

The Day-to-Day Reality of Teacher Turnover in Preschool Classrooms: An Analysis of Classroom Context and Teacher, Director, and Parent Perspectives

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This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of an article published in

Cassidy, D. J., Lower, J. K., Kintner-Duffy, V. L., Hegde, A. V., & Shim, J. (2011). The day-to-day reality of teacher turnover in preschool classrooms: An analysis of classroom context and teacher, director, and parent perspectives. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 25 (1), 1-23.

as published in the *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 2011 [copyright Taylor & Francis], available online at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/02568543.2011.533118>.

Abstract:

The purpose of the current study is to examine teacher turnover comprehensively by triangulating the experiences of teachers, directors, parents, and children through actual, “real-time” turnover transitions. We intentionally examined turnover with a small sample size ($N = 13$ classrooms) to facilitate comprehensive data collection utilizing multiple qualitative and quantitative measures and to gain a rich understanding of the implications of teacher turnover on classroom quality, staff, and the parents and children with whom they work. The study utilized an interpretive paradigm to illuminate and juxtapose the experiences of teachers, directors, parents, and children through the turnover transition—as teachers departed and their replacements began. Strategies used to respond to turnover were identified at the program and classroom levels. Implications for early childhood classroom quality and policy are discussed.

Keywords: early childhood education | child care | teacher turnover | child care quality

Article:

The high rate of teacher turnover continues to be a concern for the child care industry. Research reveals that an estimated 82% of child care teachers employed in 1994 and 76% employed in 1996 were no longer retained in the field by the year 2000. Scholars characterize the profession as “alarmingly unstable” (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001), with this instability affecting children, their families, and, of course, child care teachers.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the implications of teacher turnover through a mixed-methods approach, one that included multiple perspectives from within the classroom context. Classroom observations, interviews, teacher and director survey self-reports, and researcher fieldnotes served to facilitate an understanding of the dynamic nature of teacher turnover and its implications for directors, teachers, children, and parents. A comprehensive

analysis of teacher turnover was conducted by juxtaposing the experiences of teachers, directors, parents, and children through actual, real-time turnover transitions—as teachers left and their replacements began. Comprehensive data collection was facilitated by intentionally collecting data from a small sample ($N = 13$ classrooms). Multiple qualitative and quantitative measures were implemented to gain a rich understanding of the implications of teacher turnover on classroom quality, staff, and the parents and children with whom they work.

The study utilized an interpretive paradigm to illuminate and juxtapose the experiences of teachers, directors, parents, and children through the turnover transition. The ontological assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 1998, p. 11). From this perspective, understanding the perceptions and experiences of teachers, directors, parents, and children—as they interrelate in ways that support and resist each other—during turnover is critical to addressing important implications for classroom environments. By collecting data during real time (rather than from prospective or retrospective accounts) and through the use of qualitative and quantitative measures, a rich understanding of how programs and parties (directors, teachers, parents, and children) react and adapt in ways that support and resist each other is fostered. Classroom quality as well as teaching and working relationships among early childhood staff and among the parents and children with whom they work are examined. By compounding data sources and triangulating perspectives (i.e., teachers, directors, parents), we were able to learn about the multiple realities of turnover, as well as ways that may serve to help teachers, directors, parents, and children through such transitions.

BACKGROUND

Research has established a link between teacher turnover, global quality, and child outcomes. Centers with higher rates of teacher turnover show lower levels of global quality and less appropriate teacher-child interactions (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000). Furthermore, in programs with high turnover, children have lower levels of language, cognitive, and social development (Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Howes, Hamilton, & Philipsen, 1998; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Howes & Smith, 1995). For example, Whitebook et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study of staffing and quality. The examination included 75 centers with data collected at three points in time (1994, 1996, and 2000). Average turnover per year was 30%, with a range of 0% to 100%. The study further revealed no difference in turnover rates between centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and those that were not accredited. More stable caregivers were associated with a more secure relationship with the children in their classroom. Low turnover, combined with well-educated staff with specialized training in child development, was related to higher classroom quality.

However, the link between teacher turnover and child outcomes is quite complex. Centers with higher teacher turnover rates and lower levels of child outcomes also have higher child-to-adult ratios, fewer educated teachers, and are generally characterized as poor-quality programs

(DeVita, Twombly, & Montilla, 2002), which makes it difficult to attribute poor child outcomes strictly to teacher turnover. There has also been extensive research about the reasons for teacher turnover (Hale-Jinks, Knopf, & Kemple, 2006), with a particular focus on low salaries, lack of benefits, and difficult working conditions, resulting in low morale, stress, and job burnout (Curbow, Spratt, Unagretti, McDonnell, & Breckler, 2001), as well as compromised organizational climate (Bloom, 1997).

Teacher Turnover and Work Environments

Theorists in organizational behavior science suggest three factors that influence employee retention and turnover (Whitebook & Bellm, 1999). Employees are likely to remain in their current positions when they have adequate pay and benefits, good work environments with professional development opportunities and satisfactory relationships with co-workers, and a good match between their work responsibilities and the job expectation and training. Low teacher salaries and unsatisfactory benefits in child care have long been associated with high rates of turnover (Goodman, Brady, & Desch, 1987; Phillips et al., 2000; Stremmel, 1991; Whitebook et al., 2001). Goodman et al. (1987) reported that salary increases in Head Start programs resulted in a sharp decrease in teacher turnover, from 65% to 35%. Olenick (1986) also found a similar pattern of better compensation and higher retention of teachers in child care programs. More recent research (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003) examined the relationship between teachers who leave and those who stay. The study revealed that directors were most likely to leave because of low wages, whereas teachers, especially highly qualified teachers, were more likely to leave not only because of low compensation but also because they could not find a compatible level of education among coworkers in their work environment.

Data from the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW; 2004) underscore the relationship between inadequate compensation for teachers and turnover rates: The average hourly rate of pay for a child care teacher in 2006 was \$9.05 per hour, with turnover ranging from 25% to 40% (CCW, 2004). Not surprisingly, this rate of pay was higher than only 18 other occupations and was less than what service station and locker room attendants earn (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Child care teachers earn slightly more than one-third of the salary of a public school kindergarten teacher, even though many have the same degree and perform somewhat similar teaching activities. The problem of teacher salaries is so intractable that many in the field, including direct service providers, have become somewhat complacent about turnover. They have come to believe there is nothing that can be done about salaries and, thus, turnover, so they regard the high turnover rates as inevitable. Furthermore, Manlove and Guzell (1997) examined job turnover in 169 child care workers in rural and semirural communities in Pennsylvania. They cited high turnover as one of the greatest barriers to providing high-quality child care. Turnover in their study averaged 23% over a 12-month period. However, 41% of the teachers in these programs indicated that they expected to leave their jobs in the near future. Reasons for leaving their jobs included advancement (changing jobs) and returning to school. None of the participants in the study left the programs to accept employment in other early childhood

programs. The authors also found those with less experience and those with other job options were most likely to leave their positions.

