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Keeping Public Child Welfare Workers on the Job

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ABSTRACT. The retention of public child welfare workers is of increasing concern in today's social work job market. This article presents results of a longitudinal study developing predictors of turnover among newly hired public child welfare workers. Comparisons are made between predictors of intention to leave and predictors of actually leaving the job as alternative outcomes. Attitudes of workers in response-to-job conditions are more likely to predict intention to leave than actually leaving. Time to receiving a full caseload, which is under the control of administrators, is an important predictor of leaving the job. Other lessons for administration are discussed. doi:10.1300/J147v31n02_02 [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2007 by *The Haworth Press, Inc.* All rights reserved.]

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The retention of public child welfare workers is of increasing concern in today's social work job market. This paper presents results of a longitudinal study developing predictors of turnover among newly hired public child welfare workers. Comparisons are made between predictors of intention to leave and predictors of actually leaving the job as alternative outcomes. Attitudes of workers in response-to-job conditions are more likely to predict intention to leave than actually leaving. Time to receiving a full caseload, which is under the control of administrators, is an important predictor of leaving the job. Other lessons for administration are discussed.

Turnover has long been a problem in nearly all areas of social work (Ewalt, 1991), as well as in public child welfare (Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies, 1989; Helfgott, 1991). Public child welfare is facing its own acute shortage of social work personnel. California is experiencing a shortage of social workers that is expected to get worse (O'Neill, 2000). Statewide there were 6500 public child welfare positions funded for FY 2000/01, yet there was a need for twice that many to meet minimum standards, and three times that many to meet ideal standards (American Humane Association, 2000).

It is difficult to specify precise current turnover rates in public child welfare because of regional differences and because of different ways of measuring turnover. Furman (1998) found that about half of new hires left Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services within two years of hire. In San Diego, 24% of new hires left the job in a period of time ranging from one to three years (Jones & Okamura, 2000). The turnover rates for public child welfare workers in California were 12% in 1998 and less than 10% in 2004 (Clark, Fulcher, & Mathias, 2005). Nationally, the U.S. General Accounting Office ([GAO] 2003) estimates the annual turnover rate of public child welfare workers as high as 30% to 40%, but more careful measures are in the 10-20% range (American Public Human Services Association, 2001; Daly et al., 2000; National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being Research Group, 2001). There are considerable geographical differences, with American Public Human Services Association (2005) reporting local turnover rates from 0 to 67%.

Current staff replacement costs have been calculated at \$10,000 per worker by Graef and Hill (2000) and about \$16,000 per worker by Daly et al. (2000). More important, the U.S. GAO (2003) reports that high

turnover rates in child welfare agencies are a major obstacle to timely investigations, diminishing the ability of agencies to protect children. Though some turnover is beyond the control of administrators, an examination of the reasons for the high rates of turnover may point to ways in which administrators can create the organizational conditions necessary to foster the kind of worker morale that leads to quality service.

This paper addresses two important issues for administrators: (1) Among public child welfare workers, how much of the turnover problem is caused by factors that can be changed by administrators?; and (2) What are these factors? Variables are categorized into three categories: (1) Individual factors that workers bring with them to the job (gender, age, ethnicity, place of birth, marital status, father's education, number of children, non-job income, educational degree, being licensed or receiving supervision for licensing, being in school, work experience, and commitment to public child welfare); (2) response-to-job factors that reflect reactions of individuals to agency conditions (union membership, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy); and (3) job factors that are intrinsic in the job itself (salary, caseload size, time to full caseload, hours worked, training, stressors, peer support, quality of supervision, quality of administration, degree of authority, degree of formalization, role conflict, and job congruence with values). In addition, the study uses two dependent variables—intention to leave the job, and actually leaving the job—so that factors can be compared as they differ in relation with these two outcomes.

PREDICTORS OF TURNOVER

The empirical literature on job turnover has been well-documented. The following discussion relies heavily on Mor Barak, Nissy and Levin (2001), who conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative studies. Recent findings from Dickinson and Perry (2002), Ellett, Ellett, and Rugutt (2003), and Landsman (2001) offer an important analytical framework for the present study. Reagh (1994), Rycraft (1994), and Samantrai (1992), early exploratory studies, also remain useful for their qualitative descriptions. Retention studies use either intention to leave or actual turnover as outcomes. Mor Barak et al. (2001) examined both outcomes in the literature. Predictors are stronger for intention to leave than for actual turnover.

