instances. She stated that when there are issues related to the training, it is usually based on the implementation of change. She noted that some individuals who have worked in the SN program for longer periods of time often found it difficult to embrace new processes.

Changes Based on Case Study Site A

Based on the interview process at Case Site A, the researcher identified required changes to the interview questionnaire, interview procedures, and interview answer cards. Adjustments were made to the interview questionnaire including removing questions, redesigning and modifying questions, and adding new questions to define diversity. Additionally, new interview

questionnaires were created to address additional staff represented in an SN program beyond those roles present in the initial pilot site.

Pilot Study Case Study/Case Site B

General School District/School Nutrition Program Characteristics

Case Site B was a school district in the Western USDA region of the United States. The school district was located in an urban area with a population of approximately 473,577 residents of which 29.4% are Caucasian/White American/non-Hispanic, 13.5% are African American/Black, 0.7% are American Indian/Native Alaska, 12.9% are Asian, 1.1% are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 40.8% are Latino/Hispanic, based on 2010 census data (most recent data available). The average yearly income was \$52,944 per household, according to 2014 census data (United State Census, Long Beach). The school district had 80,685 students enrolled during the time of the site visit, with an average daily attendance of 94.8% in 83 schools (54 Pre-K/elementary schools, 15 middle schools, and 14 high schools). The free-and-reduced rate for the district was 75% and 13%, respectively. At the elementary school, where staff interviews and observations took place, the total number of students enrolled was 972, with an average daily attendance of 95%. The free and reduced rates at the case study site school were 87% and 7.3%, respectively.

School Nutrition Director and Manager Personal Characteristics

The SN director at Case Study Site B had over twenty-five years of work experience in SN programs, although she had only been in the director position for less than one year. The SN director was a registered dietitian and SNA certified. The SN director also had earned a Master's degree, and had completed some additional graduate credit hours beyond the Master's degree. The SN area manager had greater than 20 years of experience in SN programs and in the current

position. The SN manager was a registered dietitian and had SNA certification. She also has a Baccalaureate degree. The SN supervisor/coordinator had 6 to 10 years of experience in SN programs, and about one to five years in the current position as supervisor. The SN supervisor/coordinator has a Food Safety Professionals certification, and some graduate credit hours beyond the Baccalaureate degree.

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Director

During the structured interview, the SN director for Case Site B responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity and the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN director were designed to get the participant acclimated to the interview process. The first two questions were basic background questions about the director's current position and background information about the SN program at that school district. As the SN director provided feedback about background information on the school, she indicated that the SN workforce population varied, with a high percentage of Hispanic employees followed by Asian employees from Vietnam and Cambodia. The next set of questions asked the SN director to describe the working environment in her SN program. The response given for the environment of the SN department as a whole was "approachable." The next set of questions was related to the definition of diversity and the diversity climate in the local school district and the SN program. The SN director indicated that when thinking of diversity, she thinks about terms like racial/ethnic, religious, belief system, education differences, income diversity, sexual orientation, and age. When asked what, if any, signs of diversity exist in the local school district, the SN director noted that the district provided non-discriminatory training, training on different diversity groups, information on what is appropriate in the work place, and evaluations based on work performance. The SN director indicated that there was no diversity

plan in place at the school district level or in the SN program. The interview also addressed the diversity representation in Case Site B's SN staff. Based on the SN director's response, the current diversity in that SN program was both generational and ethnic. At the time of interview, the SN director was unable to provide detailed information on the generational and ethnic layout of the staff.

As the SN director responded to the questions about the climate of diversity in Case Site B's SN program, the general climate of diversity was defined as supportive, sincere, respectful, and cooperative. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, the SN director stated it, "makes me feel good," and this is "...one of the reasons why I am here." The SN director also indicated that the current work environment fosters pride among employees and encourages management to respect staff.

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN director or the SN director's observation of the experiences of other SN staff within Case Site B. The SN director indicated that she was treated well by most, and that she has had to develop relationships with others along the way. The SN director felt that the program was respected by senior administration. The SN director also felt that the SN staff treated her with respect, and that she had a good relationship with the staff.

The next set of questions allowed the SN director to respond to questions about managing a diverse SN staff. When asked if management needs varied from generation to generation, the SN director noted that she manages based on the individual needs of the employee, and not based on age difference. When asked if different ethnic groups should be managed differently, the SN director said they should not be managed differently. As to the SN director's experience in leading and managing a diverse SN workforce, she indicated a change in her management style

overtime. The SN director indicated that she has become more sensitive to the needs of the individual SN staff members. The director was asked if the conversation of managing a diverse staff is discussed with other directors in the area, and her response was that it is not typically discussed. The SN director stated that a diverse staff is viewed as “common for the area.”

The SN director was asked to respond to generational and ethnic issues that may impact a diverse SN workforce. The first set of questions allowed the director to indicate if she has experienced issues or bias based on generational or ethnic differences, or observed others experiencing issues or bias. The director stated that while she had observed others experience differences in attitudes, or consequences if one needs to meet family responsibilities or use family leave, involvement with colleagues in informal activities, and lack of acceptance based on differences, she has not experienced any issues or bias based on generational or ethnical differences. When the SN director was asked to determine which issue or bias was most critical to a healthy workplace, she identified “lack of acceptance based on differences” as the most critical of the issues identified. The next set of questions allowed the SN director to speak directly to issues related to age or ethnicity that have occurred in the local SN program among staff. As it relates to generational issues with the local SN workforce, the SN director noted that she has observed a decrease in productivity, and a need for training and good supervision for the younger generation staff, though she qualified this is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. She also noted differences in work ethics between generations, and technology challenges among older staff. When responding to the question of the issues that exist among an ethnically diverse local SN workforce, the SN director has identified the use of native language when staff are at lunch or “off the clock.” The director added that while the employees are allowed to speak in their native tongue while on break or off the clock, employees are asked to speak English while on the

job to maintain safety and the team environment. When asked how generational and ethnic issues are typically addressed by SN management, the SN director stated that all issues are handled on a case-by-case basis, and that the management team decides collectively if the issue needs to be addressed in a broader perspective. When asked if generational or ethnic issues have resulted in policy creation, the SN director advised that the human resources department creates policies. In addition, the SN director noted that many of the policies that directly impact SN staff must be reviewed and tempered against union contracts in Case Site B's SN program.

As the SN director responded to the questions related to training in diverse workforces, she did indicate Case Site B utilized several forms of training, including videos, PowerPoint presentations, role play, and handouts. When asked to rate the trainings given at Case Site B using a scale of one to five, with five being excellent, the SN director rated the trainings between a three and four, because she felt they did not provide a variety of diversity training. When asked if the SN staff were given the opportunity to evaluate any of the trainings, the SN director responded that the employees do not get the opportunity to evaluate the trainings. When asked if the director thought there were specific resources needed to train diverse staff, she indicated there were not any specific resources necessary.

The SN director at Case Site B discussed trainings from a broader perspective, as well. The SN director was asked if she had attended any trainings related to diversity in workforces. She indicated that she had not attended any conferences or trainings about managing or training a diverse staff. She did add that there was a need for local, state, and national conferences to have sessions associated with managing and educating diverse workgroups. Moreover, she noted that the diversity discussion at local, state, and national conferences should address the regional needs of a local school district, and not just provide general diversity information. She also

indicated that cultural sensitivity and awareness training would be a great addition to diversity training offered at conferences.

The SN director was asked to provide advice to other directors who are managing and training a diverse workforce. The SN director responded to both the managing and training questions in one response. Her overall advice for managing and training a diverse staff included listen to individuals, do not make decisions based on stereotypes, hold confidential conversations with individuals, and be respectful.

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Manager

During the structured interview, the SN manager for Case Site B responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity and the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN manager were designed to get the participant acclimated to the interview process, as seen with the SN director. The first two questions were basic background questions about the manager's current position, and background information about the SN program at that school district. As the SN manager provided feedback about background information on the school, she pointed out that the minimum education requirement for substitute workers is an eighth-grade education. The SN manager was asked to describe the working environment in her SN program. She indicated that things are changing in today's work environment, with staff and management working together as a unit, and "everyone's on equal terms." The SN manager added that everyone feels comfortable enough to solve problems as a team. When asked to describe the tone of the SN program as a whole, the SN manager stated that it was "caring and upbeat."

The next set of questions were related to the definition of diversity and the diversity climate in the local school district and the SN program. The SN manager indicated that when

thinking of diversity, she thinks about different age groups and different educational backgrounds. She indicated that she did not think of race when she thinks of diversity. The SN manager noted that different age groups and different educational levels are present in Case Site B's SN program.

As the SN manager responded to the questions about the climate of diversity in Case Site B's SN program, the general climate of diversity was defined as concerned, supportive, sincere, wholesome, respectful, friendly, cooperative, welcoming, accommodating, and improving. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, the SN manager stated she is "comfortable." The SN manager also indicated that the current work environment makes for a good work environment, because staff are respected and appreciated.

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN manager or the SN manager's observation of the experiences of other SN staff within Case Site B. The SN manager indicated that the administrative staff members above her SN director do not know her; however, the SN director treated her well. While the SN manager indicated that the staff that she leads treats her "nice," she did note that there have been rough times with "older African American" three-hour workers (women) who have been rude and not nice. In these instances, the SN manager believed that there were cultural diversity differences which caused these workers to be "in my face."