Teacher Turnover and Child Outcomes

Turnover also can have a serious impact on teacher-child relationships within child care classrooms. Howes and Hamilton (1993) examined the relationship between caregiver-child attachment and teacher sensitivity. They found that children who were classified as securely attached experienced more teacher sensitivity and involvement, whereas children classified as ambivalently attached experienced less teacher sensitivity and involvement. Children in the avoidant category experienced the least sensitivity and involvement. These findings are relevant as we consider the relationships that are severed between teachers and children when teachers leave their position. Furthermore, there is evidence that the development of positive relationships can affect children's long-term academic and social development. Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that children who had difficulty forming positive relationships with kindergarten teachers also had later academic and behavioral problems in school, especially those in teacher-child relationships marked by conflict and overdependence.

Overall, these findings from previous research demonstrate that turnover can affect classroom quality and child outcomes, due to changes in relationships within the classroom. However, most of the studies conducted on turnover have been retrospective. Thus, these studies have examined program quality with the rate of turnover in the past year, wages and benefits, and working conditions. The current study contributes to the field's understanding of turnover as it (1) examines the actual transition in the turnover process as one teacher leaves and another replaces her, (2) exemplifies the complexity of teacher turnover and its effects on classroom quality, and (3) demonstrates how turnover influences the lives of directors, teachers, parents, and children. Whitebook and Sakai (2003) identified three types of turnover: (1) job turnover, in which a teacher leaves a child care facility; (2) position turnover, in which a teacher moves to another classroom within the center agency; and (3) occupational turnover, in which a teacher leaves the child care field. In the current study, all three types of turnover were included, as was temporary turnover, such as extended maternity or sick leaves.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To understand the impact of turnover on the quality of classrooms, several questions guided our inquiry: (1) What are the day-to-day experiences of teachers, directors, and parents during turnover transitions? (2) How is classroom quality compromised as a result of turnover? (3) What areas of the classroom are most affected (e.g., materials/activities, language/interactions, global quality) by turnover? and (4) How are relationships among children, parents, and staff affected by turnover?

METHOD

Procedure

Understanding quality ratings of the child care centers

In an attempt to increase and maintain the quality of child care centers, the state of North Carolina has implemented a star rating system. Centers can obtain a rating from one to five stars, based on two essential components: program and educational standards. For program standards, the centers are assessed on their operating and personnel policies, activity areas in the classroom, square footage area per classroom, staff-child ratios, and their ratings on standardized instruments, such as the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 2006) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). The educational standards considered for licensing include the education and experience of teaching and administrative staff and the number of teachers with child care credentials (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). The greater the number of stars, the higher the quality of the program. In the current study, recruiting centers with different star ratings was important, because programs of varying quality may handle turnover in different ways, affecting teachers, directors, parents, and children differentially.

Recruitment of centers

Center directors from child care centers ranging in quality on North Carolina's five-star rated license were contacted and asked to participate in the study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit centers. To begin, a list of child care centers in the county of the study was gathered from the North Carolina Division of Child Development website. A simple search on the website using the county names led to a list of child care centers with their star rating. Initially, centers were randomly contacted from that list. Directors who consented or demonstrated willingness to be involved in the study were then shortlisted. Directors of child care centers on the shortlist were provided with a full explanation of the study. If they were interested in the concept of the study or anticipated a possibility of turnover in their center, they were asked to contact the researcher or give their verbal consent to be contacted twice a month to check on the center's turnover status. Once a situation of turnover was identified, the researcher visited the child care center, providing further explanation about the study, answering questions, and providing consent forms to the director and all teaching staff in the classroom experiencing turnover, including the departing and any remaining teachers in the classroom. One week after the new (or replacement) teacher started in a classroom, the researcher made another visit to the center, providing her with an explanation of the study, answering questions, and requesting consent to continue the study while she was in the classroom. Over a 2-year period, 38 centers were contacted, 11 centers agreed to participate, and 9 of those actually experienced turnover. The star rating of the nine centers that experienced turnover ranged from three to five stars.

Participant characteristics

Overall, 34 teachers participated in the current study (see Tables 1 and 2 for teachers' demographics). Most of the teachers were European American, followed by African American and other ethnic groups. Most of the teachers had some college education. Teachers were employed within the child care field for an average of 78.39 months and earned an average hourly wage of \$8.82. Most of the teachers received full benefits from their employer, with a handful receiving complete retirement packages. Similar to the teachers, most of the directors were European American; there were two African American directors and one American Indian director. Only one director had a graduate degree, whereas the other directors had either a 2- or 4-year degree (see Table 3 for directors' demographics).

Table 1. Frequencies for Teacher Demographics

	Teacher Status			
	All (N = 34)	Departing (n = 11)	Remaining (n = 10)	New (n = 13)
Highest level of education				
High school/General Equivalency Diploma	3	1	0	2
Some college	15	4	5	6
2-year degree	3	1	1	1
4-year degree	2	2	0	0
Some graduate school	3	1	1	1
Graduate degree	1	0	1	0
Missing	7	2	2	3
Ethnicity				
African American	9	3	3	3
European American	17	6	4	7
Other	1	0	1	0
Missing	7	2	2	3

Table 2. Employment Information by Teacher Status (Means and SDs)

	Teacher Status			
	All	Departing	Remaining	New
Time employed in child care (in months)	78.39 (70.01)	80.75 (51.71)	108.71 (101.7)	59.53 (57.66)
Time employed at current center (in months)	25.05 (27.52)	32.38 (30.44)	38.71 (26.29)	11.43 (22.08)
Hourly wage	\$8.82 (\$1.94)	\$8.73 (\$0.98)	\$9.71 (\$2.29)	\$8.50 (\$2.28)
Benefits received from center				
Health coverage				
None	8	2	2	3
Partial	6	3	0	3
Full	11	3	5	3
Retirement package				
No	23	6	7	9
Yes	3	2	0	1

Table 3. Frequencies for Director Demographics

Highest level of education	
2-year degree	2
4-year degree	3
Some graduate school	3
Graduate degree	1
Ethnicity	
African American	2
European American	6
American Indian	1

