

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Partnerships for Children and Families Project

Reports and Papers

2-2003

Understanding and Preventing Employee Turnover

C. Harvey

Wilfrid Laurier University

Carol Stalker

Wilfrid Laurier University, cstalker@wlu.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/pcfp>



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Harvey, C., & Stalker, C. (2003). Understanding and preventing employee turnover (Rep., pp. 1-29). Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, Partnerships for Children and Families Project.

This Finding a Fit: Family Realities and Service Responses Series (2003, 2007) is brought to you for free and open access by the Reports and Papers at Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Partnerships for Children and Families Project by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

Partnerships for Children and Families Project

**Understanding and Preventing
Employee Turnover**

C. Harvey
C. Stalker

February 2003



Understanding and Preventing Employee Turnover

The Importance of Understanding Turnover	2
The Roots of Turnover	3
A Simplified Model of Turnover Research.....	3
Theoretical Innovations: The Unfolding Model and Job Embeddedness	6
The Unfolding Model.....	6
Job Embeddedness	9
Preventing Unwanted Turnover.....	10
Recruitment and Selection.....	11
Orientation.....	13
The Maintenance or Ongoing Phase	14
Termination Phase	15
Conclusion	16
Appendix 1	24
Appendix 2.....	26
References	28

The Importance of Understanding Turnover

Child welfare agencies have identified worker turnover as a particularly problematic organizational issue. For example, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto recently reported that annual turnover among its family service workers tripled from 1997 to 2000 and intake worker turnover increased from 10 to 18% during the same period. In addition, many front-line workers transferred to other positions in the organization as those became available (Coulthard et al., 2001). This same study cites other reports of turnover in child welfare agencies identifying annual turnover at 40% and higher among family service workers. In children's mental health agencies, anecdotal information suggests that turnover is also an issue for residential care services.

Do people decide to leave child welfare and children's mental health organizations because of the work itself, because of the workload, or because they find "success" difficult to experience? Departing employees often give these types of reasons for their decisions to leave. However, research on turnover demonstrates that deciding to stay or leave is a complex process not easily captured in a brief exit interview or letter of resignation. To develop a comprehensive understanding of why turnover takes place in these organizations, this chapter looks at the roots of turnover in organizations generally and in child welfare and children's mental health organizations in particular.

Turnover is costly to organizations and high turnover radically escalates those costs. Costs are related to the money spent in recruiting, selecting, and training new staff. But there are other costs too: the costs borne by a child or a family who lose, at a minimum, a sense of continuity with a worker; costs related to the impact on coworkers of seeing a valued colleague leave; the costs of the increased workloads assumed by others who must do more until a replacement is found and up-to-speed; and the costs of losing the knowledge and skills that extensive experience creates.

Managers use turnover levels as indicators of organizational well-being. They assume that low turnover (in combination with other indicators such as low grievance rates and absenteeism) means that employees are satisfied with their work and their working conditions. On the other hand, managers know that high turnover generally means that something, or many things, are going wrong. Managers may examine their organization's recruitment and selection procedures, its pay and recognition practices, its design of particular jobs, its training and development systems, how its managers interact with their staff, whether people have the resources to do their jobs, and so on. Managers do this in a search for the answer to a problem and sometimes err in the solution because they assume a single cause rather than a complex interweaving of multiple factors. This chapter will demonstrate that turnover is a result of organizational factors that managers can control plus some that they cannot, for example, economic factors and characteristics of individual employees. All these play a role in a person's decision to voluntarily leave an organization.

Research on unwanted employee turnover has produced thousands of articles. We begin by exploring a simple model of turnover in organizations. We discuss recent innovations in theories about how unwanted turnover occurs and conclude with several suggestions for preventing turnover in human service organizations.

The Roots of Turnover

We begin our discussion of the roots of turnover by briefly defining the type of turnover we are interested in. Then we describe some highlights in the history of turnover research before turning our attention to focus specifically on a simple model of how turnover happens that we have developed from the findings of recent reviews of this literature. We conclude this section with some current innovations in thinking about the decision processes individuals use when choosing to leave an organization.

Employee turnover is measured at the organizational level. It is defined as the number of people who leave an organization, either voluntarily or through managerial action, over the course of a year, calculated as a percentage of the number of employees in the organization. Turnover within an organization is also often measured by work unit (department, division) or by position (intake worker, receptionist, youth worker).

The research on employee turnover distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary turnover. Involuntary turnover occurs when a person is fired, laid off, or retires at the age specified by the organization or legislation. Voluntary turnover is viewed as the employee's choice, although researchers acknowledge that some "voluntary" turnover is anything but, since some people who leave an organization are responding to management pressure. Others decide to leave because they are dissatisfied in some way with their current position, or because a spouse is relocating, they return to university, have a child, and so on. Therefore, some voluntary turnover is beyond the organization's control, while some may be preventable if organizations understand its origins. We are primarily interested in voluntary turnover, or turnover initiated by the individual, in this discussion.

A Simplified Model of Turnover Research

Voluntary turnover research began with work on understanding the impact of job attitudes¹ on employees' behaviours at work. Steers and Mowday traced the history of researchers' interests in job attitudes. They noted that, in a 1955 review of which job attitudes might be related to subsequent employee turnover, Brayfield and Crockett found that low job satisfaction was correlated with higher turnover. The relationship was not a strong one, suggesting that there was a lot more that led to turnover than simply whether one was satisfied with one's job or not (Steers & Mowday, 1983).

March and Simon (1958) moved beyond looking at simple one-to-one relationships between a job attitude and a single behaviour to examine the state of theories about the structure of organizations and how people working in organizations behave. They proposed that a person's *decision to participate* in an organization was the result of a complicated rational process. They concluded that a desire to leave an organization is a result of both individuals' satisfaction with their jobs and their perception of alternatives for creating more satisfaction within the organization. Further, they saw satisfaction as a product of (1) the fit between a person's self image and the job's characteristics, (2) the predictability of the work environment, and (3) the compatibility of work requirements with those of other roles that a person occupies. A dissatisfied person might see an option within the organization for a transfer to another, more attractive position or might

¹ Job attitudes are evaluative thoughts and feelings about various aspects of a job or the employing organization that develop as a result of employment.

want to leave. Before a person could actually leave however, March and Simon proposed that they had to find a viable alternative to their current position. This would be more likely (1) in good economic times, (2) when many other organizations are “visible” alternatives, and (3) when the person’s own characteristics make them more attractive to another organization (for example, they are relatively young) (March & Simon, 1958).

Notice that March and Simon pointed to factors at several different levels affecting an individual's decision to stay or leave an organization. These include characteristics of the individual, the job itself, the person's non-work life, relationships with others in the organization, the reward and decision-making systems in the organization, the external economic environment, and of the labour market.

March and Simon's model of turnover set the stage for decades of research that sought to capture all the factors that lead to job satisfaction and to turnover. There are thousands of articles that attempt to tease out the relationships among what seems to be an ever-increasing number of variables under consideration. Most of this research has been done in business and large public-sector organizations, although the researchers' conclusions have generally been supported in the relatively small number of studies in human service organizations.