The next set of questions allowed the SN manager to respond to questions about managing a diverse SN staff. When asked if management needs varied by generation, the SN manager responded "absolutely." The SN manager noted that younger workers work quickly, but they miss the kindness, caring, and compassion aspect. The older workers are very slow and forgetful. While the SN manager did not affirm or deny the idea that ethnic groups should be

managed differently, she did provide a response. Specifically, the SN manager stated, “It has proven in the past that with the Asian community groups, you don’t ever, ever raise your voice, and you never look them in the face. They feel that’s a threatening behavior.” She continued to say, “And, the way that some African Americans deal with me with conflict...They are very loud, very blunt, and very close to you physically.” As far as the SN manager’s need for change in her management style when leading a diverse SN workforce, she stated that she has made changes over time. The SN manager noted that she originally approached the job with a goal-oriented mindset, and managed the SN staff that way. She stated that as she worked in the SN profession, she realized that the emphasis of the job was geared more toward feeding children and not meeting specified goals. The SN manager added that she had to slow down and understand the diversity in ages and educational background of the staff she managed, and focus on the staff and not on goals. When addressing the question of managing a diverse SN staff and getting that team to work together to achieve common goals, the SN manager indicated that the SN program provides trainings on customer service and treating individuals with respect. She also indicated that they practice managing people correctly in order to get good results. The SN manager provided a specific example to explain her response to this question. She shared that an African American female SN staff member had problems interacting properly with other SN staff and SN supervisors. The SN manager indicated that, because of the African American staff member’s behavior and attitude on the job, the entire SN management team had to conduct an investigation at the school site to determine if the information reported about her was accurate. The information reported included that she was, “bossy, and rude, and telling people what to do.” Upon investigation, the SN management team decided that the information received was accurate, and that the best course of action was to modify the way the African American SN staff

member was managed. As a result, she was placed under a different supervisor and “managed correctly.” After said modifications, the SN manager noted that the African American female SN staff member “blossomed” as a worker.

The SN manager was asked to respond to generational and ethnic issues that may impact a diverse SN workforce. The first set of questions allowed the SN manager to indicate if she has experienced any issues or bias because of generational or ethnic differences, or observed others experience issues because of generational or ethnic differences. The SN manager indicated that she had experienced being, “spoken to in an insensitive and critical manner.” She believed that this was based on her age and the position that she held. She did not indicate that she had observed anyone experience issues or bias based on generational or ethnic differences.

The next set of questions allowed the SN manager to speak directly to issues related to age or ethnicity that have occurred in the local SN program among staff. As it relates to generational issues with the local SN workforce, the SN manager noted that she has observed older staff having difficulty with hearing, remembering tasks, and being alert. These staff are typically over the age of 80. The SN manager noted that the biggest concern, in these cases, is safety. When answering questions related to the issues that exist among an ethnically diverse local SN workforce, the SN manager identified the use of native language in the workplace as one issue. The SN manager stated that the issue with use the of native language results in staff isolation and staff concerns that they are being discussed without their knowledge. The SN manager provided an example to support her response. The SN manager indicated that there were three staff members of different ethnic backgrounds working at a local school site. One was Hispanic, and two were African American. According to the SN manager, the two young African American staff members followed the Hispanic staff member to the bus stop. The two African

American SN staff members had their parent come out to the bus stop to verbally assault the Hispanic staff member because she spoke Spanish at the workplace. As a result of this incident, the SN manager stated that the female African American worker was terminated, and the male African American worker “was fine after she was terminated; she was the instigator.” When asked how issues such as the one identified in her example are typically addressed, the SN manager noted that it is addressed based on current policy related to workplace behavior.

As the SN manager responded to the questions related to training in diverse workforces, she did indicate Site B utilized several forms of trainings. When asked to rate the training based on the ability to address the difference among employees using the scale of one to five, with five being excellent, the SN manager rated the trainings at three, because she felt they could do more to tailor the trainings if there were more resources (i.e., money, equipment, and time) available. The SN manager shared that the employees do not get the opportunity to evaluate the training, as indicated by the SN director.

The SN manager was asked about having participated in local, state, or national trainings on managing and training a diverse workforce. The SN manager stated that she had been involved in some trainings on managing diverse workgroups. She noted that the training was very helpful. She also stated that the training included information on how to deal with gang members as employees, cultural sensitivity and awareness for Asian staff, and how to deal with senior staff issues. When asked if she believed these trainings should be conducted at the local, state, and national conferences, the SN manager responded that the training would be welcomed, and added that the trainings should focus on age diversity, cultural diversity, and how to communicate and get the most out of a work group.

The SN manager addressed questions related to English as a second language. The SN manager indicated that there had been issues in the past with staff being hired who either did not speak or read English. She indicated that upon investigation, it was identified that the staff were being coached or communicated to by the supervisor in their native tongue. The SN department's concern for the lack of ability to speak or read English was related to safety and productivity (i.e., with the inability to read recipes or production records). This issue became so prevalent in the local school district that the personnel commission in that district created written policies indicating that all new hires were required to read and write in English. While the SN manager was not hesitant to share this information with the researcher, she requested that the information she was about to share would not be written down or documented as the other statements were documented. While they have identified issues and made policies to address issues related to English as a second language, the SN department does encourage staff to attend local English as a second language courses.

The final questions allowed the SN manager to end the discussion with summation. She was asked about the necessary changes that should take place in her SN program. She responded that there should be an age limit on how long an individual should be allowed to work for the health, safety, and the well-being of the staff and students. The SN manager was asked to provide advice to other directors who are managing and training a diverse workforce. The SN manager at Case Site B advised that other managers should consider each person individually, be consistent and caring to staff, explain clearly the expectations for staff, teach staff, and be a mentor as needed to any staff member.

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Site Supervisor

During the structured interview, the SN site supervisor for Case Site B responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity, and the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN site supervisor were designed to get the participant acclimated to the interview process. The first two questions were basic background questions about the site supervisor's current position and background information about the SN program at that school district. The SN site supervisor was asked to describe the working environment in her SN program. She indicated that the SN program, where she is currently site supervisor, is a "better cafeteria" than others she has worked in. She also indicated that the SN staff were a good group who communicated well with each other, and had no real issues among themselves. When asked to describe the tone of the SN program as a whole, the SN site supervisor stated that it was "a very healthy environment." She also stated that they are "encouraged to have a happy outlook" from the nutrition center or main SN department leaders.

The next set of questions was related to the definition of diversity, and the diversity climate in the local school district and the SN program. The SN site supervisor indicated that when thinking of diversity, she thinks about different ethnicities and different age groups. The SN site supervisor indicated that the evidence of diversity is present in the local SN program. The SN site supervisor added that because all staff start as substitute workers, the variation in ages are significant. She indicated that she has had substitutes who were as young as 19 years old and as old as 60 years of age. She also noted that there have been a wide range of ethnicities working in the local SN program, including Caucasians, Hispanics, and Filipinos. As the SN director responded to the questions about the climate of diversity in Case Site B's SN program, the general climate of diversity was defined as respectful, friendly, cooperative, welcoming,

accommodating, and sincere. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, the SN manager stated she is “very comfortable, I really feel strongly that we have this.” The SN director also indicated that the current work environment makes for a good work environment, because staff are respected. The SN site supervisor noted that the respect represented in the local SN program is one of the most important characteristics.

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN site supervisor’s observation of the experiences of other SN staff within Case Site B. The SN site supervisor indicated that the administrative staff that leads her (including the SN director and SN area manager) treat her respectfully. She indicated that the staff she leads is respectful and friendly. The SN site supervisor added that they all, “talk and get along. Sometimes, even gossip. But we discuss our personal lives, and I think that is fine.”

The next set of questions allowed the SN site supervisor to respond to questions about managing a diverse SN staff. When asked if management needs varied by generation, the SN site supervisor responded, “No, I don’t, I don’t [sic] think they have different management needs. I have actually one of the ladies in here... She is 60 years old. She sometimes has more energy than my 36 year old... I don’t have to make any accommodations for the older one that I wouldn’t have to make for the younger one.” When asked if management needs varied as it related to ethnicities, the SN site supervisor responded, “Again, no.” The SN site supervisor did indicate when some staff are having difficulty understanding job duties/responsibilities, she does allow other staff to explain the job in their native tongue. She noted that while the district has a policy stating that staff should not speak in their native tongue during work time, she allows it if it is going to meet the needs of the worker, and if they need to translate a word or more into the native tongue to provide understanding. She indicated that they are instructed not to have a

“whole conversation” in their language. She has instructed staff to, “Have the conversation in English. But if there is a noun that needs to be spit out in your language because you couldn’t get that word... that’s fine.” The SN site supervisor was asked if there were times when she had to change her leadership style to meet the needs of the multi-generational/multi-ethnic staff. Her response was affirmative. She indicated that there was a lady working in the cafeteria for which she had to modify her leadership style to address. She noted that the person was, “...an African American lady and she had a very hostile personality.” She noted that the individual created a few problems. She indicated that the African American staff member was negative, hostile, and had difficulty staying positive. The SN site supervisor noted that to address some of the issues with the staff member, she would allow the staff member some freedom to do things her way, if they could be supported with a good explanation. She also indicated that she had to change the way she gave corrections to the lady to avoid hostility.

The SN site supervisor responded to questions about managing and encouraging diverse groups to work together. The SN site supervisor indicated that she does several things: she makes sure all staff members are familiar with their job; she expects staff to do the job; and she expects staff to communicate with staff members and supervisors.