Study implementation during turnover

Directors sometimes were able to provide or predict future turnover as a result of forewarned departures, such as maternity leaves. At other times, we had to respond more quickly as teachers gave relatively short notices. Once the research team was made aware of a turnover situation, consent forms were provided to the director and teaching staff of the classroom where turnover

was taking place. Upon consent, during the last week of employment, teachers leaving a program were identified as “departing teachers.” Departing teachers were interviewed during their last week of employment, their classrooms were observed, and they completed survey measures. New teachers were considered those teachers replacing the departing teacher and may or may not have been new to the center. That is, in some cases, departing teachers were replaced by a “floater” or another teacher working in the center. In other situations, new teachers to the program were hired as replacements. Approximately one week after the new teacher replaced the departing teacher, she was observed and interviewed by an independent researcher and asked to complete the survey measures. Thus, new teachers were given a week in their new position before we began collecting data. Giving a week to the new teachers in their own classroom ensured that they could complete the various measures implemented in the study in an appropriate manner. That is, the work environment surveys required that the teachers have some knowledge about the center they are working for. The remaining teachers in the classroom (e.g., coteacher, assistant teacher) were identified as the teachers who were consistent through the turnover transition. They worked with the departing teacher and the new teacher with the same group of children. These teachers also were interviewed and completed the survey measures once during the data collection process. A sample of 13 classrooms, including 34 teachers within nine centers, resulted. Two of the teachers who participated in the project were initially remaining teachers, and, later in the project, left the programs and were counted as departing teachers. At these different times, these two teachers participated fully in the project according to their teacher status. Teacher demographic data and employment information are reported in Tables 1 and 2, respectively, with director demographic data reported in Table 3.

Parent recruitment

At the time the study began in each of the classrooms, information about the study and consent forms were sent home with children requesting consent for parent interviews. Interested parents were interviewed at the center or by telephone after the new teachers' arrival. Almost one half of the parents (42.3%) from each classroom consented to participate in the interviews. Of these parents, 65.4% were interviewed.

Qualitative Measures

Interviews

Semistructured interviews (CCW, 2000) were conducted with directors, teachers, and parents. Trained interviewers asked open- and closed-ended questions to elicit in-depth responses from the participants (see the appendix). Overall, each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Fieldnotes

The independent observers (from the observation with the departing teacher and the observation with the new teacher) kept fieldnotes about the procedures that participating centers implemented to maintain consistency in the classroom during the teacher turnover transition. Through a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rennie, 2006), the fieldnotes assisted researchers in recognizing distinctions in the way centers dealt with and responded to turnover. A constant comparative method is a qualitative approach in grounded theory to code data while simultaneously creating definitions through analysis.

Quantitative Measures

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised

The ECERS-R (Harms et al., 1998) is a widely used measure of global quality. Additionally, two factors have been found to differentiate the scale into two dimensions of quality: Activities/Materials and Language/Interactions (Cassidy, Hestenes, Hegde, Hestenes, & Mims, 2005). The Activities/Materials and the Language/Interactions factors represent subsets of the total scale and are utilized in the current study. That is, the total ECERS-R score, subscales, and two factor scores were used to examine changes in quality from pre- to post-turnover. Past research has excluded the Parents and Staff subscale to focus this instrument as a measure of “child-related items” (de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridely, & Wakely, 2000, p. 254). Because the current study included more comprehensive measures to capture the perspectives of parents and staff, we felt comfortable excluding the Parents and Staff subscale from the ECERS-R. This step is consistent with numerous studies of quality using the ECERS-R. All of the reliabilities for internal consistency were high; Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was .95. The Activities/Materials factor alpha was .92, and the alpha for the Language/Interaction factor was .93. Due to the small number of participating centers, the ECERS-R data were used for descriptive purposes only.

Student-Teacher Relationship Scale

The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001) is a 28-item self-report instrument that examines teachers' perceptions of their relationships with the children they work with and children's interactive behavior toward them. The scale examines three factors: Conflict, Closeness, and Dependency. Some examples of items are “I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child” and “This child is overly dependent on me.” Items are scored on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*definitely does not apply*) to 5 (*definitely applies*). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .75. This instrument was included for all teachers, including new teachers, to demonstrate the possibly notable difference in relationship between the teacher who departed and the newly arrived teacher. Although the scale recommends a short period of familiarity between teacher and child, the purpose of the study was to examine the loss for children when a teacher leaves.

Data Analysis

As a mixed-methods study, qualitative data were analyzed using an interpretive approach, whereas descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data.

Qualitative data analysis

An interpretive approach was used to code the qualitative data (Creswell, 2005). Interviews were transcribed and read to get a “general sense” (Creswell, p. 231) of the data by three independent coders. In reviewing the transcripts, all three coders wrote memos that informed an a priori coding scheme, which was identified collectively through discussion among the three coders. The coders then independently applied the coding scheme to the transcripts. For example, text was highlighted and labeled with an appropriate code. Any new codes that were identified were recorded as memos for future analysis. A continuous process of reading and assigning codes to the transcripts among the three coders ensured that themes were applied appropriately. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. For example, in the first round of coding, the coders came up with several descriptions for children's behavior as a result of turnover; these included “children's misbehavior,” “testing their boundaries,” “acting out,” “sense of sadness,” and “frustration/anxiety.” After discussion regarding the details of the statements within the transcripts, as well as comparisons across transcripts, these codes were condensed to an overall theme of “children's behavior” and subthemes of “sense of sadness,” “acting out,” and “where is so and so.”

The results from these analyses provide information regarding the day-to-day experiences of turnover from the perspectives of the directors, teachers, and parents involved in the turnover transition. Additionally, these results indicate changes in relationships among teachers, parents, and children associated with turnover. Individual and shared perspectives of these experiences and changes in relationships are discussed in detail in the qualitative results section.

Quantitative data analysis

Due to the small sample size, it was only appropriate to identify mean and standard deviations for ECERS-R average, subscale, and factor scores. Comparisons among the descriptive statistics were drawn across proactive and reactive centers and individual classrooms, pre- and post-turnover. MANOVA was employed to compare differences between teachers (departing, remaining, and new) scoring on the various STRS factors, because the sample size allowed for such comparisons. For these analyses only, follow-up post hoc analysis revealed which group of teachers differed significantly from each other.

RESULTS

Distinctions Between Proactive and Reactive Centers

Based on the fieldnotes and memos from the interview transcripts, distinctions among centers were identified from the policies and procedures implemented during the turnover transition. In

response to these distinctions, centers were categorized as either “proactive” or “reactive.” Utilizing the constant comparative method, these ideas were solidified as important qualities to consider in the way that child care programs navigated the complexities of turnover, and subsequently were important to the interpretation of the results.