Individual Factors

Studies have found mixed relationships between personal characteristics and job satisfaction (Butler, 1990) or worker attitudes (Oldham & Hackman, 1981). Koeske and Kirk (1995) found that only psychological well-being was positively related to retention of social workers, but that no other individual characteristic predicted whether workers would remain on the job. Likewise, Mor Barak et al. (2001) found that demographic characteristics were less predictive of retention than were professional perceptions or organizational conditions.

Mor Barak et al. (2001) and Dickinson and Perry (2002) did not find gender to be a predictor of turnover, but Landsman (2001) found that males were more likely to intend to leave, while Vinokur-Kaplan, Jayaratne, and Chess (1994) found the opposite. Mor Barak et al. (2001) and Dickinson and Perry (2002) did not find ethnicity to be a predictor of turnover, but Landsman (2001) found that Whites were more likely to intend to remain, while Jones and Okamura (2000) found the opposite. While some studies (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Koeske & Kirk, 1995) did not find a relationship between age and turnover, there is evidence from a number of studies (Mor Barak et al., 2001) that younger workers are more likely to leave the job. Ben-Dror (1994) and Kiyak, Namazi, and Kahana (1997) found marital status unrelated to intention to leave, while Ben-Dror (1994) found that workers with children were more likely to intend to leave.

Todd and Deery-Schmitt (1996) report that more educated child care workers were more likely to intend to leave; Ben-Dror (1994) reports that more educated residential mental health workers were less likely to intend to leave; Balfour and Neff (1993) report no correlation for child welfare workers. Jinnett and Alexander (1999), Landsman (2001), and Ellett et al. (2003) found that child welfare workers with an MSW were more likely to intend to remain on the job. Looking across studies, Mor Barak et al. (2001) found amount of work experience to be strongly associated with remaining on the job, as did Landsman (2001).

Response-to-Job Factors

These factors represent responses by individuals to job characteristics. Mor Barak et al. (2001) report that this group of variables is the most predictive of intention to leave, though less predictive of actually leaving. Weiner (1980) found no correlation between attitudes toward

unions and leaving the job among welfare workers, but Iverson and Currivan (2003) found that active union participation among teachers was associated with remaining on the job. Not surprisingly, job satisfaction is strongly correlated with intention to remain on the job (Clark, 2002; Ellett et al., 2003; Landsman, 2001; Mor Barak et al., 2001). Conceptually and empirically, job satisfaction is divided into several facets including satisfaction with different elements of the job situation (Spector, 1997), and these facets may associate in different ways with other job factors such as commitment to the job or to the career. Preliminary evidence suggests a positive relationship between levels of individuals' beliefs in their self-efficacy in carrying out tasks specific to this job, and intention to remain in the child welfare job (Ellett, 2001b).

Job Factors

Variables such as heavy workload, low salary, poor agency operation, low agency morale, and few opportunities for advancement are closely related to a desire to change jobs (Sze & Ivker, 1986). A positive organizational culture has also been found to increase the likelihood of retaining skilled child welfare workers (Ellett, 2001a). Landsman (2001) found structural characteristics, as they relate to levels of stress on the job, to be closely related to the retention of child welfare workers. Mor Barak et al. (2001) confirm that organizational factors as a group are strong predictors of intention to leave the job; somewhat less so as predictors of actually leaving.

Mor Barak et al. (2001) and Dickinson and Perry (2002) did not find a correlation between actual caseload size and turnover. A high level of stress has been found to be closely related to low job satisfaction and job commitment (McLean & Andrew, 2000; Nissly, Mor Barak, & Levin, 2005). Mor Barak et al. (2001) conclude that salary is not a factor in turnover, but some studies (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Harrington et al., 2001; Koeske & Kirk, 1995) have found that higher salaries can affect retention positively. Mor Barak et al. (2001) found training as a variable in several studies, but concluded that it does not have an effect on turnover. However, the opposite was found in some studies (Henry, 1990; Todd & Deery-Schmitt, 1996).