The SN site supervisor was also asked to respond to generational and ethnic issues that may impact a diverse SN workforce. First, the SN site supervisor was asked to note if she has experienced issues based on generational or ethnic differences, or if she has observed others experiencing issues because of generational or ethnic differences. The SN site supervisor indicated that she had observed others stereotyped as less productive, stereotyped as hard to train, and experienced conversational styles that are insensitive and critical. She has seen this in

other cafeterias within the district. The SN site supervisor did not indicate she had personally experienced issues or biases based on age or ethnicity.

The next set of questions allowed the SN site supervisor to speak directly to challenges related to age or ethnicity that have resulted in policy changes in the local SN program among staff. As it relates to generational issues within the local SN workforce, the SN site supervisor said that she has not observed any problems with age that resulted in policy changes. When asked about the issues that exist among an ethnically diverse local SN workforce, the SN site supervisor stated that she has not observed any problems related to ethnicity that resulted in policy changes. The site supervisor's perspective on this question was that problems related to diversity may not exist, because while there are ethnic differences at the local SN program, there are no language differences. She also believes that because the people can communicate, the issues with ethnic differences are minimized. When the site supervisor was probed for additional information regarding policies, she mentioned the policy regarding only speaking English during the work hours.

As the SN site supervisor responded to the questions related to training in diverse workforces, she did indicate the local school in Case Site B utilizes on-the-job training as its key method of training. The site supervisor elaborated on this response. She stated that most staff arrive at the school site already trained, based on training conducted immediately following hiring. Once staff are assigned to a specific school site, they are typically trained on the way tasks are completed at the current job site.

The final questions allowed the SN site supervisor to end the discussion with summation. She was asked about the necessary changes that should take place in her SN program. She responded that there were no changes required for this SN program to address diversity. The SN

site supervisor was asked to provide advice to other leaders who are managing and training a diverse workforce. The response to this question included other site supervisors should be sensitive to staff needs, and other site supervisors should offer open opportunities for communication.

Structured Interview with School Nutrition Staff

During the structured interview, the SN staff member for Case Site B responded to a series of questions related to generational and ethnic diversity, and the diversity climate in that SN program. The initial questions for the SN staff member were designed to get the participant acclimated to the interview process. The first two questions were basic background questions about her current position, and background information about the SN program at that school district. The SN staff member was asked to describe the working environment in her SN program. She indicated that the SN program environment was friendly, relaxed, stress free, and happy.

Next, the SN staff member was asked a series of questions related to diversity, and the diversity climate at the SN program. When asked to define diversity, the SN staff member defined it as the culture and traditions of individual workers. The SN staff member was asked if there were signs of diversity in that local SN program. She responded that there was diversity in the staff at her school site. When the SN staff member was asked to describe the diversity tone of the local SN program, she described the diversity tone as concerned, supportive, respectful, friendly, cooperative, welcoming, improving, and accommodating. When asked if she was comfortable with the overall climate of the diversity in the SN program, she responded “yes.” The SN staff member also noted that she thought that the diversity climate was good for the

working environment, and she added that the staff are not stressed at work and everyone on staff is happy.

The next set of questions focused on the personal experiences of the SN staff member, or her observations of the experiences of other SN staff members within Case Site B. The SN staff member responded to two questions about relations between the SN staff and administration and fellow SN staff members. She stated that she was treated well by administration, and that administration was not racially biased and did not practice discrimination. As she responded with regard to the way she is treated by fellow staff in the SN program, the SN staff member indicated that the staff shows respect, obeys instructions, is friendly, and is like family. When asked about personal or observed unfair treatment in the workplace based on generational or ethnic differences, she did not indicate that she had observed or experienced any generational or ethnic issues affecting staff.

The next set of questions was about organizational policies related to diversity. According to SN staff member, the current workplace policies and practices are not designed to either help or hinder people with generational or ethnical differences. The SN worker noted that all staff are taught to prioritize work, and to reorganize as needed to accomplish the job assignment.

The SN staff member responded to questions related to training in diverse workforces. Per the SN staff member, all staff at Case Site B are given trainings at the nutrition center in the district office. No additional training at the local school level was reported in this interview.

The final questions allowed the SN staff member to end the discussion with summation. The SN staff member was asked about the necessary changes that should take place in her SN program to address diversity. She responded that there were no changes needed, and that all staff

treated each other with respect. The SN staff member concluded by sharing her perception of the current leadership at the SN program, as it related to diversity. She noted that the director and supervisors at Case Site B were nice, treated staff equally, encouraged staff, provided help and support to staff as needed, and spoke to all SN staff with respect.

Diversity Field Observations

Case Study Site B had both ethnic and generational diversity represented in the site. The diversity field observations indicated that Case Study Site B ensured that workplace behaviors and expectations are clearly communicated to SN program staff. Both cultural and family-friendly policies were in place at Case Site B, including leave options and anti-discrimination policies. The SN managers were knowledgeable about how to address discrimination complaints and/or workplace harassments. In addition, SN staff members were encouraged to participate in workplace events and activities together, and were provided with developmental opportunities through trainings. Case Site B provided the researcher with the appropriate documentation to support the field observations, including a Civil Rights poster, a uniform complaint procedure policy, and a Civil Rights and complaint procedures for child nutrition programs policy.

Case Sites C, D, E, and F

Demographics

After two pilot visits, four districts of varying sizes in the Western, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast USDA regions were visited. The demographic characteristics of the school districts chosen are presented in Table 2. To protect the anonymity of study participants, school districts were designated as Case Sites C, D, E, and F in this report. School districts chosen for the case study ranged in size from a district with 7 schools and an enrollment of 3,835

students, to a large district with 187 schools and 186,785 students. Table 2 shows the average daily participation for lunch served in 2014-2015, and ranged from 2,845 in the smallest district to 81,526 in the largest school district.

Table 2

Selected Demographic Information for School Districts Chosen as Case Study Sites

Variables	Case Site C (Northeast)	Case Site D (Western)	Case Site E (Mid Atlantic)	Case Site F (Southeast)
Student Enrollment	3835	63,168	186,785	102,875
Number of Schools	11	119	187	124
Percentage of Students Approved for Free Meals	63%	42.5%	21.4%	62%
Percentage of Students Approved for Reduced Price Meals	11%	12.6%	6.2%	5%

As stated in the methods section, participants in this study shared in structured interviews. The data collected from Case Site C, and all other Case Sites (including Case Sites D, E, and F) were divided into categories: overall climate of diversity, internal and external experiences, perceptions of diversity, organization commitment, and preferences. The categories were established to capture the SN programs' environment for diversity through addressing key components of diversity climate. The categories were also utilized to facilitate discussion.

Overall Climate of Diversity

The climate of diversity is viewed as the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that define an institution. The purpose of the initial set of questions in the structured interview

were to explore perceived definitions of diversity and to identify diversity in the local SN program.

The SN program director, manager, and staff in Case Site C were asked for their opinions on the definition of diversity, the prevalence of diversity in the local SN program, and the type of diversity climate that exists in the local SN program. The definitions given for diversity by SN management and staff varied. The general themes of definition for diversity were differences among groups of people, including cultures, races, opinions, outlooks, and methodologies. Both the SN director and manager noted that diversity was present in the local SN program, but the SN staff member stated that there was no diversity in her school's SN program based on the definition she provided. According to the SN director, the SN staff at Case Site C were represented by different ethnic groups, including Haitian, Laotian, Chinese, Filipino, Puerto Rican, Serbian, Taiwanese, African American, and Caucasian. She also noted that there were different generations represented in the SN program staff, ranging in age from 20 years old to 65 years old, representing all age categories.

When Case Site D's SN management and staff were asked to define diversity, the responses varied. The SN management staff, including the director, operations manager, site manager, and site lead, provided definitions for diversity. The two common themes in these definitions were different ethnicities and nationalities working together, and a combination of ages, sexes, and different groups. None of the SN staff interviewed understood the term diversity and were unable to give a response, with most stating they did not know the meaning of the word. According to the SN director, the staff at Case Site D represented all ages, including Millennial/Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalist age groups. The SN director also noted that there were different ethnic groups on staff as well. These groups included

Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, Mexican, African American, Caucasian, Ukrainian, and Indian (Middle East).

When defining diversity, Case Site E's SN management and staff responded similarly to Site D. The SN management and staff's general definition of diversity was differences in religion, sex, origin, nationality, culture, and religion. The SN director stated that there were both diverse age groups and ethnic groups in Case Site E. It was noted that all age groups were represented in Case Site E's SN program, including Millennial/Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalist age groups. She added that there were Vietnamese, Korean, Indian (Middle East), Egyptian, African American, Caucasian, Ghanaian, Ethiopian, and Kenyan natives on the SN staff.

While Case Site F's SN management and staff defined diversity in a variety of ways, the common themes from the definitions given by SN management were different nationalities, groups of people, and cultures. Like Case Site D, the SN staff at Case Site F did not know what diversity meant, and were unable to provide a definition. The SN director and other management staff noted that there was diversity among SN staff at Case Site F, including varying age groups from 22 years old to 70 years or older, representing all generational groups. In addition to diverse generational groups, there were different ethnicities represented in the SN staff, including African American, Asian, South American, Taiwanese, and Caucasian.

School nutrition management at each case site (Case Sites C, D, E, and F) were able to provide a definition for the term diversity. All definitions were a derivative of the general statement of differences in nationality and ethnicity. Although all SN management staff were able to give a definition of diversity, SN staff members at both Case Site D and Case Site F were unable to provide a definition for diversity. As the management and staff responded to questions

of the presence of generational and/or ethnic diversity at the local SN program, all responders affirmed that both generational and ethnical diversity were present at each case site location.