Specifically, child care centers that were identified as proactive had systems in place to minimize the disruption of turnover. For example, proactive centers were more likely to have a “floater” position established in the program, someone with whom children and parents were familiar and who was accustomed to the center, its policies, daily routines, and instructional environment. Often, this “floater” was placed in the classroom before the departing teacher left the program and remained in the classroom until after a transition period with the new teacher. Conversely, child care centers that were more reactive responded to turnover by shifting current staff or children to maintain state-required ratios or relied on the use of multiple substitutes in the classroom. For example, one center that was classified as reactive responded to turnover by combining two classrooms after the teacher left, shifting children and teachers to maintain state ratio requirements. This reactive approach not only resulted in children and families losing their teacher, but also meant some of the children experienced an unfamiliar classroom in addition to multiple substitutes. In the current study, four centers (five classrooms) were identified as proactive and five centers (eight classrooms) were identified as reactive. Although we divided child care programs that were more reactive or proactive to turnover into two groups, we acknowledge that this concept may fit best on a continuum, with centers having varying degrees of reactivity and proactivity. Additionally, some of the qualitative results were similar across proactive and reactive centers. However, the distinctions between proactive and reactive centers are indicated where appropriate.

Qualitative Results

Teachers' perceptions of turnover

Instructional changes: “You cannot teach and you cannot help as many children.”

Teachers discussed the impact of turnover on their own work and in relationship to the experiences they were able to provide to children. The departing, new, and remaining teachers across reactive and proactive centers all talked about challenges they faced in their work environment as a result of turnover. For example, a departing teacher stated, “A lot of times, working with someone, you get close to ’em. ... It's kind of hard when they do leave, ’cause you learned a lot about ’em.” Another departing teacher recognized the implications of teaching with fewer teachers in the classroom. She stated, “It's just when you don't have enough people in this room, you cannot teach and you cannot help as many children as you would like.”

The teachers remaining in their classrooms during the turnover transition felt largely depended upon and reported increased stress. For example, one teacher stated, “After she left and I had all those other teachers to come in, it just wasn't the same; it was like everything was put on me.”

Another remaining teacher noted, “I wouldn't have help, you know, for some time.”

Additionally, teachers described an increased workload. For example, one teacher stated, “It makes it more difficult to just work with a new person; they don't know the routine.” Further, it impacted “my ability to plan, because my time is taken with other things in the classroom instead of being able to take the time to plan our classroom activities.”

The new teachers also talked about an increased workload as a result of turnover. For example, a new teacher noted, “You have to pick up the slack for whoever is gone.” Interestingly, the new teachers also noted the increased responsibility of remaining teachers to orient the new teacher (in this case, them) to the position. One new teacher explained how a remaining teacher has to “basically do the same thing that [she] did with the previous person.” Accordingly, another new teacher reflected on learning the logistics and routines of the classroom: “When the [new teacher] come[s], you have to show her the routine, you have to show her the schedule and stuff.” No matter the status of the teachers or reactivity of the program, turnover resulted in an increased workload, making it more difficult to teach effectively.

Classroom management: “Just trying to regulate the whole classroom.”

Teachers also discussed the complexity of keeping daily routines consistent, maintaining a positive climate through classroom management, and having to compromise instructional activities in the face of teacher turnover. However, the difficulties associated with classroom management were expressed primarily by teachers in reactive centers. One teacher said, “It disrupts your routine and everything. ... If you had something planned you know and somebody stays out, you can't do what you planned on doing.” Furthermore, a teacher remarked, “It's harder, especially when you have somebody who comes in who might not know the routines of the classroom. ... They need to get used to the classroom, used to the kids.” Similarly, another teacher stated, “Everything pretty much falls on that one person because ... if they do send someone in, they don't know the routine.” As another teacher described it, “You have to again kind of train the person.” Similarly, “just having to tell a sub what they need to do” was an added stress to the day.

Moreover, classroom management was described as especially difficult during turnover, affecting the activities and the interactions teachers were able to have with children. For example, as one teacher stated, “Just being able to teach the children is hard, because it's hard for me to get involved with a small group of children when I have to maintain the classroom as a whole. ... I've had to do more managing of the classroom.” Another teacher noted, “I can't teach them or sit with them like I want to because I have to show the other teacher, you know, how to go move around the classroom and what to do.” For one teacher, instructional activities were not a possibility because so much time was spent on daily routines. As she said, “You can't do the activities ... when you're all by yourself in this room. ... You have to change them, feed them, nap them, and that's it.” Unfortunately, as a result of turnover, teachers were less able to regulate their classroom and create a positive learning environment for the children.

Teachers' perceptions of the impact of turnover on children's behavior

In addition to trying to maintain a sense of normalcy in the classrooms during turnover, teachers also are meeting the varying demands of children's reactions to the change incurred by turnover. Departing, remaining, and new teachers in proactive and reactive centers shared some similar ideas about how turnover affects children. For example, "behavioral changes" in the children emerged as a theme from all teacher interviews, regardless of their role in the transition. Additionally, sub-themes captured children questioning "where is [the teacher]?", having a "sense of sadness," and "acting out" as reactions to turnover.

Confusion: "Where is so and so?"

Across proactive and reactive centers, departing teachers reported that turnover was "confus[ing] at first" to children, as "they don't understand" and "they are looking for that teacher." One teacher stated, "They wonder where the teacher's gone and are and where are they going to, are they coming back." Another teacher described the experience as being "very confusing for them, they don't understand why, suddenly their teacher was here and then she wasn't. ... I think the first few days, they may be asking, 'Where is so and so?'" Similarly, a teacher noted, "They get curious and ask a lot of questions, 'Well, where is she?,' 'When is she coming back?'"

Remaining and new teachers expressed similar ideas related to children being confused and inquiring about the teacher who left. For example, a remaining teacher noted how "It takes time to get used to somebody new ... they're still kind of like, 'Is she coming back?'" Another remaining teacher described children as "needing consistency and when there is not, the children seem to be ... confused: 'Who's the teacher?' 'Who do I listen to?'" Another remaining teacher reflected, "You become a part of their life, you know, when they come see you every day, then all of a sudden you just disappear: 'Where did she go?,' 'What happened?' Kids stress just like adults stress." For one new teacher, the children "just want to know why" a particular teacher is leaving. As another new teacher observed, "They are very confused and they want to know where that teacher is and what happened." In general, no matter the reason for teachers' departures, teachers reported that children seemed to be confused about why teachers were leaving and concerned about them not returning. However, in proactive centers, the children were given positive strategies, such as writing letters to the departing teacher, to help them with the transition.