Figure 1 shows the types of antecedents to turnover and the relationships among them that researchers have studied. This figure and Table 1 below reflect (but greatly simplify) the conclusions of several recent reviews of the turnover literature, notably the reviews by Barak, Nissly, and Levin (Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001), Hom and Griffith (Hom & Griffith, 1995), Griffith, Hom, and Gaertner (Griffith, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000), Irvine and Evans (Irvine & Evans, 1995), Kossek and Ozeki (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999), Lease (Lease, 1998), Lee, Carswell, and Allen (Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000), and Wai Chi Tai, Bame, and Robinson (Tai, Bame, & Robinson, 1998). In addition, several recent studies that focused on human service organizations were consulted and their conclusions are incorporated. Interested readers are encouraged to consult the original sources for the details of this research. Some of the most relevant sources are briefly profiled in Appendices 1 and 2.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Figure 1 shows the antecedents of turnover organized into five categories: characteristics of individuals; factors that are a part of the job itself and how it is done; factors that relate to the organization and its practices and procedures; job attitudes (especially job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and states (job burnout) that develop as a result of the interaction of personal, job and organizational factors; and individual behaviours and intentions that are viewed as more immediate, or proximal, to actual turnover.

Generally, researchers view the relationships among the types of turnover antecedents working in the following ways. Individuals bring to their workplace a set of characteristics consisting of personality and demographic features, friendships, family, and non-work responsibilities. These provide the ingredients for both personal support and work conflict, and a degree of affinity for their current occupation. People become members of a workplace that has its own characteristics. These workplace characteristics are organized into factors related to the particular job an individual

performs and factors that are imbedded in the organization as a whole. Job factors include the degree of freedom or autonomy that a person has to make decisions, how challenging the job is (job scope), the degree of role clarity, overload and conflict present, and the degree of support provided to do the job. Organizational factors consist of established human resource management policies (for example, pay and benefit rates and promotion practices) and cultural elements (for example, leadership style and justice practices), as well as some externally determined attributes such as the organization's reputation.

Some organizational factors, such as leadership style and culture, influence how specific jobs are designed, so the model shows an arrow from organization factors to job factors. For example, formal, hierarchical organizations such as a bank or a government department often define their jobs in extremely clear, narrow ways creating jobs with low autonomy, high role clarity, and close supervision.

As the model indicates, individuals respond to the features of their jobs and their organizations. They develop job attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and psychological states such as job burnout. When individuals feel low job satisfaction, low commitment to their organization, or high burnout, they may form high intentions to leave their jobs. So job search behaviours, such as preparing a résumé, begin and, ultimately, actual turnover is the result. Thus, the model is an overview of how individuals' experience of their job and its organizational context combine to create attitudes that may ultimately lead to turnover.

Figure 1 illustrates a simple model, simple because it does not include the myriad of variables, interactions, and feedback loops that researchers have pursued. While exploring these in detail is beyond the scope of this chapter, we examined the reviews of the turnover literature (see Appendix 1) to create the following table that summarizes the authors' conclusions about the factors that influence turnover.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 1 lists the antecedents to turnover that have been investigated by researchers, organized by the same five categories as in the earlier figure. Most of the individual, job, and organizational variables do not directly affect turnover intentions. Instead, they have their major impact on job attitudes or psychological states as the model shown in Figure 1 indicates. Many of these variables have a very slight impact on actual turnover, while others are more significant. In the table, an asterisk indicates those variables that researchers have found to be more strongly related to turnover intentions or actual turnover.

Considerable evidence shows that, across a wide variety of occupational groups, the best predictor of actual turnover is turnover intention. Since the next best predictors of turnover are organizational commitment and overall job satisfaction (see, for example, Hom and Griffith, 1995; Griffith et al, 2000; Lease, 1998), research has tended to focus on discovering the list of individual, job, and organizational factors that predict organizational commitment and job satisfaction. As you can see, there are many variables that are related to turnover and to job attitudes, often in intuitive ways. For example, low opportunity for promotion is related to higher turnover, as is low work group cohesion and high work-family conflict (Hom and Griffith, 1995). These variables

are significantly related to low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment, which are, in turn, related to higher intentions to leave a job.

Researchers who have conducted their studies in human service organizations have looked at some factors that are of particular interest to them (Appendix 2). For example, Hatton and Emerson (1998) found that public respect for the job workers were doing was related to turnover. Baker and Baker (1999) concluded that perceived differences in ideology among workers affected their commitment to the organization. In human services organizations, job stress or job burnout may also be a relatively strong predictor of turnover (Barak et al., 2001; Barrett et al., 1997).

Most research on turnover and its antecedents examines just one or two parts of the model we described above. As a result, we know quite a lot about, for example, the influence of equitable rewards on organizational commitment and about the importance of autonomy or control to professionals in determining job satisfaction, but we still cannot predict actual turnover with much certainty. In fact, a close look at the empirical findings reveals that the accuracy with which one can predict voluntary turnover is actually quite low. As Lee et al. point out, Hom and Griffeth's (1995) comprehensive meta-analysis demonstrated that the "proportion of variance shared by levels of satisfaction and turnover is 3.6 percent, and the proportion shared by intention to leave and actual leaving is 12 percent" (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999).

Obviously, we must acknowledge that research focusing only on understanding job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and so on is not advancing our knowledge of why individuals might decide to stay with or leave an organization. However, this research has been indispensable in improving our understanding of how managers can create workplaces where high job satisfaction and organizational commitment are commonplace. We will use this understanding later in our discussion about how child welfare and children's mental health managers can prevent turnover. Now, we turn our attention to describing a promising new theory of the decision process used by people to determine whether to leave a job. Awareness of this process can lead to more opportunities to reduce organizational turnover.

Theoretical Innovations: The Unfolding Model and Job Embeddedness

The Unfolding Model

In 1994, recognizing that current ways of thinking about antecedents to turnover were not leading to significant contributions, Lee and Mitchell proposed an alternative theory they termed the "unfolding model." According to Lee et al. (1999), most previous turnover theories assumed that a rational choice process precedes employee resignations. That is, the process begins with low job satisfaction, leads to searching for, evaluating and selecting another job, and quitting only when one has accepted another job offer. The difficulty is, Lee and Mitchell observed, it doesn't always happen this way. People who are very satisfied with their jobs also leave them, prompted by some event. These events have different attributes, that is, they may be positive or negative, expected or unexpected. Some people even quit without searching for another job (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Prompted by this puzzle, Lee and Mitchell conducted informal interviews with people who had left their jobs and spent "many hours in conversation and debate" (Lee and

Mitchell, 1994). The unfolding model they propose asserts that the previous research on turnover had focused on only one path that people follow, and that there are at least three other possible scenarios.

Two concepts or constructs are crucial to understanding the unfolding model. The first of these is “shock”, which is “a particular, jarring event that initiates the psychological analyses involved in quitting a job” (Lee et al., 1999, p. 451). A shock can be positive, negative or neutral; expected or unexpected; and internal or external to the person experiencing it. Unsolicited job offers, transfers, firm mergers, changes in marital status, a poor performance evaluation, and admission to graduate school are all examples of shocks. Following Beach’s image theory which posits that people make decisions by assessing the “fit” between the options before them and their images of themselves, “that is, to their values, goals and plans for goal attainment” ((Beach, 1997), the unfolding model proposes that when people encounter a shock, they evaluate it in the context of their own experience and make a decision about what to do.