The SN director, manager, and staff members responded to questions about the diversity climate of the local SN program, specifically in terms of how that environment can be described in descriptive terms. At Case Site C, the SN director's only description of the SN program's diversity climate was "improving." The SN director stated, "The prior foodservice director didn't really hire other than herself. She had problems understanding the accents." When the researcher probed for more details, the SN director added that the previous director only hired people that "looked like her." The SN director also stated, "We had an Asian employee, and she had me come in, when I was manager, and translate for her. And, she was speaking English." The SN staff member also listed "improving" as one of the characteristics of the diversity climate at Case Site C. Both the SN manager and staff listed respectful and friendly as descriptions of the diversity climate. Welcoming, supportive, and sincere were listed as descriptions of the climate of diversity at Case Site C. When the SN manager and staff member were asked how they felt about the diversity climate as they had described it, they stated that they felt "good about it" and "love it." The SN director replied that the current characteristic of "improving" did make for a good working environment. She added that for the first time, as far as she knows, the SN department currently has a Laotian/Chinese individual in management, noting that most management staff are Caucasian.

At Case Site D, the SN management were asked about the diversity climate at the local SN program. School nutrition management at Case Site D most frequently mentioned descriptions of the diversity climate as respectful, friendly, cooperative, supportive, and welcoming. Among SN staff members, the most frequently mentioned descriptions were

respectful, friendly, cooperative, welcoming, supportive, sincere, and wholesome. All SN participants were asked how they felt about having a diversity climate as they had described it. The overwhelming response from SN management at Case Site D was that the management felt “good” about the overall climate of diversity. The SN director added, “The children in our schools that are coming in are umm [sic] they are culturally diverse. Kids now, at least here in (state) are more accustomed to seeing people of all kinds of different cultures, and they want to see that come back at them. They want to be able to have someone that is familiar that shows that there are opportunities for them as well.” All management staff agreed that the kind of diversity climate they have at Case Site D made for a good working environment for the staff.

The SN staff at Case Site D were asked the same question about the diversity climate at the local SN program. The responses were different from the management team. The SN staff noted that they felt “happy” about the diversity climate as they had described it. The SN staff agreed that the current climate of diversity at Case Site D made for a good working environment for the staff.

At Case Site E, the most frequently mentioned characteristics for the diversity climate shared by SN management were supportive, respectful, friendly, cooperative, welcoming, and accommodating. The most frequently mentioned characteristic among SN staff at Case Site E was respectful. The SN management and staff were asked how they felt about the diversity climate at the SN department, and the majority response was “good.” All SN management staff agreed that the current work climate of diversity makes for a good working environment for the staff. The SN staff also agreed that the current climate of diversity makes for a good working environment for the staff.

Case Site F SN management staff were asked to describe the diversity climate in the SN program. The majority of the responses were supportive, welcoming, accommodating, respectful, friendly, cooperative, and sincere. The SN staff member responded like the SN management staff. When SN management was asked how they felt about the diversity environment of the SN program, they all said “good.” When asked if the diversity climate that they had described encouraged a good working environment for the staff, the responses were “yes.” The staff’s response to these questions was the same as the management response.

Among all case sites (C, D, E, and F), there are some descriptions of the SN program’s climate of diversity that are repeatedly mentioned. The words used to describe the climate of diversity at all sites were respectful and friendly. Cooperative, supportive, and welcoming were also terms used to describe the climate of diversity at most case sites. This information is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Defining the Diversity Climate at the Local School Nutrition Program

Description of Diversity Climate	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F
Improving	X			
Respectful	X	X	X	X
Friendly	X	X	X	X
Cooperative		X	X	X
Supportive		X	X	X
Welcoming		X	X	X
Sincere		X		X
Wholesome		X		X
Accommodating			X	X

Internal and External Experiences

Interpersonal and observed experiences related to diversity can contribute to the perceived climate of diversity. The SN program management and staff were asked a series of questions about their experiences within the SN department in relation to diversity.

Case Site C's SN department director, manager, and staff were asked about personal experiences with administrators and also with staff, either staff they manage or staff they work with. In response to the way they are treated by administration, the SN director and manager said they were treated "fine." The SN director added that the administrative staff treated her as an equal. The SN manager also noted that she was treated "with respect." The SN staff member

noted that her administrators were “all like friends.” She also noted that she could talk to her administrators whenever necessary.

The SN director and manager at Case Site C were asked how the diverse SN staff treated them. The SN director stated that the Generation X group treats her with respect, and the different ethnic groups are sincere and friendly. As far as how staff treated the SN manager, the SN manager noted that her staff treat her “fine.” She added that she was fair to all staff, and treated them with respect.

When asked how the SN director, manager, and staff felt that the staff treated each other at Case Site C, the SN staff stated that the staff respects the differences among fellow coworkers. The SN manager felt that the SN staff members treated each other with respect. While the SN director noted that the SN staff members worked well together, she did state that there have been instances where she has had to intervene in staff relations based on cultural differences.

Case Site D’s SN department management team and staff were asked about personal experiences with administrators and also with staff, either staff they manage or staff they work with. The most common response from the SN management about the way upper administration treated them was respect. Another common theme from the SN management team was supportive. When this question was asked of the SN staff, the common theme response for how administrative staff treated SN staff was also respect.

The SN department management at Case Site D responded to questions about how they felt the SN staff that they managed treated them. Respect emerged as the common theme with this question. The SN director and operations manager both noted that staff members were comfortable approaching them, because of the open door policy that they have. The SN staff

members at Case Site D were asked how they were treated by fellow staff members, and the overwhelming response was supportive.

When the SN management were asked how the staff treated each other, the common theme was that treatment of each other varies from day to day. However, the SN director and site manager were overwhelmingly positive as they provided feedback about how staff members related to each other, including SN staff members work well together and treat each other with respect. School nutrition management did add that there are segments in the staff that may treat people differently based on job status (i.e., permanent or substitute) and involvement in specified social groups, and situations that may not be related to generational or ethnic diversity.

The SN management staff at Case Site E were asked about how they felt they were treated by senior administrative staff at their school district. The overall theme of the responses from the SN management staff was respect, as seen in Case Site D. The SN staff at Case Site E were asked how they felt the administrative staff treated them, and the majority of responses noted that staff members felt they were treated with respect.

When the SN management staff at Case Site E were asked how they felt the diverse SN staff treated them, different, but positive responses were given including “with respect,” “well,” and “wonderful.” As for how the staff treated each other, the SN management noted that the relationship among staff varies from school to school. The SN director and supervisor added that when issues among staff arise, leadership in the SN department makes every effort to address staff relations, from meetings with staff to moving staff to other facilities. An example of these efforts was given by the SN director in Case Site E. The example was of an Indian SN staff member working under the management of a Chinese SN staff member. The SN director stated, “The employee did not like working with this person.” In this instance, the Indian SN staff

member did not feel that he or she could work with the Chinese SN manager. Therefore, to address the issue without losing a staff member, the Indian staff member was given the opportunity to relocate to another school.

The SN staff members at Case Site E responded to the question of how they were treated by fellow co-workers. The overall response theme was that the work groups utilized team work.

When Case Site F's SN management staff responded to the question about how the senior administration treated them, the common theme was with support and respect. When the SN staff was asked the same question, the response was "very good." The SN management also responded to how they felt the SN staff treated them, and the common theme from those responses was with respect. When both the SN management and SN staff responded to the question of how SN staff treat each other, the common themes from the responses was that they treat each other like family.

All case site participants at Case Sites C, D, E and F responded to the question of treatment between and among management and staff in the same manner as they responded to the question of diversity climate. The majority of the responses noted that upper administration and staff respond to each other in one of two ways, with respect and/or with support. These were also the most frequently reported responses for the description of the diversity climate at the local SN program.

The SN management and staff were asked to identify issues people may experience associated with age and race differences while working in the local SN program. Each person was presented with a list of potential issues, and was asked to identify if they have experienced or witnessed someone else experience those issues.

The SN director at Case Site C indicated that she had personally experienced discrimination, more specifically, reverse discrimination where she was accused of showing favoritism to Asians over Caucasians. The SN director also noted that she had observed others experience consequences for taking leave, issues with getting promotions, professional and social isolation, discrimination, unfair treatment on performance ratings/employee evaluations, stereotyped as less productive, stereotyped as hard to train, stereotyped as resistant to change, spoken to in an insensitive manner, and a lack of acceptance based on differences. The SN manager at Case Site C stated that she had not experienced any of the issues listed, but she had observed the issue of not meeting individual training needs and not providing training opportunities to some individuals. The SN staff at Case Site C did not report experiencing or observing anyone experience any of the issues on the list.

At Case Site D, the SN management identified two areas where there had been a personal experiences of bias and/or issues based on age difference or race difference. Experiences included ideas ignored by staff and leadership, and discrimination. Those personal experiences were provided by the SN directors. No other member of the SN management team had experienced any issues. The SN management team, collectively, were able to provide differences and issues they have observed others experience due to age or ethnicity. These issues included issues getting promotions, ideas ignored by staff and leadership, feelings of professional and social isolation, involvement in coworkers informal activities, harassment, discrimination, stereotyped as less productive, stereotyped as hard to train, stereotyped as resistant to change, spoken to in an insensitive and critical manner, lack of acceptance based on differences, and not meeting individual training needs or providing training opportunities. The SN staff at Case Site D were asked the same question about issues and differences experienced in the workplace. As

observed for Case Site C, none of the staff reported having experienced or observed someone experience difference in the workplace based on diversity. One SN staff member noted that substitutes may be stereotyped as hard to train, but this adverse treatment was based on the fact that the individuals were substitutes, and the kind of attitude and mentality the substitutes typically have on the job.