Sorrow: "Sense of sadness."

Regardless of center classification, the departing and the remaining teachers also observed children experiencing "sadness" from the loss of a teacher. One departing teacher noted, "I think they're genuinely sad that she's not there." Another departing teacher said, "I think the children are very sad ... they're more emotional. They'll come up to you and they'll tell you, 'I'm going to miss you' and they give you things, 'I made this for you.'" Teachers also made distinctions among children, indicating that some children will show their "sadness" more than others.

Specifically, one departing teacher described how one child would “be most hurt by it” because of a close relationship with that teacher. A remaining teacher also noted, “They do have a sense of sadness. ... Sometimes they feel like they've been left behind.” Another teacher reflected that it was “hard for me as a teacher to get used to it, so I know for the children it's hard.” Although a couple of new teachers expressed they saw sadness among the children, this was not a prevalent theme; this may be a function of new teachers wanting children to be happy to have them as a teacher.

Frustration: “Acting out.”

All the teachers described children “acting out,” “pushing the limit,” and “testing boundaries” during the turnover transition. For example, one departing teacher stated, “Children tend to test their boundaries [with] the new person. ... [They are] probably going to have a few more arguments, get much louder, not follow the rules like they would when their regular teacher is in the classroom, kind of act like they don't really know what they're supposed to do.” Another departing teacher commented, “They'll test whoever is in there. ... It's hard for them to regain control ... because that stable person isn't there anymore, so they are going to start acting out and testing boundaries.” Many of the new teachers also described children “get[ing] distracted, push[ing] your buttons, see[ing] your limits.” For example, a new teacher noted, “I think they just test whoever is in there; see if they're going to stick with the same rules, if they can get away with something.” Overall, teachers identified several ways in which children manifested in confusion, sadness, or frustration after losing a teacher.

Distinctions by role of teacher

Although all teachers shared some similar insights, they also were affected differentially by the position they played in the transition. For example, the departing teachers emphasized that if children knew the incoming teacher, it “wasn't as big of a deal” and that, over time, children “kind of adapt,” suggesting the temporary nature of the impact. This idea of a temporary impact was emphasized more by departing teachers than by new or remaining teachers. Understanding the effects of turnover as temporary may have eased their concern for the children upon their departure. Additionally, new teachers uniquely expressed the complexities of being new and “learning all the people.” One new teacher noted, “I'm trying to get all this in my head so that I don't mess up.” Similarly, remaining teachers talked about changes in the overall environment and how they took a more active role. For example, one teacher stated, “You feel like that you have to be over everything.” These experiences of teachers echo the idea that all teachers are affected by turnover; however, the nature of this impact may differ according to the role in the system.

Directors' perceptions of turnover

Center-wide effect: “Domino effect.”

Directors described the impact of turnover as a “domino effect ... because you'll lose somebody and then there may be a whole shifting of people.” Directors indicated that turnover required a reorganization of staff through adjusting, shifting, and accommodating. For example, a director noted, “Everybody sort of has to adjust and shift and accommodate.” Additionally, a director compared turnover to “a puzzle; it has to be put together and it all has to fit and work with the classroom, the whole center, as well as meet the requirements of the whole state.” All center directors, regardless of the use of proactive or reactive strategies during turnover, suggested that turnover created change in the center as a whole. However, reactive centers held more negative attitudes about the change. A director from a proactive center noted that “a lot of times it [change] can be good.” Conversely, one director from a reactive center reflected that such change was “not really great for morale.” Similarly, a director noted, “It just affects everybody and their whole cohesion.”

All of the directors mentioned the use of substitutes and floaters. Primarily, directors seemed to rely on their current teachers and floaters to fill in the gaps in order to maintain state-required ratios. However, proactive centers had floater positions that helped to maintain consistency in classrooms during turnover: “We usually rely on floaters and part-time people that can work more hours than they're scheduled for.” Another director from a proactive center noted, “I feel really fortunate that I haven't had to scramble and find somebody that I don't know.” Conversely, reactive centers were more likely to shift teachers from other classrooms or move children into other classrooms as a temporary solution. Consistently across proactive and reactive centers, directors reported, “It is always difficult to find good substitutes.” In fact, a director from a reactive center described desperately calling on “ladies from my church to come help me.” All directors recognized that remaining teachers must contend with an extra workload as a result of turnover: “It overworks the rest of the teachers because they have an extra burden.” No matter the reason for the turnover or the level of proactive or reactive responses, all of the directors noted that changes were felt by everyone at the centers.

Work overload: “It's just too many hats.”

Directors also talked about accumulating extra work during turnover. One director explained, “It's just too many hats, you have to wear too many hats.” Another director noted “I have 2–3 people's jobs then.” Some directors discussed working in classrooms in order to cover ratios, taking them away from their administrative work. For example, one director stated, “I usually have to cover the classrooms, so that takes away my time in the office to get things done.” Another director noted, “Go[ing] in the classroom means I have to stop here and then whenever I get a chance, or stay late whenever everybody's gone, to get it [administrative work] done.”

Furthermore, directors also described the time it took to find and interview new hires. For example, one director stated, “I can't necessarily focus on what I need to focus on during the day because ... people walk in the door to fill out an application and it disrupts what you're in the middle of doing.” Another director described “spend[ing] all of my time interviewing people,

calling their references, making decisions, making staff changes, schedule changes.” Further, a director recognized that “it takes the time to replace them [departing teachers], it takes time to orient a new person to their job. ... You sort of have to redo things you've already done.” Additionally, directors from both reactive and proactive centers talked about how the extra work “affect[ed] their home life as well as [their] job.” Specifically, one director described how she “wind[s] up working sometimes all day on Saturday or part of Sunday.” According to these statements, as directors cope with the domino effects of turnover in their centers, they also have to take on more and varied responsibilities, making their jobs even more difficult. These increases in workload occurred for directors in both proactive and reactive centers.

Prevention of turnover: “Increase their salary, give them better benefits, and provide an assistant teacher.”