Some people, in reacting to a shock, find and resort to a “script” for their response. This is the second important concept in the model. A script is a preexisting plan of action based on a person’s prior experience, on observations of others in the same or a similar situation, on reading, or on perceived social expectations. It serves as a decision rule in the situation. We will use examples to illustrate these two concepts in action as we describe the four paths leading to turnover in the unfolding model.

In the first example, a social worker is responsible for the outcome of a particularly challenging and successful case conference attended by employees of several agencies. A manager from one of the other agencies approaches the worker to ask her to consider a supervisory position that has been vacant in his organization for some time. They chat about the position over a spontaneous lunch meeting. The offer flatters and shocks the worker, who thinks it over quickly and accepts later that afternoon. The worker searched her memory for any experience of similar shocks and quickly found that a similar request had led to her taking her current job. So, in this instance, there was a shock, a ready script to enact, but there was also no job dissatisfaction, no image violation, nor search for other alternatives. This type of turnover decision represents Lee and Mitchell’s Path One in the unfolding model depicted below (Lee and Mitchell, 1994).

Path One: Shock → Script? → Yes → Quit

In Path Two, the shock leads to an image violation and reconsideration of the employee’s attachment to the organization. After some thought, the employee leaves the organization without searching for alternatives. Consider this example: a social worker swears angrily and loudly after a phone conversation with a client. He is completely surprised and appalled with his reaction to his client. He has never done this before and experiences a shock at his own behaviour. When he thinks about what he has done, the image of himself as an easy-going person who can handle almost anything is violated, and he reconsiders whether he wants to work at this agency. He types his resignation, thinks about it overnight, and hands it in the next day before leaving for home.

Path Two: Shock → Script? → No → Image Violation? → Yes → Quit

In Path Three, the shock and image violation lead to lower job satisfaction, which leads to a search for and an evaluation of alternatives. If this leads to the perception that another option fits with the person's image, the employee resigns. For example, a family services worker receives a call from a police officer informing her that the child in a family with whom she was working has been killed by his mother. One result of this call is that the worker evaluates her own perception of her competence. Despite reassurance from her supervisor and others on her team, she judges herself incompetent and becomes very dissatisfied with her job. She begins to look for another position and eventually receives an offer from a community mental health organization. In this job, she would be working with adults experiencing problems in their workplaces. She feels that doing this would fit better with her goal of helping others improve their lives and she resigns from her current position.

Path Three: Shock → Script? → No → Image Violation? → Yes → Reduced Job Satisfaction → Search → Alternatives? → Yes → Image Fit? → Yes → Quit

Path Three could also be entered through a positive shock. For example, if we use the situation described in path one where there is an unsolicited job offer, but there is no ready script, then path three could unfold with a focus on the social worker assessing whether the position offered fits better with what she wants than does her current position or some other option. Job dissatisfaction could be relatively small in this case.

In Path Four, there is no shock and therefore no script is engaged. Here, employees engage in a periodic evaluation of whether the job and the organization continue to meet their needs. Over time, of course, both organizations and people change, so this sporadic check is a thoughtful assessment of whether the fit with image is continuing or not. If not, the image violation leads to lower levels of satisfaction, then to lower organizational commitment, job search, alternatives, intention to quit, and turnover. This is the path that has been extensively explored by turnover researchers (as has the part of Path Three from reduced job satisfaction onward). Lee and Mitchell (1994) label this path Four B. Realizing that some people behave differently once they realize they are dissatisfied with their job – they just quit, without searching for other alternatives, Lee and Mitchell designated this shorter path as Four A.

Path Four A: Image Violation? → Yes → Reduced Job Satisfaction → Quit

Path Four B: Image Violation? → Yes → Reduced Job Satisfaction → Search → Alternatives? → Yes → Image Fit? → Yes → Quit

The paths take different lengths of time to unfold. Paths one and two move quickly, in days or weeks, whereas paths three and four can take a very long time. In the latter case, dissatisfaction may take a long time to build. In paths three and four, the search for and evaluation of alternatives, including non-work options, can also take a long time (Mitchell, Holtom, and Lee, 2001).

Mitchell, Holtom, and Lee summarize the empirical support for the unfolding model (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). They report on five studies (for details, see (Lee et al., 1999; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Eraz, 2001) that used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. These studies found that most people leave organizations via path three (52% over three samples) or path four B (30%), taking time to search for other alternatives and assess an image fit before quitting their current

positions. Five percent left following path one, 6% path two, and 7% path four A. Notice that this means that 63% left following some initial shock, and that about 18% left without searching for an alternative. Job dissatisfaction plays a role in 95% of decisions to quit, although it is an initiating factor in just 37% of the situations examined in this collection of studies. “In combination, these data help to explain why the traditionally studied variables of job dissatisfaction and alternatives aren’t strongly predictive of turnover. A lot of people leave without alternatives or as a result of some shocking event that may not be associated with job dissatisfaction”(Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001).

Hom & Griffeth (1995) called the unfolding model a “refreshing new perspective,” and point out that the unfolding theory also gives greater attention to the origin of the turnover process, which has been neglected by earlier theories. Others have begun to test the unfolding model in their research. For example, Somers and Birnbaum (1999) and Somers (1999) have found some support for this new way of thinking about turnover.

Job Embeddedness

Their explorations of the unfolding model to understand why and how people leave organizations led Lee and Mitchell and their colleagues to discover the opposite -- why people stay. They created the concept of *job embeddedness* to explain staying in organizations (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee et al., 2001; Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

Mitchell and Lee (2001) state that there are three factors comprising job embeddedness: “1) the extent to which one has strong attachments to people or groups on-the job and in their community; 2) the extent to which they fit or are a good match with their job and community; and 3) the degree to which they would have to give up or sacrifice things if they left their job. We label these factors: links, fit, and sacrifice” (Mitchell and Lee, 2001, p. 35).

Links are the formal and informal connections a person has on or off the job with other individuals or groups resulting in a “web of attachments” that range in number and importance. For example, the importance of work relationships with co-workers, management, supervisors and unions have all been mentioned as having an effect on turnover intentions by researchers. Some reports also discuss that family relationships impact turnover decisions and others say that non-family links (church, recreational) are also important. Mitchell and Lee (2001) believe the number of links put pressure on a person to stay, and, beyond numbers, that family and friends bring normative (“should”) pressures to bear on a person considering leaving a job.

Fit is “an individual’s compatibility with their work and non-work settings” (Mitchell & Lee, 2001, p. 37). On-the-job fit has been studied for decades. Turnover increases when people see that they do not fit their job, organization, or their occupation (Kristof, cited in Mitchell and Lee, 2001). They assess fit along a number of dimensions, including climate, values, problem-solving style, and congruence with supervisors’ perceptions of culture. Mitchell and Lee (2001) propose that off-the-job fit is also important and discuss ideas such as fit with the cultural and recreational life of a city.

Sacrifice is viewed as “the things that someone must relinquish or give up when leaving a job. It is the perceived loss of material or psychological benefits that currently are available or will be available in the future” (Mitchell & Lee, 2001, p. 39). They

acknowledge that a part of this concept is captured in the continuance dimension of Meyer and Allen's organizational commitment scale and that research has shown that giving up salary and benefits to move elsewhere reduces turnover, but they have a broader conceptualization of sacrifice. In conceptualizing factors in sacrifice, Mitchell and Lee include job stability and future opportunities such as training and promotion; the investments people have made in understanding how their current organization works both formally and informally; and the extent to which people feel that they, their strengths, weaknesses, and desires, are known to others, enabling them to function more smoothly.