The SN participants in Case Site E also responded to questions about personal or observed experiences with issues on the job based on age or ethnicity. The SN management staff noted that they had experienced consequences of taking personal leave to deal with family issues, issues with getting promotions, ideas ignored by staff and leadership, unfair treatment on salary decisions, stereotyped as hard to train and resistant to change, lack of acceptance based on differences, and not meeting individual training needs or opportunities. The two frequently mentioned observed issues or differences based on age and ethnicity by SN management were consequences for taking personal leave and stereotyped as unproductive. Other issues were reported, including stereotyped as hard to train, spoken to in an insensitive and critical manner, unfair treatment on salary decisions, harassment, feeling of professional and social isolation, and involvement with coworkers in informal activities. The SN staff responded to the same questions. As observed at Case Sites C and D, the SN staff at Case Site E did not identify personal or observed experiences of issues related to age differences and ethnicity differences.

The SN management staff at Case Site F were asked if they had personally experienced issues or differences based on race or age. The SN management noted that there were some personal experiences of consequences for taking personal leave to deal with family responsibilities, issues with getting promotions, ideas ignored by staff and leadership, and unfair treatment on salary decisions. They had observed others experience harassment and of being

stereotyped as hard to train based on race and age differences. As with all previous sites (Case Sites C, D, and E), the SN staff at Case Site F did not experience or observe anyone having issues or differences because of their age or race.

Personal and observed experience of issues and differences related to diversity in the work environment were noted by SN management, but not by SN staff. The issue experienced by SN management that emerged most frequently was ideas ignored by staff and leadership. The issues most frequently observed impacting other staff were feelings of professional and social isolation, harassment, stereotyped as less productive, spoken to in an insensitive or critical matter, and stereotyped as hard to train. Stereotyped as hard to train had been observed within each of the case sites by SN management. The experienced issues and observed issues are listed and recorded in Tables 4 and 5, respectively.

Table 4

Issues and Differences Experienced by School Nutrition Management

Issues Based on Diversity of Staff	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F
Consequences for taking personal leave to deal with family responsibilities			X	X
Issues with getting promotions			X	X
Ideas ignored by staff and leadership		X	X	X
Discrimination	X	X		
Unfair treatment on performance ratings/employee evaluations			X	X
Stereotyped as hard to train			X	
Stereotyped as resistant to change			X	
Lack of acceptance based on differences			X	
Not meeting individual training needs or provided training opportunities			X	

Table 5

Issues and Differences Observed by School Nutrition Management

Issues Based on Diversity of Staff	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F
Consequences for taking personal leave to deal with family responsibilities	X		X	
Issues with getting promotions	X	X		
Limited opportunities to show leadership or become a leader			X	
Involvement with coworkers in informal activities		X	X	
Ideas ignored by staff and leadership		X		
Feelings of professional and social isolation	X	X	X	
Harassment	X	X	X	
Discrimination	X	X		
Unfair treatment on performance ratings/employee evaluations	X		X	
Unfair treatment on salary decisions			X	
Stereotyped as less productive	X	X	X	
Stereotyped as hard to train	X	X	X	X
Stereotyped as resistant to change			X	
Spoken to in an insensitive and critical manner	X	X		
Lack of acceptance based on differences	X	X		
Not meeting individual training needs or provided training opportunities		X		

Perceptions of Diversity

Case site participants were asked about their management beliefs and behaviors with respect to generationally and ethnically diverse staff. They were also asked to provide their perceived benefits and barriers to working with a diverse staff.

Case Site C's SN director, manager, and staff were asked about their perceptions of the work environment in relation to the diversity climate. Both the SN director and SN manager were asked if different generational groups required a particular management style. The SN director responded that there are some differences necessary when addressing different generations.

For younger generations, the management team must remind the younger staff that the staff members that have been in the SN program for years have earned respect. For the older generations, the SN management team has to ensure that older staff members do not mistreat the younger staff. In addition, the SN director believed that older staff must be approached with respect. When asked about differences required to manage different ethnic groups, the SN director noted that management needs are not different. The SN director added that while there was no need to manage different ethnicities in staff in a particular way, there may be a need to communicate differently with different staff members and ethnic groups. The SN manager noted that there were no differences in the way different age groups should be managed; however, she did state that occasionally the younger workers do not work as well as the older workers. When asked if different ethnicities needed to be managed differently, the SN manager said, "I don't think so."

Case Site D's SN management were also asked if different generational and ethnic groups required a particular management style. The majority replied yes, that different age

groups need a particular management style. The reasons given varied, but included younger staff have a hard time without their cellular phones at work; younger staff need more instruction and support; and older staff prefer to communicate one-on-one. School nutrition management were also asked if different ethnic groups required a particular management style. While they did not give an affirmative yes to the response, all respondents provided feedback and examples of when a different management style was needed. They included differences with the way one communicates with Muslim staff; the need to be a good listener when working with other ethnicities to break down barriers; the need to slow down speech when speaking to different ethnicities, because some ethnicities may not feel comfortable asking individuals to slow their speech; and the need to involve staff who speak a common language to translate the discussion. When SN management were asked if they had to modify their leadership style to meet the needs of the diverse workforce, the response was related to changing communication styles, as needed.

When Case Site E management staff were asked if different generational groups required different management styles, half of the SN management staff responded that there was a need to modify management styles for age differences and ethnic differences. The examples of the need to modify management style for age included the need to ensure that work assignments remained comparable for all staff, regardless of age. Moreover, the younger American staff may need more training and attention from managers to ensure that the work is done correctly. The younger staff may also need to be placed in schools that don't have other teens (like elementary schools) and in a workforce that has different age groups that could support the teenagers. As for the different ethnicities, the SN management team noted that the need for different management styles included additional training on food safety and sanitation for staff from different cultures where sanitation and food safety is not highly observed. Another example for addressing different needs

of ethnically diverse staff was the potential to move staff of different ethnicities to areas that were more suitable for their cultural/ethnic needs. Examples provided included placing Asian staff in the back of the house due to their “abrupt and non-friendly” demeanor, and placing Latino staff, who are typically “shy,” in smaller school settings, like elementary schools, to help them adapt to face-to-face communication and eye contact required for customer service.

Case Site F’s SN management staff responded to questions regarding the need for a generationally and ethnically diverse workforce to be managed in a particular way. The SN management team all responded “yes” to the need for specific managerial styles for different age groups. The SN management noted that younger staff are not dependable, don’t have strong work ethics, and may not have the work experience necessary to successfully complete the job. One SN management staff member noted that the Baby Boomer staff members are more dependable and conscientious. The older staff were noted as having diminished physical and mental abilities to complete certain tasks. When asked if there was a need for an ethnically diverse staff to be managed in a specific way, the majority of the SN management staff replied “yes.” The SN management at Site F provided instances where various ethnic groups had to be managed differently. An example given was that African men are more strong-willed and don’t want to take orders from women.

As all case site responses on whether diverse staff require specific management techniques are reviewed, several issues surface. First, most SN management acknowledged that the different generations within the SN staff do require specific management styles. These differences included consistent training and direction for younger staff. As it relates to staff of different ethnic backgrounds, the responses varied from site to site. The majority of the responses were not a direct yes. Most responses were in the affirmative by way of examples shared by

management. The overall theme for specific management needs for an ethnically diverse staff was communication. School nutrition management noted that different ethnic groups must be spoken to and listened to in a specific way, a way that is clearly defined for that ethnicity.

Case site SN management staff were asked about the perceived advantages and disadvantages of working with a diverse staff. Case Site C's SN staff listed the advantage of being in a diverse ethnic workforce is staff support, particularly among staff who speak the same language. The SN staff indicated that individuals who speak the same language as their colleagues can assist in explaining concepts, practices, or behaviors required in the SN program. When listing the advantages of working with a generationally diverse workforce, SN staff members listed knowledge and experience as a benefit. School nutrition staff members provided additional insight to the response by noting that the SN staff members who have worked in the program for longer periods of time are valuable and knowledgeable. The disadvantage of working with diverse ethnic staff was the language barrier. Issues associated with language barriers include staff misunderstanding the instructions provided to complete SN tasks, resulting in incomplete or incorrect food preparation and lost time.

Case Site D's SN staff members revealed two common themes for advantages to working with diverse staff were obtaining wisdom from older workers, and that all staff work together to complete tasks, such as younger staff members helping older staff members. The shared theme identified as the disadvantages of working with diverse staff was the language barrier. The staff members elaborated that the issue of understanding the language can be frustrating. Most staff members indicated that when English is not understood by staff members from different ethnicities, a demonstration of the requested job task is usually helpful.

Case Site E's SN staff responded to questions about the advantages and disadvantages to working with different generational and ethnic workgroups. Staff at Case Site E could not or did not identify any advantages from working with a diverse generational work group. The SN staff at Case Site E also did not provide any advantages to working with an ethnically diverse staff. While no advantages were listed during the interview, one SN staff member did note that it was good to know different cultures and to learn different customs observed by staff.