Directors unanimously talked about needing to “increase staff salary and improve staff benefits” in order to reduce the rate of turnover. One director described the importance of “supplement[ing] teachers based on levels of education, experience, and responsibility so that teachers really are paid what they are worth.” Interestingly, directors also emphasized the need to reduce teacher-child ratios. Consistently, directors discussed the complexities of trying to provide high-quality services to children in the context of the current state ratio regulation. For example, one director working for a corporate child care program stated, “Companies don't give us enough hours [for teachers to work] to put two [teachers] in there, because the state is only 1 to 10 [children] so, without a doubt, it's lower, it's gotta be lower [ratios].” Another director stated, “I would love to have 1 to 3 ratio in infants, but it's 1 to 4. ... I'd love to have lower class sizes and group sizes, but that's the regulations right now and that's what's seen as, you know, good care for children.” In accordance, another director described how “you don't have time to do activities with them when you have 18 two-year-olds and there are only two of you. ... I think we would see a lot less turnover if we had smaller ratios and, of course, higher pay.” Similarly, one director wished for “lower class sizes and staff-to-child ratios because, of course, teachers are able to accomplish more if they are working with fewer children and are able to have the time to devote to implementing the curriculum as they planned.” Additional staff also makes for a better work environment for teachers, as described by one director: “It's not as difficult for a person to feel like they can take a vacation cause they know there's ... a competent person to cover for them.” Each of the directors noted that money, benefits, and lower ratios would help to prevent turnover; however, they did not have access to the resources that would allow them to implement such preventions.

Parents' perceptions of turnover

Similar to teachers' perceptions, many parents expressed that changes in the classroom staff, whether temporary or permanent, affected the parent-teacher relationship, as well as the teacher-child relationship. Specifically, parents in proactive and reactive centers stated that a change in or loss of relationship with teachers resulted in heightened concern for their children's welfare

and diminished quality of communication with classroom staff. With regard to the teacher-child relationship, parents mentioned changes in their children's behavior, emotionally and physically.

Parent-teacher relationship: “I had a real rapport and relationship.”

Several parents noted that children are not the only individuals who form relationships with teachers; parents also establish relationships with teachers over time. As one parent stated, “Having the same teacher for a longer period of time gives a comfort level because you establish a rapport. You know that teacher has a certain amount of history and background with your child.” When this relationship ends because of teacher turnover, parents may experience difficulty in establishing that trust and confidence in the new teacher: “This is the person that you have trusted your child with, and then they leave. So that makes it kind of difficult to regain confidence in the next teacher because [you] have to go through that process all over again.” Teacher turnover, therefore, has a direct impact on some parents, as it affects the relationship between teachers and parents, which may take quite some time to rebuild with a new teacher.

Teacher-child relationship: “I'm concerned about my child's welfare.”

As a result of this loss of trust, some parents noted concern for their child's well-being. Often, these concerns were related to new teachers not being familiar with each individual child's needs or any special concerns. One mother was specifically concerned about how new teachers would be able to handle an emergency if they did not have background information on the child: She noted that “if there was an incident, they are not familiar with the children in the classroom or what, you know, things they may do.” This parent also noted that because her child was not familiar with the teacher, he would be less likely to approach the teacher if a problem arose. Parents also expressed concern that children may be affected negatively because of changes in teaching style or approach. These changes in teaching were especially salient for parents regarding reactive centers that frequently use substitutes. As one parent noted, “I don't feel that there's any sort of a class program or agenda followed.” Thus, parents' concerns for their children addressed not only their physical safety and emotional well-being, but the quality of the instructional environment as well.

It is interesting to note that most of the parents who discussed serious concerns for children's well-being had children who were enrolled in more reactive centers. Because there was such frequent shifting of teachers in these centers, parents seemed to be less likely to know who was caring for their children. For example, after experiencing two instances of turnover within a few weeks, one parent stated that, “You don't know ... who's taking care of your child. You drop him off in the morning and you don't know who's going to be there in the afternoon, and that's tough.” Another parent noted that the care situation for her child had changed so frequently that she could not remember the teachers' names.

Communication: “Nobody has the history.”

The majority of the parents in both proactive and reactive centers also expressed the sentiment that the loss of relationship with a teacher often resulted in less effective and informative communication. For example, one parent stated, “We feel like there's, um, an interruption. ... They [subs or new teachers] can't give you the same kind of information about [your child].” Many concerns regarding communication arose from new teachers' lack of familiarity with families. One parent said, “Nobody has the history ... and the longer term picture of your child.” Another parent noted that new teachers do not “know me as a parent, they [don't] know what is acceptable to me and what is not acceptable to me in terms of my child's behavior.” Although parents noted that communication was affected by turnover, they were less concerned about this, as they understood that it takes time to develop new relationships. Specifically, one parent noted that teachers “are still getting their bearings and so they don't know what to report at the end of the day.” Most parents mentioned that the communication would return to normal after an adjustment period in which the parents and teachers learned how to communicate with a new person. These parents stated, “You have to learn what that teacher does, how they communicate,” and “It takes time to develop that kind of relationship again.”

Trust in relationships: “They probably don't know who to trust.”

When discussing their children's reactions to turnover, some parents noted that children were more attached to specific teachers and, thus, were affected negatively by the departure of those teachers. As one parent noted, “When children are subjected to several different people, it can cause a trust issue.” This parent went on to comment that her child had a difficult time becoming comfortable with the new teacher and expressed concern about the long-term impact that the turnover would have on her child. Another parent stated, “I think it has a negative effect on the children, because they don't, um, again, get to establish a relationship with a particular person because there's constant change. So they probably don't know who to trust.” These sentiments were echoed by most of the parents, who noticed an effect in their child because of the severed relationship with the departing teacher, thus losing an important person in their child's life.

Emotional reactions: “Sad to say goodbye.”

Some parents observed that their children reacted emotionally to teacher turnover. For some children, these reactions conveyed sadness over teachers' departures; as one parent stated, “He came home from school and said, ‘Mom, we got some bad news today, [the teacher's] leaving.’” Other parents noted similar reactions: “I think [she] is, was a little bit sad to say goodbye”; “I believe she was sad.” Additionally, many parents noted that children stated occasionally that they missed their previous teacher. However, for other parents, their children showed more intense reactions of sadness and anxiety about going to school. For instance, a parent stated, “He's been crying like he didn't want to go.” Another parent said her child was upset at the transition and “just doesn't want to come [to school].” No matter the intensity of the reaction, there was a consensus among parents that children were sad when they lost their teachers to turnover.

Behavioral reactions: “He's been acting out.”