Off-the-job sacrifice is significant when an individual considers relocating to obtain a new position. A person might lose the community links built up over time, possessions, and investments in the community. Additionally, if relocation is not a factor, people may need to change their work schedule, commuting time, and so on.

So, where do the unfolding model and job embeddedness connect? Mitchell and Lee say that job embeddedness affects how the unfolding model develops. For example, in an exploratory study, Mitchell and Lee (2001) found that highly job embedded people who experience shocks have fewer plans (scripts) about leaving than those who are less embedded in their organizations.

Both the unfolding model and job embeddedness seem to have much to offer researchers seeking to add to our understanding of the process of how people come to decide to leave their organizations or to stay with them. Combined, these two advances also add to how we can structure our thinking about management strategies for avoiding the turnover of valued employees. For example, what actions can a manager take to increase the job embeddedness of a new employee, so that if this person experiences a shock he or she will be less likely to leave? We turn our attention now to the task of preventing unwanted turnover.

Preventing Unwanted Turnover

Every organization needs some turnover: marginal employees may see that they don't really fit or may be fired; people retire; people relocate. This turnover is functional. It enables an organization to renew and revitalize. On the other hand, unwanted turnover in human service organizations affects the quality of services through a lack of continuity of care to service users and a lack of adequately trained staff. It also places extra demands on managers to recruit, integrate, and train new staff (Hatton & Emerson, 1998).

The amount of attention and resources an organization should devote to avoiding unwanted turnover depends on how much this type of turnover is taking place and on how costly it is to the organization. For example, fast food outlets do not spend a lot of effort on reducing their typically high turnover. New employees are readily available since these organizations are entry points to the workforce for young people wanting their first jobs. Also, the training required to do the jobs is minimal, so the cost of turnover is relatively low. The situation is very different in child welfare and children's mental health organizations where there is often a shortage of qualified applicants and the time to train a new employee can be significant.

For the suggestions we make below for reducing unwanted turnover, we will draw on three sources: our reviews of the literature that identified antecedents to turnover; the recent work of Mitchell, Lee and their colleagues, particularly Mitchell and Lee (2001) and Mitchell, Holtom and Lee (2001); and on the accumulated body of knowledge on recommended human resource management practices. To help organize our recommendations for reducing turnover, we will use the typical human resource management cycle that begins with the recruitment of new employees, continues through the management processes designed to maintain people as valued workers, and ends with the termination of an employee.

Recruitment and Selection

Let's begin with a common scenario compiled from experiences related to us by employees in human services organizations.

Organization A has had a few workers leave lately and needs to hire three replacements. It advertises in the local paper for "social workers (BSW or MSW) to work in child welfare". A human resources employee screens the applications received for the quoted credentials as they come in and passes on to a supervisor the résumés of qualified applicants. When the supervisor has time, she enlists a worker to assist her and the two of them sift through the résumés looking for people who stand out in some way. They search for someone with previous experience in child welfare, but most applicants are new graduates or are working part-time in another sector.

They find eight people and call them for an interview. Six weeks have passed since the ad was first placed. Two people have already secured other full-time positions, one person says he really only wants to work part-time, and five agree to interviews.

The supervisor finds another worker to help with the interviews, since the first worker says she just cannot take more time away from her clients to do interviews. The two of them get together over lunch and plan a series of questions to ask the applicants. They meet with the candidates and ask most of them most of the questions. When they review their impressions, they find they can quickly agree on one person who was very talkative, confident, and pleasant. They found one other person each that they did not like at all and agreed to eliminate them. They listed some pros and cons for other two candidates and decided that they should be offered positions -- other agency workers were asking when they would be getting some relief from overtime and their high caseloads.

Six months later, the first person hired had left by mutual agreement. He had overstated the depth of his experience and was reluctant to seek help when working with complex cases. Within three months, the supervisor knew he was not going to become competent, despite his disclaimers that he was "as good as anybody". On the other hand, the supervisor found to her surprise that one of the other hires was absolutely wonderful. The final person hired had quickly returned to her part-time position in another agency, shocked that she immediately had to take on new cases and handle them completely on her own.

Unfortunately, this type of scenario is too common. People who are well trained in their professions but ill trained in how to select an employee must do hiring under immense pressures to find someone quickly to fill a position. They have an unclear picture of the

type of person they are looking for, and limited assistance to develop the tools needed to do this difficult task well. Predictably, the outcome is an unhappy one for many. However, an organization can take steps to improve how it chooses its new employees and reduce the turnover caused by poor recruitment and selection practices.

The hiring of a new person begins with accumulating two different types of knowledge, one about why people are leaving, and the other about the characteristics of those who stay and flourish in the position. Information about why people are leaving is gathered best through exit interviews (see the discussion in the section on Termination below).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

For the second type of knowledge needed before recruiting (see Table 2, a summary of our suggestions at each stage of the human resource management cycle.), management must devote time to understanding the attributes of people who flourish in the position being filled. A good strategy is to identify two to five people who enjoy the job and do it well. The key questions are: What knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics contribute to these people being able to perform exceptionally well? Which of these are absolutely required in a new person? Which can be added through training or other means after hiring?

Once the description of the model candidate is clear, the challenge is to determine how these attributes can be measured during the selection process. Some, such as a knowledge requirement gained from an earned degree are easily gleaned from a résumé. Others, such as the ability to work cooperatively with others, or the ability to appropriately solicit support, are more difficult to assess. A well-designed interview, particularly a structured one², is crucial, as is asking the candidate to undertake a work sample (actually do a client interview, or respond in detail to a hypothetical situation). Conducting a thorough reference check is also essential. Some personality or other testing may also be done. For example, conscientiousness has been demonstrated to be related to both higher levels of performance and lower rates of turnover (Barrick & Mount, 1991). It is certainly an important attribute in this documentation-driven time in human service organizations and can be reliably measured.

Just as important as describing the model employee, is the training of those who will be involved in evaluating the candidates. The temptation for human services professionals is to assume that, because they interview people all the time (as clients), they know how to conduct a selection interview. Interviewers need to know the critical attributes of the model candidate and they need to discuss how these will be assessed. They need to prepare or review the interview schedule and talk about how they will work together in an interview and subsequently to decide on their evaluation of the candidate (if more than one person will be involved at the same time).

In our opening example, the supervisor seemed to have no clear idea what characteristics she was looking for or how she would evaluate them. She was surprised with the success of one of her hires and with the failure of another. If her manager were

² A structured interview, also known as a behavioural interview, is one that follows a predetermined set of questions designed to explore the candidate's previous experience through examples of behaviours relevant to the current position requirements. "Give me an example of a time when you sought advice from your supervisor about a difficult case", is an appropriate question versus, "Do you ask for advice?" which is not.

evaluating her hiring success as one of her performance criteria, the supervisor would be motivated to examine her skills in this area and to improve them. Of course the organization itself should periodically review its own overall success rate and make changes to its processes as well.

Management needs to decide which parts of the process should be carried out by human resource professionals, and which need to be done by supervisors and co-workers. The more specific and detailed the position description and the job advertisement is, generally the more screening can be done by a human resource staff member.

All of this preparation takes time, but it is necessary to design effective recruitment and selection processes. In periods like the present, when turnover rates in child welfare organizations are very high, it is tempting to move quickly and "go for the warm body" who has some basic qualifications. This strategy is shortsighted -- it costs more in training, support, mistakes, in reduced morale in others who continue to carry more of the load, and, ultimately, it costs in additional unwanted turnover.