Peer support is related to the intentions of child welfare workers to remain at their current jobs (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Ellett et al., 2003; Gleason-Wynn, 1995; Landsman, 2001). Perceived positive quality of supervision is associated with intention to remain on the job

(Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Henry, 1990; Landsman, 2001). Mor Barak et al. (2001) confirm that quality of supervisor is a predictor of intention to remain on the job, but not of actual turnover.

Lee and Ashforth (1993) found that work autonomy is correlated with intention to remain on the job. Qualitative studies have found that the issue of role conflict emerges from discussions with workers about their experiences on the job (Reagh, 1994; Rycraft, 1994; Weaver, 1999). Mor Barak et al. (2001) report that role conflict, role ambiguity or role stress are associated with intention to leave the job, but not with actual turnover.

METHODS

Design

An original quantitative survey instrument was constructed. Standardized scales were drawn from the existing literature. The instrument was pre-tested on a group of child welfare workers that were not part of the study. A slightly different version of the questionnaire was used for the workers who had already left the job. Potential subjects for this longitudinal study were the 1700 new public child welfare workers hired in California's 58 counties between April 2000 and April 2001. California's public child welfare system is county-based, so this approach allowed for variation on job and agency variables. Over 1700 surveys were mailed to these workers in 44 counties between July 2001 and December 2001. The counties not in the study are all very small and rural; most of these 14 counties are not included because they had no new hires during this period of time, though some counties declined to participate. With 519 active cases in the final data file, this is a response rate of approximately 34%. The response rate and the rate of inappropriate surveys varied across counties. The range of time between hire date and survey completion date was three months to two years, with a mean of about one year. Because of missing values, 382 cases were used in the final binary logistic regression analysis. Final turnover data for each subject in the sample were collected from each study county from June to August 2003. Respondents had been on the job for two to three and a half years, with a mean of 34 months (Weaver & Chang, 2005).

Variables

Outcomes

The present includes two outcome variables—intention to leave the job and actually leaving the job. The variable measuring *commitment to the current job* (six items, e.g., “I am actively seeking other employment” Alpha = .84) is modified from Ellett’s (2001a) nine-item scale that measured intention to remain in the profession rather than intention to remain on this job. It is reversed to indicate intention to leave the job. The dichotomous turnover variable, based on reports from the personnel departments of each county, indicates if each respondent left the job or not.

Individual Variables

Gender is coded as *Male*. Ethnicity is coded as *Latino*, *African-American*, *Asian* and *Other*, with *White* as the reference category in the regression analyses. The *Other* category consists of bi-racial subjects. *Age* is included as a continuous variable. *US-born* indicates that the respondent was born in the United States. *Father’s college* indicates that the subject’s father has some college education and is intended as a measure of socioeconomic background. Marital status is coded as *Never Married* or *Divorced/Separated/Widowed*, with *married* or *living with a partner* as the reference category. *Has children* is coded from a variable inquiring about number of children. Salary is subtracted from total household income to derive a measure of nonwork *income support*.

Since social work degrees are of primary interest and are considered more specialized for these jobs, workers with both BSWs and other BAs are coded as *BSW* and those with MSWs and other degrees are coded as *MSW*. Respondents with BA, AA or PhD degrees, and no MSW, are the comparison group in the regression analyses. (Title IV-E stipend history is of interest, but is not included in the analysis because these respondents have a work payback obligation to public child welfare for each year of educational support, which affects their turnover patterns.) Dichotomous variables are coded for being *Licensed* (either marriage family therapists or licensed clinical social workers), being under *Supervision for licensure*, and for currently being *In school*. *Work experience* was elicited on full-time, part-time and volunteer basis. Years of

part-time work is calculated at .5 of full-time work; volunteer work at .25 of full-time work.

Commitment to public child welfare uses four items (e.g., “Working in child welfare is important to me” Alpha = .90) from McCloskey and McCain (1987) and one from Weaver (1999). Though Mor Barak et al. (2001) categorized this variable as a response-to-job variable, this study considers it as a factor that workers bring to the job.