Parents also observed physical and behavioral reactions from their children. Some parents mentioned that their children expressed their emotions through acting out, either in the classroom or at home. Specifically, one parent noted that her child was “having like tantrums and stuff ... for the past two weeks.” Other parents stated that their children were less likely to exhibit their normal outgoing behavior. For instance, one mother said, “I can definitely tell he's not as comfortable with them, um, maybe not as willing to participate and ... be as outgoing.” Similarly, another parent observed that her child had “become more clingy when being dropped off at school.” Although many of the children's physical or behavioral reactions were not severe, there were a few parents who noted that their children had a more difficult time adjusting to the turnover. One mother reported that her child had “wet his bed for like three days in a row, and he never does ... but he knows what's going on and it's bothering him.” Another parent noted that her child had “a lot of meltdowns ... a lot of crying, not wanting to go to bed, not wanting to come to school” after the turnover started. Although these children expressed their feelings in a variety of ways, the emotional, physical, and behavioral reactions of children indicate that children and families are impacted negatively by turnover in child care classrooms. Additionally, although we recognize that some of these effects may well be temporary, we must consider the possible long-term impact of turnover transitions, especially those that are more chaotic or reactive.

Quantitative Results

Differences in classroom quality from pre-turnover to post-turnover

The quantitative results further capture some of the experiences discussed by teachers. For example, classroom quality seems to be compromised during the turnover transition. The overall mean scores on the ECERS-R from the pre-turnover assessment to the post-turnover assessment decreased (pre $M = 4.35$; post $M = 4.13$). Similarly, as reported in Table 4, subscale and factor scores postturnover were lower than scores prior to the turnover transition. These data are purely descriptive, as the sample size is small ($N = 13$) and there is not enough power to test significance. As noted in Table 5, classrooms identified as proactive in their response to turnover were of higher quality, based on the ECERS-R scores, than classrooms identified as reactive. Additionally, post hoc analyses revealed that reactive centers experienced a higher turnover rate (29.82%) compared to programs identified as proactive (20.93%), also reported in Table 5.

Table 4. Mean Differences in Classroom Quality Pre- and Post-Turnover

	Pre-Turnover Mean (SD)	Post-Turnover Mean (SD)
ECERS-R Average Score	4.35 (1.02)	4.13 (1.29)
ECERS-R Subscales		
Space and Furnishings	4.57 (.86)	4.40 (1.18)
Personal Care Routines	3.49 (1.26)	3.39 (1.46)

Language and Reasoning	4.66 (.95)	4.18 (1.31)
Activities	4.25 (1.06)	4.16 (1.31)
Interactions	4.88 (1.76)	4.43 (1.88)
Program Structure	4.77 (1.63)	4.14 (1.50)
ECERS-R Factors		
Activities/Materials	3.83 (1.08)	3.74 (1.22)
Language/Interactions	4.82 (1.55)	4.29 (1.64)
ECERS-R = Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised.		

Table 5. Mean Quality Ratings Based on Reactivity to Turnover

	Proactive Mean (SD)	Reactive Mean (SD)
ECERS-R Average Score	5.11 (1.07)	3.61 (.03)
ECERS-R Subscales		
Space and Furnishings	5.23 (.95)	3.96 (.68)
Personal Care Routines	4.21 (1.70)	2.89 (.61)
Language and Reasoning	5.32 (.93)	3.78 (.81)
Activities	5.00 (1.27)	3.63 (.67)
Interactions	6.08 (.85)	3.64 (1.59)
Program Structure	5.08 (1.78)	4.01 (1.28)
ECERS-R Factors		
Activities/Materials	4.44 (1.15)	3.32 (.87)
Language/Interactions	5.82 (.99)	3.65 (1.28)
ECERS-R = Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised.		

Teacher-child relationships

Utilizing the STRS, the interaction patterns and teacher-child relationships for all of the children in each classroom with the departing, remaining, and new teachers were examined. This included an examination of the three factors of the STRS scale: Conflict, Closeness, and Dependency. Additionally, the conflict and dependency scores were added to formulate a relational negativity score (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The findings, also reported in Table 6, indicated that the relationship between teachers and children were differentiated by teacher role (departing, remaining, and new). Departing teachers shared a closer relationship with the children in the classroom, $F(2, 302) = 4.17, p = .01$, and perceived children to be more dependent on them, $F(2, 302) = 14.63, p = .001$, as compared to remaining or new teachers. Not surprisingly, this may suggest that the departing teachers know more detailed characteristics of the children in classrooms that they are leaving, compared to new teachers, and subsequently indicated a closer and more dependent relationship between the departing teachers and children.

Table 6. STRS Factors by Teacher Classification

	Departing	Remaining	New
	(N = 128)	(N = 85)	(N = 92)
Closeness	4.08* (-0.62)	3.87 (-0.65)	3.86 (-0.67)
Conflict	2.03 (-0.89)	2.13 (-0.61)	2.01 (-0.86)
Dependency	2.45** (-0.87)	2.32 (-0.74)	1.83 (-0.93)
Relational negativity	2.13 (-0.76)	2.17 (-0.57)	1.97 (-0.77)

* $p < .01$

** $p = .001$

DISCUSSION

This mixed-methods study on teacher turnover demonstrates the complexity of the turnover process and documents its impact on the classroom environments and people associated with this change. The qualitative and quantitative findings demonstrate that the turnover transition affects all individuals involved, as well as the child care centers as a system. Among these effects are negative changes in classroom quality, particularly in terms of disruptions to routines and classroom instruction. Although only descriptive in nature, the changes in the ECERS-R (including overall mean, subscale, and factors scores) indicate that all areas of classroom functioning decrease in quality during the turnover transition. Additionally, changes in teacher-parent and teacher-child relationships may compromise trust and rapport, create communication difficulties, and induce emotional and behavioral distress. For example, the STRS data were collected to demonstrate that the closest connections between children and teachers were those that existed between the departing teachers and the children. Although this may be inherent in the role of the departing teacher, it is clear that a bond has been severed. Furthermore, in this sample, the remaining teacher was often the assistant teacher or a center “floater” who had some level of familiarity with the children but was not as connected as the departing teacher.

Interdependence of Coping

According to Bloom (1991), child care systems can be thought of as social systems that include the interdependent components of people, structure, and processes. When change occurs in one component of the system, the other components also will experience change. Thus, when teachers (the people component) change due to turnover, child care centers and classrooms experience adjustments to the structure and processes within the centers. Examples of these changes include adjustments in communication, teaching practices, classroom environment, and interpersonal relationships. It is evident from the above findings that the impact of teacher turnover elicits a range of coping mechanisms from directors, teachers, children, and parents in the hopes of regaining stability in their shared environment. Such coping mechanisms instigate a dynamic process of teacher turnover that continues to reverberate; how directors, teachers, children, and parents respond to teacher turnover not only changes the nature of their personal experiences, it also influences their relationships with one another. For example, as a result of having a teacher depart, children may become sad, resist coming to school, or “test” the new

environment. Teachers must then respond not only to an increased workload but also to the children's varying reactions, while altering the schedule and modifying the instructional activities in an attempt to manage the classroom. This subsequently creates more inconsistency for the children, resulting in additional stress. As parents respond to the sadness and distress of their child, they also may receive disjointed communication from the new teacher, with whom they may be struggling to establish a new relationship.