At some point during the selection process, the candidate must be told what the job is really like and what it is like to work in the organization. This *realistic job preview* reduces turnover by increasing the probability that the job will match the candidate's expectations and that the organization's culture and values will match as well. The preview should outline both the positive and negative aspects of the job and working in the organization. Interviewers should describe a typical day, discuss specific tasks and types of interactions, the challenges usually encountered by new employees, and how the organization facilitates new employees' integration and learning.

Once the reference checks are done and a hiring decision made, it is time to make an offer to the candidate. The candidate will look for signs of equity and fair dealing throughout this process. Make an attractive offer that highlights aspects of the work that the individual will find appealing. Since the offer process often goes through many stages, management should try to keep the candidate fully informed and welcomed throughout. Doing this will have an impact on the sacrifices a person will perceive when thinking about leaving the organization (refer back to the job embeddedness model described earlier). This step will begin to establish some norms around how the organization behaves and expects its employees to behave during a formal interaction.

Because the decision to hire a specific person is an organization's first opportunity to influence subsequent turnover of that person, we have spent a lot of time in this section discussing a hiring process. A well-designed and executed recruitment and selection process will reduce shocks related to unmet expectations and ensure a better fit with the organization's values and culture, while building an initial commitment to the organization in the new employee.

Orientation

The process of integrating the new person begins with orienting them to the policies, procedures, and practices of their new organization and their specific position. It also begins with introducing them and linking them to managers and co-workers. This stage can be lengthy if the job is quite complex and a lot of learning and training is involved. A mentor can often help a new employee make sense of the organization. The mentor

should be an experienced employee (not a supervisor/manager) who exhibits the values and attitudes that the agency wants to encourage in its new employees. The mentor helps integrate the new person by providing a sounding board, by anticipating questions, concerns, and reactions, and by letting the new hire know "how things are done around here." Learning very difficult jobs is often easier when an inexperienced person has a model to observe. Mentors can perform this function or new employees can "shadow" an experienced worker as part of their training before taking on their own, independent cases.

Mentors and managers can both offer organizational scripts that the new person can use when encountering new situations to avoid these being experienced as shocks leading quickly to turnover. These scripts can take the form of what to do or what to think when "X" happens. Easing new hires into their role and supporting them through training, mentoring, and a lot of opportunity to ask questions and share concerns is essential during the initial phase of employment.

As the new person begins to "settle in" to the job, the manager/supervisor should be both encouraging and challenging. They need to encourage the new person to ask questions, to explore and test the boundaries of accountability and responsibility, and to identify any specific training and support needs. They need to challenge the new person to perform difficult, achievable tasks, to work productively and cooperatively with others, and to solve problems that arise. The manager should provide timely, accurate feedback on performance and share the formal and informal organizational rules and norms. This is the time when the organization's values around performance and its treatment of its employees are communicated. New employees' fit with the organization, their understanding of the sacrifices they might make if they change jobs, and their links to others in the organization are being established through this stage and their job satisfaction and organizational commitment increase.

The Maintenance or Ongoing Phase

During this phase of employment, individuals focus on doing the job well and on the rewards they get for doing the job. Here, too, is where job dissatisfaction and lower organizational commitment can intrude when their antecedents are present. The challenge for organizations during this phase is essentially an organization design challenge, requiring the effective design of all human resource management systems (reward and recognition, training and development, and performance management systems). As well, the organization's design of its own structure, the definition of jobs, accountabilities and responsibilities, and the provision of adequate resources to do the jobs are all involved. The culture and norms of the organization, especially as these relate to the treatment of employees, also come into play.

We can refer to our earlier review and to Mitchell and Lee's models of job embeddedness and turnover for advice on the design of organizations to minimize unwanted turnover. For example, we know that role conflict is associated with increased turnover. Can the job be designed to reduce role conflict? If not, can the supervisor intervene to offer better ways to deal with the conflicts before the situations escalates to the point where some new event constitutes a shock or the continued experience leads to reduced job satisfaction? If a shock is felt, can the supervisor offer an alternative script, or some other incentives to someone considering leaving?

This phase is rich with opportunities for management to design an organization that meets the needs of its employees while achieving its mission. Encouraging a work-life balance (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001), and strong employment relationships (Lowe & Schellenberg, 2001) increase the links that Mitchell and Lee consider important while also increasing the list of sacrifices that turnover could create. Providing contingent rewards (money is not necessary, but recognition is!) demonstrates that good performance is important and that strong performers are noticed. Having employee assistance programs acknowledges that the work can be stressful and that the organization wants to be helpful and supportive. Offering flexible hours, different types of employment contracts, and extended leaves can all relieve stress, work-life conflicts, and burnout. Competent, caring supervisors and managers provide role models and support. The list is almost endless.

The emphasis in this, the longest stage in the human resource management cycle, is on developing and encouraging the employee's achievement as an exemplary worker, and on appropriately and personally recognizing that achievement.

Termination Phase

Exit interviews with departing employees, using the unfolding model described earlier as a guide to the type of questions to ask, can provide the organization with critical information. For example, ask the person leaving questions about whether they experienced a shock or an image violation and what type it was ("Was there a particular event or experience that prompted your resignation? Have you been thinking about leaving for a long time?"). Ask whether they had a script in place and whether there was an opportunity for management to intervene with re-framing the situation ("Was this an inevitable decision when "X" happened? Is there anything we could have helped you with or anything we could have done to encourage you to stay?"). Ask whether the employee had another offer, or was leaving without an alternative in place, whether, again, there was an opportunity to intervene with some new incentive to stay (more rewards, different or more flexible hours, more supervision and support, an internal transfer, and so on).

The point of the exit interview is to gain as much information as possible about how management can make internal organizational changes to affect the variables over which it has some control. For example, in the case described in the introduction to this section, where a new employee quits soon after starting, a simple change might be for the agency to clarify its expectations of a new employee. Or the agency might decide to modify its practice of having new workers immediately take on their own cases independently.

During this exit interview, there is also an opportunity to gather some understanding of any characteristics of individuals themselves that may be related to turnover. These latter characteristics can form the negative part of the description of a model candidate, that is, the type of candidate to avoid hiring. For example, the overconfidence and reluctance to seek support displayed by another person in our example could be qualities that interviewers screen against. Some of this negative information can also be gleaned by talking to both the people who made the hiring decision and to the individual's supervisor.

Throughout these suggestions for preventing turnover we have emphasized the creation of effective human resource systems and processes. Our ideas may seem difficult or expensive to put into practice in child welfare and children's mental health organizations. However, an organization considering how to approach its own turnover issues can analyze which parts of the system might benefit the most from implementing changes. For example, by looking at the relationship between individuals' tenure and turnover, one might see that people tend to leave within the first two years of employment. In this case, the focus should be on understanding why (through exit interviews) and then making the appropriate changes to recruiting, selection, or orientation systems. Creating an understanding of why your best people stay through this period can also inform any needed changes.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, our understanding of why turnover happens in organizations is still evolving despite a great deal of attention by researchers over the past 50 years. We know that an individual's decision to leave an organization is a result of both personal and organizational factors. From the research that has explored the relationships among personal, job, and organizational variables and turnover, we know that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are important determinants of individuals' intentions to leave or stay with their employer. In human service organizations, such as child welfare and children's mental health agencies, burnout or emotional exhaustion also seems to be a factor in determining turnover intentions.