Response-to-Job Variables

Twenty-two items address the overall concept of job satisfaction. These items are from a 36-item, 9 facet Job Satisfaction Survey by Spector (1997), with additional items from California Social Work Education ([CalSWEC], 1996) and Vinokur-Kaplan et al. (1994). Seven subscales are derived from these 22 items—general job satisfaction (six items, e.g., “All in all, I am satisfied with my job” Alpha = .83), and satisfaction with job conditions (five items, e.g., “The job security is good” Alpha = .70), clients (three items, e.g., “I have satisfying relationships with clients” Alpha = .75), workload (three items, e.g., “I have too much to do at work” Alpha = .73), pay and benefits (three items, e.g., “I am satisfied with the benefits I receive” Alpha = .74), job flexibility (two items, e.g., “I appreciate the flexible schedule of this job” Alpha = .71), and transfers (one item, “Workers are frequently transferred without consideration of their feelings”).

Three self-efficacy subscales—dealing with the agency (four items, e.g., “I have a strong ability to work effectively within the structure of my county organization” Alpha = .78), having personal motivation (three items, e.g., “I have a strong ability to persist in my efforts to accomplish work goals” Alpha = .77), and having good job skills (eight items, e.g., “I have a strong ability to effectively use interviewing skills” Alpha = .83)—are derived from 15 items by Ellett (2001b). “In the union” indicates union membership. This is considered a response to the job because in most counties, union membership was voluntary.

Job Variables

Specific items address *Caseload size*, months until acquiring a *full caseload*, *hours worked per week*, percentage of *time spent on paper-work*, and *monthly salary*. *Amount of training* is from CalSWEC (1996). Additional items ask if subjects took the *Standardized Core Training* or the *Regional Training Academy* training. Eighteen items address the

amount of *job stressors* at each agency. Most of these items are modified from Barrett and McKelvey (1980), and are intended to measure the presence of specific potentially stressful job conditions, not the degree to which workers experience stress. The following four subscales are developed from these 18 items—stress from *environmental conditions* (six items, e.g., “Making home visits in a high-crime area” Alpha = .80), *job duties* (five items, e.g., “Appearing in court” Alpha = .82), *fear factors* (three items, e.g., “Death of a child” Alpha = .79), and *time pressures* (four items, e.g., “Needing to work overtime” Alpha = .62).

Peer support (five items, e.g., “In my office child welfare staff professionally share and learn from one another” Alpha = .93) is from Ellett (2001a); *quality of supervision* (six items, e.g., “My supervisor is competent in doing her/his job” Alpha = .93) is from CalSWEC (1996); and *quality of agency administration* (seven items, e.g., “In my office, child welfare staff view leadership roles as shared by staff and administrators” Alpha = .93) is modified from Ellett’s (2001a) 11-item scale measuring the quality of administrators and supervisors. The degree of *authority* (five items, e.g., “Little action can be taken here until a supervisor approves it” Alpha = .89) in local agency control systems is measured with Aiken and Hage’s Scale of Authority, found in Price (1972). The degree of *formalization* (five items, e.g., “There is a complete job description for my job” Alpha = .70) in the administration of agencies is also from Hage and Aiken, found in Price (1972). *Role conflict* on the job is comprised of three items (e.g., “I work on unnecessary things” Alpha = .76) taken from Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman’s (1970) 15-item scale. Congruence between the job and respondents’ *values* is measured by a single item (“I perform work that suits my values”). Though this variable could be placed in the category of response-to-job (Mor Barak et al., 2001), here it is considered an aspect of the job itself.

Analysis

Three separate multiple regression analyses were carried out using the scale of intention to leave the job as the outcome and each of the three groups of factors from the survey as the predictors (Tables 1, 2, & 3). The Beta in these models is standardized, that is, can be compared among variables. The F statistic is used to measure the overall strength of the model in predicting intention to leave the job; the R^2 shows how much of the variance in the outcome is predicted by the model. To ensure an inclusive model, at the expense of developing a tighter predictive model,

variables with a p value $< .2$ from each group of predictors are included in the complete multiple regression model (Table 4).

The dichotomous outcome of leaving or staying on the job was logistically regressed separately on each of the three groups of predictors from the survey (Tables 1, 2, & 3). Within each model the Odds Ratio states the likelihood that a respondent will leave the job, given a change of one unit in the score on the independent variable. A Ratio above 1 shows a positive relationship between the independent variable and the outcome variable of leaving the job. The model Chi-square indicates how reliably the overall model distinguishes between leaving the job and staying on the job. Again, variables with a p value $< .2$ from each group of predictors were included in the complete logistic regression model (Table 5).