Prevention

From the interviews with directors, teachers, and parents, three main themes emerged as suggestions to reduce turnover: increase salaries, offer better benefits, and create supportive work environments. Consistently, salary was the number one strategy mentioned by all participants to decrease the rate of turnover. Benefits also were mentioned frequently as a way to reduce turnover by professionalizing the field so that teaching in child care is understood as a long-term career rather than as a temporary job. Additionally, various aspects of the work environment were discussed, including a supportive and positive organizational climate, lower teacher-child ratios, smaller group sizes, and increasing the number of committed teachers with education in early childhood.

It may be that no single factor is responsible for a teacher's decision to leave. Rather, it may be the combination of low salaries, inadequate benefits, and difficult work environments that lead teachers to leave their jobs. This is not news to early childhood researchers and policy analysts, but it does provide needed emphasis on the serious, complex, and multilevel nature of the issue. In light of the impact of turnover on directors, teachers, parents, and children in the child care system, it is imperative that we have a goal to drastically reduce turnover by addressing each of these factors.

Amelioration of the Impact of Turnover

Because prevention will provide only limited assistance with the issue of turnover, programs need to have purposeful strategies in place to make the transition as smooth as possible. Based on the results of the current study, the policies and systems that are implemented proactively by center directors dramatically change the severity of the turnover process. That is, centers that responded with more proactive strategies that aim to sustain the most consistency for teachers, children, and parents tended to relieve some of the stress associated with turnover. Although some reasons for turnover can be positive (e.g., promotion of a teacher or terminating the employment of a poorly performing teacher), establishing policies and procedures to maintain consistency for teachers, children, and parents is essential to minimize disruption in the work environment and learning environments of teachers and children. Helping centers create and implement these explicit strategies to mitigate the negative effects of the turnover transition must be a high priority.

Taking on Turnover

Whitebook and Bellm (1999) provided excellent strategies to assist programs in coping with turnover. Findings from the current study offer several possibilities. For instance, having consistent floaters or substitutes who are already familiar with center policies and children in the classrooms may prevent teachers or children from being shifted from classroom to classroom when turnover occurs. Other strategies may include having new teachers shadow departing teachers, so that the remaining teachers are not required to spend as much time and energy training incoming teachers. This would also allow children to form a relationship with the new teacher prior to the turnover of the departing teacher. Additionally, maintaining consistent mechanisms of communication with parents seems vital as parents form new relationships with new teachers. Having proactive strategies allowed centers to handle the turnover transition in a way that supported children, families, and teachers by minimizing the disruption associated with the turnover. Thus, these centers were able to maintain high-level interactions and prevent drastic decreases in classroom quality. Nonetheless, proactive programs were not immune to turnover. Proactive and reactive programs experienced turnover, and the causes of turnover including low salaries. Although the proactive centers reported a lower turnover rate, it is important to note that the differences between these two types of programs were how they coped with turnover, not that one type experienced turnover and the other did not.

Limitations

The results of the current study highlight the complexity of the teacher turnover process. Nevertheless, there were a few limitations in the current study. Unfortunately, the major limitation of the current study was its small sample size. It was extremely difficult to solicit cooperation from programs when they were experiencing turnover. Turnover is a time when most programs do not want observers in the classrooms and stress in the facility is high. We are deeply grateful to the programs that shared their turnover experiences with us. However, the small sample lowered the power necessary for testing statistical significance on changes in classroom quality and restricted which analyses could be conducted. Additionally, as the sample was not randomly selected, it is not representative of all child care and does not allow for generalizations to be made. The findings are also limited by the semistructured nature of the interviews. Such structure may have hindered participants from voicing concerns about, or experiences related to, the turnover transition that were not addressed with the preset questions.

CONCLUSION

The study allowed for measurement of the immediate impact of turnover rather than the retrospective findings that have been reported in past research. Teachers were interviewed as they were leaving centers, arriving for employment, or experiencing the loss of a coteacher. Directors and parents were caught in the turmoil of the turnover crisis. We believe that because of the methodology used, we captured the day-to-day reality of turnover, including the stress and concern created. Furthermore, parents, teachers, and directors were able to provide candid and accurate responses, because the impact of teacher turnover was very fresh. Future research

certainly should include a larger sample size with a similarly immediate impact format. The turnover variable also should be included in large-scale, longitudinal studies that include child outcome data.

One important lesson learned is that good things do seem to go together. Proactive centers may be able to better minimize the impact of turnover on classrooms, teachers, and families, because they also have successful management strategies and demonstrate an ability to maintain higher quality, even through the disruption of turnover. Further examination of the strategies used by proactive centers will enable us to assist in better preparing programs for turnover and perhaps to decrease the level of turnover in our child care facilities. Preparing programs to reduce and minimize the effects of teacher turnover alleviates job stress among teachers and directors, while providing a more positive experience of child care for children and parents.

APPENDIX

Teacher Interview Questions (adapted from Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2000)

In the last year, or since you have been working at this center (if less than one year), how many changes of either type have you experienced?

Number of changes in groups of children

Number of changes in rooms

What accounts for these changes?

What is the total number of teachers assigned to work in your classroom each day?

During the last year, how many different teachers have you worked with in your classroom?

Do the teachers you work with consistently share the workload with you on a regular basis?

Have you received as much training as you would like (in the last year)?

If no, please indicate why not.

If you leave this job, what would you be most likely to do?

When staff leave your center or when there are staff vacancies, does it affect your ability to do your job?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult is it for you?

What areas of your teaching are most affected?

When staff in your center are out of the classroom for a few hours, how does it affect your ability

to do your job? A day? A few days?

Please explain how.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult is it for you?

What areas of your teaching are most affected?

Does turnover among coworkers affect your own career goals?

How long do you plan to remain in child care?

Would you recommend teaching in child care as a career choice?

Please explain.

What are the most rewarding aspects of your job?

What are the most stressful aspects of your job?

(If a departing teacher) Why are you leaving this job?

(If a new teacher) Why did you accept this position?

How do you think children are affected when a teacher is out of the classroom for a short time?

Describe their behavior.

How do you think children are affected when a teacher resigns or is fired?

Describe their behavior.

How do you think parents feel when teachers leave?

How do you think parents feel about substitute teachers in the classroom?

How do you think things will change next week when (departing teacher) leaves?

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