Case Site F staff members also responded to the question of the advantages and disadvantages of working with a generationally and ethnically diverse staff. Advantages shared for working with a generationally diverse staff included learning from older staff and team work, particularly with lifting and moving heavy objects. The younger staff became an asset to the older staff. Another advantage shared regarding working with diverse work groups included learning from each other. The SN staff members at Case Site F did not identify any disadvantage to working with a generationally diverse workforce. However, the SN staff members noted that some disadvantages of working with ethnically diverse workgroups is ensuring consistency with completing standard operation procedures for food preparation and sanitation. This was viewed to be particularly difficult if the SN staff member only had exposure to standard operating procedure within his or her own country.

As Case Sites C, D, E, and F are compared, there are similarities across the groups. The majority of all site staff members agreed that the advantages of working with generationally diverse work groups are the knowledge and wisdom gained from older, more seasoned staff. Specifically, Case Sites C, D, and E noted that older staff have more wisdom, knowledge, and experience. Another advantage mentioned for working with generationally diverse work groups was the team work efforts made by staff. In this instance, SN staff noted that younger staff

become an asset to older staff, because of their ability to lift and move objects within the kitchen setting. Just as there are advantages, there were disadvantages for working with diverse work groups. There were no listed disadvantages for working with generationally diverse work groups. The frequently mentioned disadvantage to working with ethnically diverse staff among all sites was the language barrier. Case Sites C and D shared that concern.

Organization Commitment

Case site participants were asked to share their thoughts about policies established in the local SN program designed to impact the diversity climate, including policies and practices related to recruitment, retention, acculturation, training, and inclusion.

The SN director at Case Site C noted that neither the school district nor the SN program have a diversity plan in place. She also noted that diversity was not a factor in succession planning for any management position. The SN director, manager, and staff all stated that there have been no workplace policies created or revised to address issues related to generational or ethnical differences among staff. The SN staff at Case Site C added that no workplace practices have been established to help or hinder people of different ethnicities or generations.

Case Site D's SN director and operations manager indicated that there is no school district wide diversity plan in place. The SN operations manager noted that in some school sites, where there have been racial tensions, there is a plan in place. It is typically related to students, and not in the support areas, such as nutrition and custodial areas. The SN director and operations manager also noted that the SN department does not have a diversity plan in place. However, there are diversity efforts in place to ensure that discrimination and harassment are excluded from the school district's culture. The SN department has not created policies beyond what the district has offered. When SN management and staff were asked about policies and

procedures related to age and ethnicity, the overall response was that there were no policies or procedures created to address issues of age or ethnic differences, and that none had to be created based on issues resulting from age and ethnicity. The SN director did indicate that there was an unwritten policy that staff must speak in English when addressing SN related matters, including food preparation and food safety. When asked about work place practices designed to help staff from different age groups and ethnicities, the overarching theme was training. When asked about the SN department efforts to integrate diversity into its succession planning, there was no indication of a plan in place. The SN director noted that the management team is diverse.

The SN director at Case Site E noted that there is a diversity policy in place at the school district level, and the some senior staff have also taken a diversity training course within the school district. The SN program also has a diversity plan in place that includes civil rights training and sexual harassment training. The supervisors and managers at Case Site E are trained to modify work environments by modifying work assignments for different ethnic and cultural workers who do not work well together. The SN director shared an incident that recently required the use of the SN diversity plan. The SN director stated, “For example, last year we said, ‘We got a problem with head covering.’ We said, ‘What are we going to do?’ ...We talked about how many schools we have the issue at [sic]. Then we met with HR... We came up with this letter of accommodation and put it in the employees lap.” This plan allowed employee who need special accommodations based on religious practices or other issues to make a special request for accommodations to meet their needs while working in the SN department. The SN director and supervisor at Case Site E noted that the majority of the policy changes made have been centered around religious and cultural beliefs, and not about age and ethnicity. The SN staff

all stated that there have been no workplace policies created or revised to address issues related to generational or ethnic differences among staff.

When asked if diversity was incorporated into succession planning for management positions, the SN director at Case Site E responded, “With succession planning, though, you got [sic] to make sure they have the qualifications... I don’t care what color you are yellow, orange, purple, polka dots, [sic] qualifications have to be first.”

The SN director at Case Site F indicated that there was no diversity plan in place at the school district level or in the SN program. When asked if diversity was integrated into succession planning for the SN program, the SN director noted that the SN program management team was already diverse. When SN management staff members were asked about workplace policies that address generational diversity, the most common response was related to policies created to address the use of cell phones and cell phone accessories. In addition, SN management mentioned policies created for the proper wearing of false eyelashes and fingernail polish. These policies appeared to impact the younger SN staff. There were also decisions made to modify training to accommodate the needs of older SN staff members. School nutrition management noted that these modifications included developing step-by-step procedures, and modifying the standard operation procedures. When SN management members were asked about workplace policies that address ethnically diverse staff needs, it was noted there had been a specific change in the meal applications in the school district. The SN department created Spanish-language meal applications for the local community. The SN department encouraged Spanish-speaking management staff to translate for or to communicate with parents who were completing the applications. Also, SN management allowed Spanish-speaking staff to speak in Spanish to other staff as needed.

The SN staff at Case Site F were also asked about policies and workplace practices centered on diverse staff. As for workplace policies and practices for generationally diverse staff, the SN staff noted that younger staff members assist older staff members with moving heavy items. Additionally, SN staff members noted that there are practices in place to help staff who have difficulty understanding required tasks, including working closely with the staff and providing hands on training, as needed

A few similarities appeared among case sites as it related to the diversity plan. First, only Case Site E has a diversity plan in place at the district level and within the SN program. Secondly, none of the schools have diversity as an official part of the secession planning process. Thirdly, two sites (Case Site D and F) have unwritten policies to allow staff to speak English only on the job, but allow staff to speak in their native tongue, as needed, to explain work related tasks.

Case site participants were asked about training opportunities to ascertain if training policies and procedures created a positive or negative impact on the diverse staff. Questions were also created to determine training best practices.

The Case Site C SN director, manager, and staff all agreed that training in the SN program was typically done as on-the-job training. There were some instances of training that happened in group settings. These trainings were offered as demonstrations or meetings with handouts and/or electronic media, including videos and PowerPoint presentations, and were presented by the director and/or site manager. When asked to rank the trainings received at Case Site C on a scale of one to five, the response from SN management and staff was from three with a comment of “...in the middle... Training is just the starting point,” to five with a comment of, “We learn a lot from them.” The SN director and manager noted that there is no evaluation given

to ensure that the staffs' learning needs are being met. When asked if the staff is given the opportunity to identify their specific training needs, the SN director noted that the staff can come directly to her and make a request. The SN manager indicated that she had not experienced any staff needing specific training methods. The SN staff member replied that while all staff speak English, if there is a need to translate information, it was done by other SN staff.

Case Site D's SN management and staff noted that a variety of training materials and methods are used to train SN staff including, on-the-job training. The SN staff and management noted that handouts, demonstrations, PowerPoint presentations, video, and interactive learning methods were used to conduct trainings. There are different levels of training offered at this site, including annual training for all staff, which consists of face-to-face small group trainings and monthly meetings with staff hosted at individual school sites. When asked to rank the trainings received at Case Site D on a scale of one to five, the SN management staff, including the director, operations manager, site supervisor, and site lead, ranked it a three with various reasons given for the score, including the inability to reach every individual based on their specific learning needs and language barriers. The SN staff ranked the trainings at a five. The SN staff were also asked to rank the trainings based on the trainings meeting their individual learning needs. Again, the SN staff ranked the trainings as a five. All trainings are conducted in English. The SN management were asked to indicate if the SN staff were able to evaluate trainings, and the overwhelming response was "no." When asked if the staff were given the opportunity to identify their specific training needs, the SN management noted that the staff were not routinely asked if they had specific needs. The SN site manager at Case Site D stated that the staff have the ability to express their needs during a meeting as needed.

Case Site E trainings are both created in-house and created by other companies. The SN management staff noted that a variety of training methods are used, including short trainings with pictorial illustrations, handouts, video, demonstrations, and pictorial steps for recipes. The SN management noted that visual aids are the most utilized method with pictorial illustrations because of the success in using pictorials. Per the SN director, some of the training materials and information are translated into different languages. When staff responded to the question about the languages of the trainings, they noted that the trainings are conducted in English. Both the SN management and staff noted that if there is a need to communicate trainings in a different language, it is acceptable for staff to translate the message.

When SN management and staff were asked to evaluate the trainings offered at Case Site E in terms of meeting the training needs of the diverse staff, the average rating of the trainings was four out of five. The majority themes for the reasons the trainings are rated at a four was based on the use of pictures to explain processes and procedures and the use of short trainings. The SN staff were also asked to give an overall rating to the trainings and the response was five out of five.

The SN management at Case Site E also responded to the opportunities staff are given to evaluate trainings and share specific training needs. As it relates to evaluating training to see if it meets the learning needs of the SN staff, the SN management noted that some trainings are piloted in schools and revised based on participant feedback. Other comments included the fact that trainings are evaluated based on successes and failures within school sites. This is typically determined at administrative review. When asked if the SN staff have the opportunity to provide managers with what their specific training needs are, the SN management noted that staff are given the opportunity to communicate their needs on comment cards distributed during the

annual meetings. Additionally, staff have the option to speak to the managers about their training needs.