This research has enabled us to identify many of the correlates of high job satisfaction, high organizational commitment, and low burnout, and suggests several strategies that human service organizations can employ in the design of these organizations and in the selection, development, and treatment of their employees. We have described many of these in this chapter and these strategies have become recommended practices for contemporary child welfare agencies.

The recent theoretical innovations of Lee and Mitchell (1994) have added both to our understanding of how people make decisions to leave organizations and to how human service organization managers might intervene in that decision process. Their hypothesis that people often have "scripts" that indicate how to behave when positive or negative "shocks" occur suggests opportunities for managers to influence these scripts. For example, a proactive human resource department could design an orientation program that anticipated many of the shocks that a new child welfare worker might encounter and recommend ways of reacting to those shocks. Similarly, if longer tenured employees felt "embedded" in their agencies, their first resort in the face of an unexpected event might be to talk to a trusted colleague. In both cases, unwanted turnover could be averted.

While the research has taught us much about the antecedents to turnover and about prevention strategies, there is still more to learn. As we noted earlier, most studies were done outside the human services sector and the relationship of burnout to organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and to actual turnover is not well understood. More research is needed that focuses specifically on these questions in human service organizations. As well, studies that examine the impact of human resource strategies such as those suggested by the unfolding model (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2001) need to be undertaken.

Human service organizations do have an advantage over many business organizations. Their staff is typically extremely committed to the organization's purpose. Building on this *commitment to purpose* to the point that it becomes commitment to the organization takes energy, time, and a reflective approach to management. The return for this effort is ultimately in benefits to the clients and to the community that employees serve. We have demonstrated that turnover has many roots – some of these are strong contributors to high levels of turnover, and others are weaker determinants, but still add to the cumulative effect. Much research has been done, but more studies, based on new ways of understanding the processes that culminate in turnover will increase our ability to reduce turnover. Our hope is that this chapter has increased awareness of the conditions that lead to turnover, and has stimulated readers to think about how human service organizations can avoid becoming fertile soil for the roots of avoidable turnover.

Figure 1

A Simplified Model of Voluntary Turnover

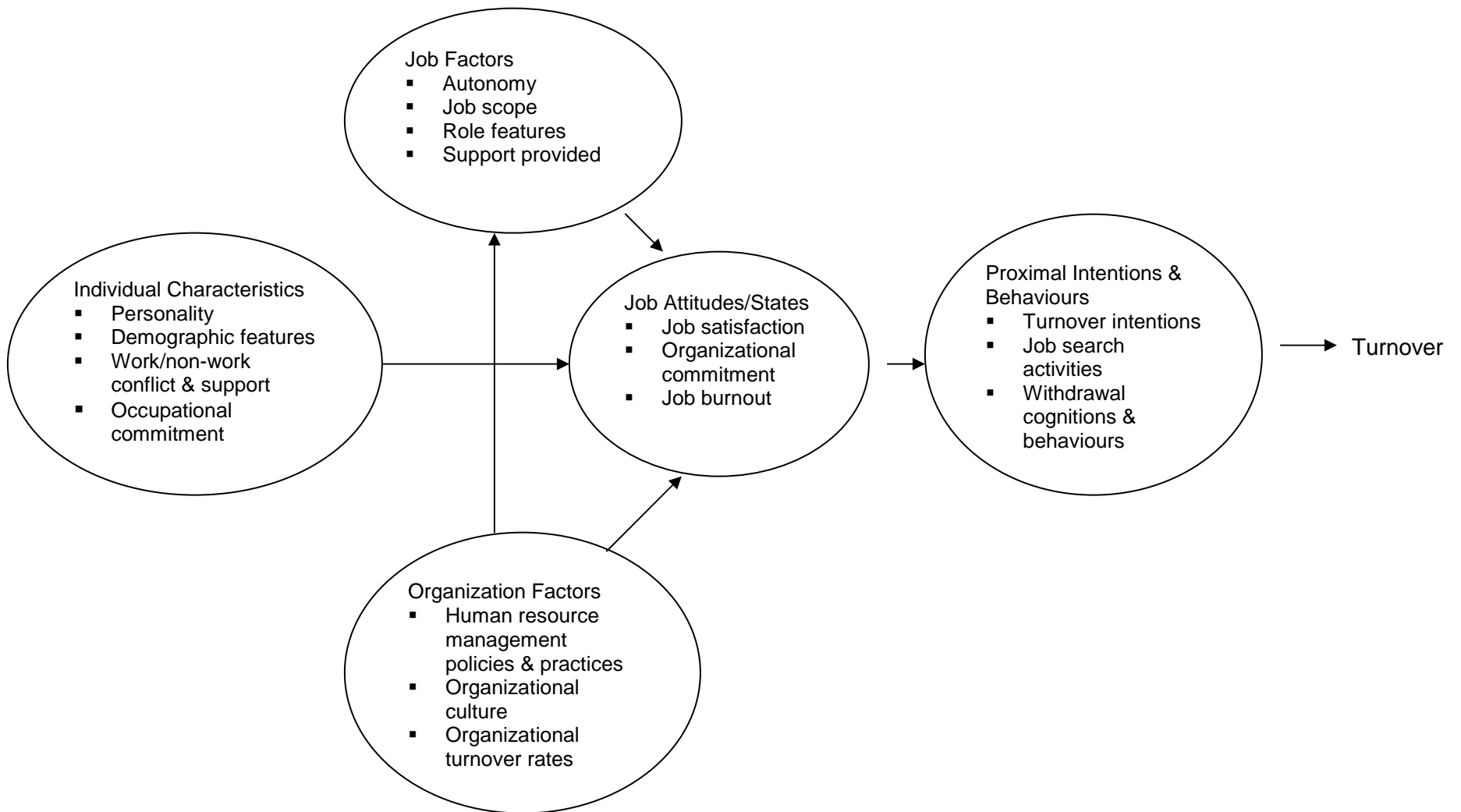


Table 1
A Summary of Individual and Organizational Variables Related to Turnover³

Individual Factors	Job and Organization Factors	Job Attitudes/States	Proximal Intentions and Behaviours
Personality Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive affectivity(High) ▪ Conscientiousness (High) ▪ Agreeableness (High) Demographic Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dependents/Kinship responsibility (High) ▪ Tenure (High) ▪ Career stage ▪ Age Conflict and Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work-non-work (family) conflict (High) ▪ Supportive family and friends (Low) ▪ Community embeddedness (Low) Occupational Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occupational commitment (Low) ▪ Occupational turnover intention (High) Scripts* (see section on the unfolding model)	Job Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonomy (Low) ▪ Role clarity (Low) ▪ Role overload, conflict (High) ▪ Job scope (High challenge and complexity vs. routinization) ▪ Work group cohesion (Low) ▪ Coworker support (Low) ▪ Supervisory support (Low) Organization Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human resource management policies and practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility (Low) • Corporate day care • Competitive pay rates • Contingent rewards • Competitive benefits • Promotion practices (Unfair) • Mentoring ▪ Distributive, interactional , & procedural justice (Low) ▪ Promotional opportunity (Low) ▪ Promotion satisfaction (Low) ▪ Leadership culture ▪ Organizational turnover rates* (High) ▪ Public respect (Low) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job satisfaction* (Low) ▪ Organizational commitment* (Low) ▪ Job burnout* (High) ▪ Image violation* (High) ▪ Job embeddedness* (Low) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Turnover intentions* (High) ▪ Intention to stay* (Low) ▪ Job search activities* (High) ▪ Perceiving alternatives* (High) ▪ Withdrawal cognitions* (High) ▪ Withdrawal behaviours* (High) (lateness, absence, performance reduction)

³ An asterisk indicates a strong relationship of the antecedent variable to actual turnover or turnover intentions. The other variables listed here are significantly related to one or more job attitudes or states. Descriptors such as low or high refer to the variable's relationship to actual turnover or turnover intentions. For example, low autonomy is related to high turnover intentions.