The SN management at Case Site F noted that trainings for the local SN programs utilized materials that have been created by other institutions, as well as personalized training created by SN management. Most trainings for Case Site F are conducted at the central kitchen and are held twice per year. These trainings include electronic media (including PowerPoint), demonstrations, hands-on experiences, classwork, and discussion. The materials included visual images and step-by-step instructions. The SN management and staff noted that all trainings were given in English. When asked to rank the trainings for meeting the SN staff's needs on a scale of one to five, the SN management's average rank was four. The reasons for ranking the trainings at a four varied by participant, but included, "...we give them all the tools that they need" and, "...teaching background... easy for me to convey the message." When SN staff were asked to rank the trainings, the average rating was five. The reasons for the rating varied from "fun" to "good way to learn."

The SN management at Case Site F also responded to the opportunities staff are given to evaluate trainings and to share specific training needs. As it relates to evaluating training to see if it meets the learning needs of the SN staff, the SN management noted that annual training evaluations are available online, and staff can offer suggestions throughout the evaluation. When asked if the SN staff have the opportunity to provide managers with their specific training needs, the SN management noted that staff members are given the opportunity to communicate their needs directly to managers.

The overall response from case sites indicates that training is taking place at each site. Sites are utilizing various means of delivery for the trainings. When SN management was asked

to rank the trainings in terms of meeting the needs of the SN staff, the average response was 3.5. When staff were asked to rank the trainings base on meeting their needs, the average score was five. While only half of the sites noted the use of evaluation tools to access trainings, all sites stated that the staff could approach management to make suggestions or specific request regarding individual training needs.

The management staff were asked to respond to questions about attending trainings on managing or educating a diverse workforce. The trainings could have been given on the local, state, or national level. These questions were intended to determine if SN management members were exposed to any best practice information regarding managing a diverse workforce.

Case Site C management staff stated that they have not attended trainings on educating and managing a diverse staff. When asked if this type of training should be made available to SN program managers and directors, they both responded in the affirmative. The SN director added that sessions should include “have to have patience with people with different languages,” “understanding that not everyone was raised like you were.” When asked if there are specific resource needs to train diverse workforce, the SN director at Case Site C stated that the materials should be presented in different languages.

Both the SN director and SN operations manager in Case Site D responded that they had been involved in training related to managing and/or educating a diverse staff. Other management staff at Case Site D had not been involved in any diversity trainings. When asked if the local, state, and national conferences should create sessions on the topic of diversity, the majority responded “yes.” The SN management staff members were also asked what the sessions at the local, state, and national level should entail. The major response theme for this question was communication across cultures. When asked if there are specific resource needs to train a

diverse workforce, the SN director and operations manager stated that there should be a skeletal diversity training addressing communication among groups.

Case Site E management staff stated that they have not attended training on educating and managing a diverse staff outside of the district trainings. When asked if this type of training should be available at the local, state, and national level, the majority response was yes. The SN management staff added that sessions should include information on how to create a friendly work environment, and how to address issues that may surface in diverse workgroups. When asked if there are specific resource needs to train a diverse workforce, the SN management members stated that there should be case studies for managers, and training material containing familiar faces and diverse images.

When Case Site F's management staff were asked about attending trainings on managing and training a diverse staff, the responses varied. The upper level SN management, including the SN director and nutrition coordinator, noted that they had attended some form of training for working with diverse groups. They indicated that the trainings they received have encouraged them to modify their own training styles to include being more demonstrative, and to utilize teaching materials in different ways to ensure that all learning needs are met. When SN management members were asked if training on managing a diverse workforce should be made available to SN program managers and directors, they all responded in the affirmative. The common response theme for a session topic was communication. When asked if there are specific resource needs to train diverse workforce, the SN management at Case Site F noted that the resources should include information on different cultures (including communications, treatment, differences), English as Second Language, and employee material translated into different languages.

All the case site participants from Case Sites C, D, E, and F responded to the questions about trainings for a diverse workforce. Half of the sites had one or more staff, indicating that they had participated in a diversity training course at the local, state, or national level. When all the site participants were asked if training for working with diverse workgroups was needed, the majority responded in the affirmative. The SN management were asked for suggestions on topics that could be covered at a diversity workforce training course. The common theme for suggested workshop training topics was communication across cultures and ethnicities.

Preferences

Case site participants were asked to provide their preferences regarding developing a positive diversity climate at the local and national level. When asked if there are things that the SN program leaders need to do to encourage respect and inclusion among a diverse workforce, the SN staff member at Case Site C noted that there were no changes for SN program leaders to make. The SN staff member indicated that any changes should come from within the SN workforce, such as minimizing personal issues while on the job. When asked if there are things that the SN program leaders need to do to encourage respect and inclusion among a diverse workforce, the SN staff member at Case Site D, like the one at Case Site C, did not suggest any changes. At Case Site E, the SN member staff noted that the SN management does a good job encouraging respect and inclusion among the diverse staff, and did not suggest any changes, as indicated by both Case Sites C and D. When asked if there are things that the SN program leaders need to do to encourage respect and inclusion among a diverse workforce, a SN staff member at Case Site F responded “treat us... the way they want to be treated.”

None of the SN staff at Case Sites C, D, E, and F provided insight into optimal methods for management to institute inclusion, or to garner respect for diverse staff.

The case site participants were asked to share any necessary changes that could be made at the local SN program level related to diversity. The SN director at Case Site C noted that there should be more acceptance of different ethnic and generationally diverse staff. The SN manager and staff felt that everything at the local SN program is doing well and does not need to change. At Case Site D, the SN operations manager suggested development of a diversity plan for the SN department. The SN director suggested continued efforts to stress the importance of communication. As for the SN staff at Case Site D, one staff noted that there was a need for translation of some courses and training materials. The SN management and staff at Case Site E responded that there was no need for changes to be made at the SN department, because they were already “on the right path.” The SN management member at Case Site F responded that the local SN program could benefit from developing materials to assist managers in communicating with diverse populations, and in identifying resources available for staff.

All SN management staff at each site were asked to provide advice and feedback to other managers in regard to managing and training diverse staff. This was done in an effort to ascertain best practices in the area of managing and training a diverse staff.

The SN management members at Case Site C were asked to provide advice to other management on best practices for managing a diverse staff, and the responses were, “Learn about different cultures,” “Don’t let the resistant people stop you,” “Be fair,” and “Treat everybody the same.” In addition to providing advice on managing a diverse staff, SN management at Case Site C were also to provide advice on best practices for training a diverse staff. Case Site C participants responded that management should get training materials in other languages and have a translator available as needed.

The SN management at Case Site D were asked if they were asked to provide advice to other management on best practices for managing a diverse staff. The overarching response was related to developing good communication skills, such as listening to staff, asking questions of staff, and being mindful of how you speak to staff. In addition to providing advice on managing a diverse staff, SN management at Case Site D were also to provide advice on best practices for training a diverse staff. Case Site D management staff noted that SN directors and managers should be willing to try different teaching methods, including using multi-lingual staff to conduct the training. They also advised that management should not be “afraid to try new things.” The SN management staff responded that training materials should be provided in other languages, and that a translator should be available, as needed.

When the SN management staff members at Case Site E were asked to provide advice on managing a diverse staff, some of the responses included understand staff needs, be a good listener, create a new hire presentation, stay open minded, be flexible, be patient, be sincere, always be happy, be positive, seek training through classes and professional reading, stay abreast, and find good resources. When asked to provide advice on training a diverse staff, the responses included customize your trainings, train and retrain staff, utilize other staff to train, be flexible, be patient, be clear and make sure staff understands instructions, understand the needs of your staff, and be a good listener.

When the SN management staff at Case Site F were asked to provide advice on managing diverse staff, the common theme was be patient, know your staff, and be aware of other cultures. Additional responses included be open-minded, spend time with staff, provide clear instructions, and offer hands-on activities. When asked to provide advice on training diverse staff, the

common theme was to identify the staff's skill and the ability to then work on improvements. Other responses included be patient, know your staff's history, and be observant.

Best practice information was gathered for both managing and training a diverse staff. The SN management members listed several best practices for managing diverse work groups. A few best practices were repeated among all case sites. The commonly listed best practices for managing a diverse staff were listen to staff, know your staff, and be patient with staff. The SN management member also listed a variety of best practices for training a diverse staff. Of those provided, a few were commonly listed among all sites, and included offering translated SN program materials for all trainings, utilizing multi-lingual staff in training as needed, knowing your staff's needs, and being patient.

Diversity Field Observations

Diversity observations were conducted at each case study site. The observations were conducted to identify evidence of diversity in action at the local SN program. The researcher looked for printed materials, policies, and procedures that would further describe the diversity climate in the SN program. The researcher also looked for physical evidence of the diversity climate by observing human resources and human behavior.

In Case Site C, the policies and procedures noted were workplace behavior, and expectations clearly communicated to staff. Additionally, the workplace had anti-discrimination clauses. As for the printed materials and interpersonal interactions among staff, the researcher observed an internal diversity initiative at a local elementary by means of multi-lingual signage around the campus. Moreover, the multi-ethnic staff was observed working well together during meal service.

In Case Site D, the SN director and SN operations manager provided evidence of policies and procedures directly related to diversity values, human dignity efforts, nondiscrimination efforts from the local and federal level, a grievance process based on discriminatory activity, recruiting diverse staff, and multicultural awareness. Multi-ethnic staff at Case Site D were observed working cohesively. To address the diverse learning needs of the staff, images of proper preparation and presentation of menu items were posted in the preparation area at the nutrition center for all staff to review. The multi-ethnic SN staff were successfully working together.