Table 2
Avoiding Turnover through the Design of Human Resource Management Systems

When	What	How	Why
Recruitment and Selection Before recruiting	Define the right person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify current (or previous) position holders who perform the job exceptionally well. List the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes of the ideal candidate. ▪ Determine the qualities that you absolutely must have on hiring and those that can be added through training or other means afterward. Include attributes associated with low turnover (e.g., conscientiousness, values fit) as long as these do not violate local labour regulations (e.g., hiring on the basis of marital status or the number of dependents). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maximize the potential for job fit ▪ To reduce the possibility that the person hired will not be able to do the job.
Before selection	Design the selection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine how the critical attributes will be assessed -- consider using personality tests, and work sample tests. ▪ Create interview questions that will enable interviewers to evaluate critical attributes -- consider using a structured interview or a standard process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To create a process that will be a reliable and valid assessment of each candidate while avoiding a potential mis-hire.
	Train interviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the critical attributes and how they will be assessed. ▪ Provide an outline of the process/questions to use. ▪ Discuss how individual evaluations will be combined if more than one interviewer is used. ▪ Consider including, as a measure of their own performance, interviewers' hiring success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To minimize the potential for a "gut feeling" only decision.
During the selection process	Realistic job preview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe a typical day on the job. Outline the specific tasks and interactions required in the job. Provide details about the amount of time required in different tasks. ▪ Include a description of the amount of support available to a new, versus continuing, person in the position. Describe the organization's culture and norms. ▪ Provide opportunities for a candidate to meet people in the job or people with whom an incumbent would interact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To reduce the potential for shock when the job turns out to be different than expected.
During the selection process	Reference checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use questions related to critical attributes and be sure to check any concerns that have arisen during the selection process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.

When	What	How	Why
Making the offer	The offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make it attractive! State any non-financial incentives that may be uniquely appealing to the candidate, for example, access to on-site day care. ▪ Make the process easy! Set out who will do what by when to build confidence in the organization on the part of the new employee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To begin building the list of items that will become difficult to sacrifice on leaving the organization. ▪ To demonstrate how formal interactions with the organization will occur.
Orientation Orienting the new employee	The initial orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide information about formal policies and procedures. Describe expectations and support, including initial training. ▪ Introduce the new employee to co-workers, supervisors, and managers. ▪ Assign a mentor for the initial period. ▪ If the employee is new to the community, provide information and links to local services. ▪ Fit the length and intensity of the orientation to the complexity of the job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To begin establishing the links, the fit, the sacrifices. ▪ To develop trust in the organization and affective commitment to it. ▪ To minimize the potential for shock that the reality of this organization does not match its promises. ▪ To provide the new employee with scripts to use on encountering the unexpected.
	The "settling-in" phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage the new person to ask questions and to explore the boundaries of the job. Help new people identify how their values fit with the organization. ▪ Provide challenging, achievable tasks and supportive feedback. Identify and provide for ongoing training needs. Discuss "how things work around here" and how to solve problems that arise. ▪ Provide opportunities to engage in team/task force activities. Facilitate links with others in the organization and community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To continue building links, fit, and sacrifice. ▪ To create job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

When	What	How	Why
Maintenance Phase	Developing permanence through reward, recognition, development, and performance management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify those you definitely want to stay and train, transfer, or terminate others. ▪ Design your human resource management systems and your organization to reduce known antecedents to turnover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To maximize ongoing job embeddedness. ▪ To minimize the potential for shock, image violation, and the development of job dissatisfaction and reduced organizational commitment.
Termination	Exit interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the reasons for unwanted turnover, using the unfolding model as a guide for your investigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To add to the list of characteristics defining the model employee. ▪ To improve the design of the organization and its systems, especially its human resource management systems.

Appendix 1

Reviews of the Turnover Literature, 1995-2001

Authors	Focus	Major Findings/Implications
Barak, Nissly, and Levin (2001)	This paper reviews 25 articles that examined antecedents to both turnover and retention in human service organizations, including child welfare organizations.	Burnout and stress, job dissatisfaction, low organizational and professional commitment, lack of social support, and the availability of employment alternatives are the strongest predictors of intentions to leave and turnover.
Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner (2000)	Updated Hom and Griffeth's 1995 meta-analysis by adding findings from 42 studies published during the 1990'. All studies that included predictors of actual turnover and which calculated turnover at the individual level were included in their reviews.	Proximal precursors (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job search, comparison of alternatives, withdrawal cognitions, & quit intentions) in withdrawal process are the best predictors of turnover.
Hom and Griffeth (1995)	A book that reviews the results of a comprehensive meta-analysis of studies of turnover and its antecedents that were reported in journals in human resource management, industrial/organizational psychology, and organizational behaviour.	A thorough review of the literature to 1994 of all research that examined antecedents to turnover.
Irvine and Evans (1995)	Their paper reports the results of a meta-analysis of 21 studies published prior to 1993 that included samples of registered nurses, registered nursing assistants, and licensed nursing practitioners.	Work content & work environment have stronger relationship with satisfaction than economic or individual difference variables. Control over work is important.

Authors	Focus	Major Findings/Implications
Kossek and Ozeki (1999)	The review includes a meta-analysis of 27 quantitative studies that reported a correlation between work-family conflict and at least one of 6 work outcomes. The paper also reports the results of a qualitative analysis of 19 Human Resource (HR) policy studies that estimated the effects of a HR policy or intervention on work outcomes or work-family conflict.	Three types of conflict were measured in these studies: 1) work interference with family life (work to family conflict); 2) extent to which family responsibilities influence the employee at work (family to work conflict); and 3) bi-directional measures.
Lease (1998)	Very readable review of 69 studies on all occupational groups that examined turnover intentions or actual turnover that were published between 1993 and 1997.	Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are viewed as antecedents to work outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover intentions and turnover.
Lee, Carswell, and Allen (2000)	Meta-analytic review of variables associated with occupational commitment; included 76 studies up to July 1999.	Models of organizational turnover have largely ignored occupational turnover, and including this variable may improve the ability to predict organizational turnover.
Wai Chi Tai, Bame, and Robinson (1998)	Review of 37 published quantitative studies and dissertations completed between 1977 and 1996 that included a measure of staff turnover as the dependent variable.	Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived job possibilities, and supervisors=behaviour may lead to turnover. Future research should include expanded model, which includes both social support at home & at work.