In Case Site E, the SN director provided evidence of policies and procedures on the SN programs diversity strategy, action plan, and other policies. These policies included a uniform employee health and hygienic standard pamphlet to address standard uniforms required by the SN department at Case Site E, and a workforce diversity compliance policy created at the district level. The SN director also provided the researcher with training materials for staff to meet various learning needs. The materials were written in English, and provided visual aids to demonstrate what was explained in English. Additional training materials were also provided, all of which addressed cultural diversity among SN department staff. These materials included a handout for staff, titled, “Understanding a Multicultural Work Force,” which included information on culture characteristics, a handout on hand washing with four different languages on the handout in addition to English, and a safety tips sheet that included four different languages on the handout in addition to English. Moreover, there was a training manual titled, “Increasing Multicultural Awareness,” created by and for the SN program at Case Site E. Other evidence of diversity being the culture of Case Site E’s SN program included images of multi-ethnic children on the wellness policy pamphlet, the use of words and pictures to explain

job tasks and responsibilities posted in the work areas, a hand washing sign with the words “Wash Your Hands” written in 23 different languages displayed above the sinks, and multiple signs throughout the facilities with cartoon character images of children of different ethnicities entitled, “Everybody Smiles in the Same Language.” The researcher also observed multi-generational and multi-ethnic groups working together at the school site.

In Case Site F, there were numerous signs of diversity observed in the SN department and out at the local SN program. The SN director provided information regarding SN staff attending workplace diversity training and awareness sessions during orientation. In addition, the SN director noted that there were development opportunities available for all staff. The researcher observed a diverse staff working cohesively at Case Site F. There were also images of diversity prominently displayed in the SN department, including one with the caption “Together” on it. The image on the “Together” poster depicted the hands of people from different ethnicities stacked one on top of the other. In addition, there were images posted in the local SN department with directions for hand washing. Posters for proper hand washing were located in the SN department at the local school. The posters were created to meet the different learning needs of the staff, and included a pictorial example of proper hand washing step-by-step.

All observations yield evidence of diversity within each case site. The diversity climate during the site visits were similar to what the staff and management described in the interview process – respectful, friendly, cooperative, welcoming, and supportive. All sites had visible displays of diversity in plain view.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project was to explore issues and challenges associated with managing an ethnically and generationally diverse school nutrition (SN) workforce. The research objectives for this study were the following: identify the perceived advantages to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce; identify the perceived barriers to managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce; explore optimal methods for staffing an SN program in a generationally and ethnically diverse labor market; explore optimal methods for leading a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce; explore optimal methods for training/developing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce; and explore other issues associated with managing a generationally and ethnically diverse SN workforce.

The results from each of the case site interviews provided similar themes that exist in each SN program. It can be concluded that diversity is viewed by the four SN case sites as cultural and ethnic differences. Other elements of diversity such as gender and religion were also listed as sources of differences. Consistently, the participants viewed the local SN program as a diverse environment with a variety of ethnicities and generational groups being represented, in addition to other diverse characteristics. Moreover, the case site interviewees provided feedback that the local SN program had made efforts to create and maintain positive diverse environments for the local SN management and staff. The common held beliefs about the overall climate of diversity among all of the case sites was that these climates represented respectful, friendly, cooperative, supportive, and welcoming environments for all staff. The evidence of this described climate of diversity was also apparent among staff and management on a more intimate basis. SN management and staff indicated that they were treated by upper level SN or

school district administration with respect and/or support, thus offering a translation of the climate of diversity from the global perspective through to the individual perspective.

Although the overall climate of diversity was viewed as positive, the interviews yielded some areas of concern as it relates to treatment of SN staff and the manifestations of bias based on ethnicity or age. The SN management staff tended to report experiences with issues and discrepancies in treatment of staff with generational or ethnical differences rather than SN staff. In particular, SN management reported most frequently they experienced their ideas being ignored by staff based on either their ethnicity or age. The SN management also reported witnessing others experience feeling professionally and socially isolated, being harassed, being discriminated against, being stereotyped as less productive and hard to train, and spoken to in an insensitive or critical manner because of ethnicity or age. Previous studies documenting bias experienced by minority and foreign-born faculty working in different settings corroborate these findings (Price et al, 2005).

There are some possible explanations as to why SN management were able to report issues and biases with the treatment of generationally and ethnically diverse work groups and SN staff were not. First, the SN management may have been more aware of what happens within the SN department because all SN staff grievances were reviewed and addressed within the SN management team. Secondly, it is possible that the road to leadership was filled with exposure to various individuals with different ideologies. Therefore, SN management may have had to personally overcome generational or ethnic obstacles to progress to the level of management in the SN program. Finally, SN management may have been better suited to respond to the question of biases among ethnically and generationally work groups because of job security. The SN management have a level of job security that SN staff may not. It is possible that the level of

confidence that there would be no repercussions related to responding to questions asked in the interview process empowered SN management to speak honestly about diversity issues in the local SN program. As we look at explanations as to why SN staff did not report issues or biases based on age or ethnicity while working in the SN program, several thoughts come to mind. The first thought is that SN staff may have been unwilling to share negative experiences for fear of exposure or adverse consequences for speaking out about personal or observed experiences with biases in the workplace. Another thought is that SN staff may not have fully understood the questions being asked and therefore were unable to respond correctly. In either instance, these concerns remain. Are SN staff really providing a true glimpse into the climate of diversity in SN programs in terms of the way individuals are being treated in local SN programs? Can interviews offer enough anonymity to allow individuals to be honest about what they are experiencing in multi-ethnic and multi-generational workforces? Is the overall climate of diversity in these organizations so positive that the underlying issues related to generational and ethnic diversity, observed and experienced by SN management, were being disguised?

Multiple commonalities were identified among case sites related to the advantages and disadvantages for managing generationally and ethnically diverse SN staff. Common themes for the benefits of managing diverse staff included wisdom and knowledge gained from working with older, more seasoned staff, as well as the team work exhibited between younger and older staff. Common themes for the disadvantages of managing generationally and ethnically diverse staff included the need to provide additional training and supervisory oversight for younger employees, and the need to mediate language barriers among ethnically diverse staff. The issue with communication among ethnically diverse staff is one disadvantage that surfaced in other diversity based research, thus supporting these findings (Tuz and Gumus, n.d.).

The SN management and staff interviewed also shared common responses with regard to policies created to foster an environment of diversity at each site. Three of the four case sites did not have a written diversity plan in place at the district level or in the SN department. Two of the sites either had written or unwritten policies centered on diversity. These policies involved the unwritten requirement for staff to speak English only during work time (observed in at least two sites) and an official accommodations policy to meet the changing needs of diverse staff (observed in one site). None of the sites have diversity planning as a part of the secession planning process within the SN department.

The SN management provided optimal methods for managing, leading, and training diverse staff. The optimal methods for managing and leading generationally and ethnically diverse staff included increased awareness of diversity within the SN program, creating and maintaining a diversity plan for the SN program, providing leadership with tools for effectively communicating across cultures and ethnicities, and practicing patience and fairness among staff. This finding supports a recent study conducted by Price et al. (2005) that revealed suggestions to improve diversity climate included increasing leadership awareness of their own attitudes and behaviors toward minority faculty and increasing institutional leadership commitment to improving the diversity climate. The optimal methods for training generationally and ethnically diverse staff include offering training materials in different languages, utilizing multi-lingual staff for trainings, understanding staff ethnicities and cultures, and being patient with multi-ethnic and multi-generational staff. A portion of this finding was substantiated by research done with employees of immigrant Hispanic arboriculture workers. Employers of non-English speaking workers expressed concerns that language barriers exist between migrant workers and other staff. The employers listed non-English written training materials as one of the best tools to

use in training non-English speaking workers (Ricard, R., Legrand, A., Hirsch, D., & Gabany-Guerrero, T. 2008).

The site visits and interviews with SN management and staff were helpful in creating a safe atmosphere to discuss this sensitive topic. However, the feedback provided in this study offers an insufficient amount of information regarding optimal methods to lead and train a diverse SN workforce. This may be due in part to the nature of the discussion, the ethnicity of the interviewer, the desire for SN staff to say what would not warrant further discussion by SN management, and the lack of understanding that all responses provided during the interview session would be confidential. Because of this, making definitive suggestions for improvements, or modifications to the current diversity environment of any SN program, would be difficult, at best.

Limitations of the Current Study

While the results of this study may provide insight into diversity practices and the diversity climate in SN programs and school districts across the United States, the data collected is limited to the perceptions and information shared by the expert panel members and stakeholders at the six case study sites. It is possible that the results from this study would be different if different school districts were used for the study. In addition, this study is a case study design requiring face-to-face interviews with SN management and staff. The information gathered in this study may be more aptly received if collected anonymously.

Implications for Generationally and Ethnically Diverse School Nutrition Programs

School nutrition and school professionals participating in this study provided the following recommendations for diversity best practices:

- Manage a diverse SN workforce by being an active listener, by knowing your staff and their needs, and by being patient with you SN workforce; and
- Train a diverse SN workforce by offering training materials that have been translated into common languages held by your staff, by utilizing multi-lingual staff during training as needed, by knowing your staff and their training needs, and by being patient with you SN workforce.

Recommendations for Additional Research

The information from this multi-phase case study could be used as baseline information for future studies. More research could be conducted to:

- Identify the true impact of a diverse workforce on managing and training efforts in the SN program; and
- Use information from this study and future research projects to develop best practices, training, and resources for SN professionals interested in creating a diversity plan for their SN program to include secession planning, meeting the training needs of generationally and ethnically diverse staff, and best practices for managing and leading diverse staff in the SN program.

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