Appendix 2

Studies Focusing on Human Services Organizations, 1994-2000

Authors	Focus	Major Findings/Implications
(Aryee, Vivienne, & Stone, 1998)	Examined the relationships between two family-responsive variables (work schedule flexibility & supervisor work-family support) and turnover intentions & organizational commitment among human service staff; also assessed whether gender had a moderating influence of family-responsive variables on turnover intentions & organizational commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employed parents who benefit from family-responsive policies tend to be attached to the organization because it minimizes their experiences of work-family conflict ▪ Attachment to organization created by such policies holds for both sexes
(Baker & Baker, 1999)	Examined job satisfaction & organizational commitment of psychiatrists in community mental health system and the relationships between perceived ideological differences with coworkers, job satisfaction & organizational commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perceived differences in ideology affects organizational commitment, which may lead to turnover
(Barrett, Riggan, Flowers, Crimando, & Bailey, 1997)	Examined status of personnel turnover in rehabilitation agencies, facilities, & organizations	<p>Employees who left their jobs reported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little advancement potential (achievement & recognition) ▪ Little job satisfaction (dissatisfaction, self-esteem, distress with policy, & administration) ▪ Burnout ▪ Personality differences with management/supervision (lack of direction, support, consideration)

Authors	Focus	Major Findings/Implications
(Ben-Dror, 1994)	Examined the reasons for staff turnover in community mental-health residential services & the relationship of workers' developmental stage to those reasons	<p>Different needs of different people need to be addressed in order to reduce turnover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suggest clinical training for new workers ▪ Mid-career employee is at higher turnover risk: suggest having individuals take part in organization management practices & decision making processes & create more upward mobility
(Hatton & Emerson, 1998)	Examined job satisfaction, work & individual characteristics as predictors of actual turnover among direct care staff in a residential service for people with multiple disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actual turnover was significantly related to higher education, lower job satisfaction, less practical support from supervisors, less satisfaction with promotion prospects, less satisfaction with public respect for job, experience of higher role ambiguity and role conflict ▪ Two variables significantly predicted actual staff turnover, public respect for job and levels of practical support from supervisor
(Larson & Lakin, 1999)	Examined turnover among direct support professionals in small community residential settings using longitudinal data on 110 small group homes in Minnesota	<p>4 factors made a difference in retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shorter tenure ▪ Residential workplace characteristics; ▪ Shorter tenure of supervisor; ▪ Poor pay, benefits, paid leave & promotional opportunities
(Somers, 1995)	Examined relationships between each facet of commitment, & employee retention & employee absenteeism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Affective commitment sole predictor of turnover & absenteeism ▪ Commitment has limited rather than pervasive effect on employee retention & absenteeism

References

- Aryee, S., Vivienne, L., & Stone, R. (1998). Family-responsive variables and retention-relevant outcomes among employed parents. *Human Relations, 51*(1), 73-85.
- Baker, J. G., & Baker, D. F. (1999). Perceived ideological differences, job satisfaction and organizational commitment among psychiatrists in a community mental health center. *Community Mental Health Journal, 35*(1), 85-95.
- Barak, M. E. M., Nissly, J. A., & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work, and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and meta-analysis. *Social Service Review, 75*(4), 625-661.
- Barrett, K., Riggart, T. F., Flowers, C. R., Crimando, W., & Bailey, T. (1997). The turnover dilemma: A disease with solutions. *Journal of Rehabilitation, 36*-42.
- Barrick, M. R., & Mount, M. K. (1991). The big five personality dimensions and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology, 44*, 1-26.
- Beach, L. R. (1997). *The Psychology of Decision Making*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ben-Dror, R. (1994). Employee turnover in community mental health organization: A development stages study. *Community Mental Health Journal, 30*(3), 243-257.
- Coulthard, C., Duncan, K., Goranson, S., Hewson, L., Howe, P., Lee, K., Persad, S., McDonald, C., Raposa, C., & Schatis, D. (2001). *Report on Staff Retention*. Toronto: Children's Aid Society of Toronto.
- Duxbury, L., & Higgins, C. (2001). Work-life balance in the new millenium: Where are we? Where do we need to go?, *Canadian Policy Research Networks Discussion Paper* (pp. 80). Ottawa.
- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millenium. *Journal of Management, 26*, 463-488.
- Hatton, C., & Emerson, E. (1998). Brief report: Organisational predictors of actual staff turnover in a service for people with multiple disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 11*(2), 166-171.
- Hom, P. W., & Griffeth, R. W. (1995). *Employee turnover*. Cincinnati, Ohio: International Thomson Publishing.
- Irvine, D. M., & Evans, M. G. (1995). Job satisfaction and turnover among nurses: Integrating research findings across studies. *Nursing Research, 44*(4), 246-253.
- Kossek, E. E., & Ozeki, C. (1999). Bridging the work-family policy and productivity gap: a literature review. *Community, Work & Family, 2*(1), 7-32.
- Larson, S. A., & Lakin, K. C. (1999). Longitudinal study of recruitment and retention in small community homes supporting person with developmental disabilities. *Mental Retardation, 37*(4), 267-280.
- Lease, S. H. (1998). Annual review, 1993-1997: Work attitudes and outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 53*, 154-183.
- Lee, K., Carswell, J. J., & Allen, N. J. (2000). A meta-analytic review of occupational commitment: Relations with person- and work-related variables. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*(5), 799-811.
- Lee, T. W., & Mitchell, T. R. (1994). An alternative approach: The unfolding model of voluntary employee turnover. *Academy of Management Review, 19*, 51-89.
- Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., McDaniel, L. S., & Hill, J. W. (1999). The unfolding model of voluntary turnover: A replication and extension. *Academy of Management Journal, 42*(4), 450-462.

- Lowe, G. S., & Schellenberg, G. (2001). What's a good job? The importance of employment relationships, *Canadian Policy Research Networks* (pp. 117). Ottawa.
- March, J. G., & Simon, H. A. (1958). *Organizations*. New York: Wiley.
- Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., & Lee, T. W. (2001). How to keep your best employees: Developing an effective retention policy. *Academy of Management Executive*, 15(4), 96-109.
- Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., Lee, T. W., Sablinski, C. J., & Eraz, M. (2001). Why people stay: Using job embeddedness to predict voluntary turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(6), 1102-1121.
- Mitchell, T. R., & Lee, T. W. (2001). The unfolding model of voluntary turnover and job embeddedness: Foundations for a comprehensive theory of attachment. In B. Staw & R. Sutton (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior* (Vol. 23). Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.
- Somers, M. J. (1995). Organizational commitment, turnover and absenteeism: An examination of direct and interaction effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 16, 49-58.
- Somers, M. J. (1999). Application of two neural network paradigms to the study of voluntary employee turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(2), 177-185.
- Somers, M. J., & Birnbaum, D. (1999). Survival versus traditional methodologies for studying employee turnover: Differences, divergences and directions for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20, 273-284.
- Steers, R. M., & Mowday, R. T. (1983). Employee turnover in organizations. In R. M. P. Steers, L.W. (Ed.), *Motivation and Work Behavior* (3rd ed., pp. 470-481). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Tai, T. W. C., Bame, S. I., & Robinson, C. D. (1998). Review of nursing turnover research, 1977-1996. *Social Sciences Medicine*, 47(12), 1905-1924.

SOCIAL WORK



Partnerships for Children and Families Project

Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3C5

Email: partnerships@wlu.ca

Local: (519) 884-0710 ext.3636

Toll Free: 1-866-239-1558

Fax: (519) 888-9732