FINDINGS

Turnover

Of the 1165 subjects for whom turnover data were received, 386 (33%) left the job. As many as 141 survey respondents (27%) left the job. For those who left, mean and median time on the job is about 16 months. There appears to be no modal time on the job; subjects' departure times are fairly evenly distributed over the three and one half years. A difference in commitment to job was examined using a two-tailed t test for independent samples. Those who report a high commitment to the job at the time of initial data collection are more likely to leave than were others. Those who stayed report a mean of 3.26, while those who left have a mean of 2.80 on the five-point commitment to job scale, $t(476) = 4.89, p < .000$. Of those who report that they strongly agreed or agreed that they would remain on the job, only 15% actually left the job. Of those who report that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that they would remain on the job, 49% left. This indicates that there is a significant number of workers still on the job who intend to leave.

Individual Variables

Table 1 contains the results of the individual variables regressed on intention to leave the job and on actually leaving the job. When controlling for the effects of these variables, males are 2.6 times more likely to

leave the job than females, but do not express a greater intention to leave the job. Respondents who are divorced, separated or widowed are only about half as likely to leave the job as married respondents, but do not express a greater intention to stay. Respondents with an MSW express a higher intention to leave than other respondents, but are in fact not more likely to leave. Those with a high level of commitment to public child welfare are significantly less likely to leave the job ($Exp(B) = .630$, $p < .005$), as compared to those with a lower level of commitment, and also express less intention to leave ($\beta = -.639$, $p < .005$).

TABLE 1. Individual Variables Regressed on Intention to Leave the Job (Multiple Regression) and on Leaving the Job (Logistic Regression)

Variables	Multiple Regression (DV = Intention to Leave) $R^2 = .448$, $p = .000$		Logistic Regression (DV = Left the Job) Model $\chi^2 = 37.47$, $p = .010$	
	B(SE)	Beta	B(SE)	Odds Ratio
Male	-.179(.103)	-.069*	.955(.361)	2.598**
Age	-.005(.005)	-.052	.016(.019)	1.017
Latino (White)	.043(.099)	.019	-.785(.418)	.456*
African-American (White)	.114(.116)	.039	.370(.431)	1.447
Asian (White)	.087(.138)	.026	-.399(.537)	.671
Other (White)	-.071(.166)	.166	.086(.564)	1.090
U.S.-born	-.037(.102)	-.364	.657(.436)	1.930*
Father has some college	-.034(.073)	-.019	-.099(.271)	.906
Never married (Married)	-.002(.087)	-.001	.129(.321)	.686
Div/sep/wid (Married)	-.012(.097)	-.128	-.795(.392)	.452**
Has children	-.043(.073)	-.024	-.220(.274)	.422
Income support	-.002(.000)	-.008	.000(.000)	1.000
BSW (BA, AA, PhD)	.182(.124)	.059*	-.311(.507)	.733
MA (BA, AA, PhD)	.111(.106)	.046	-.187(.373)	.829
MSW (BA, AA, PhD)	.183(.080)	.100**	-.308(.302)	.735
Licensed	-.111(.178)	-.024	.192(.606)	.752
Supervised for License	-.196(.111)	-1.769*	.059(.410)	1.061
In School	.042(.106)	.015	-.296(.427)	.489
Work experience	.005(.005)	.046	.005(.019)	1.005
Commitment, Child Welfare	-.605(.038)	-.639***	-.462(.135)	.630***

* $p < .20$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .005$

As shown in Table 1, this model is statistically significant in both cases, with $R^2 = .448$ ($p < .000$) for the outcome variable of intention to leave and $\chi^2(20) = 37.47$ ($p = .010$) for actual turnover. Being male and receiving supervision for licensure are carried over to the complete multiple regression model at $p < .2$. Ethnicity, being born in this country, and educational degree are carried over to the complete logistic regression model.

Response-to-Job Variables

Table 2 shows that general job satisfaction and a strong sense of self-motivation are significantly correlated with intention to leave the job, with higher scores of general satisfaction and self-motivation indicating lower intention to leave. However, there are no statistically significant correlations with actually leaving the job among the response-to-job variables.

The overall R^2 of the multiple regression model is $.538$ ($p < .000$), accounting for 54% of the variance in intention to leave, while the

TABLE 2. Response-to-Job Variables Regressed on Intention to Leave the Job (Multiple Regression) and on Leaving the Job (Logistic Regression)

Variables	Multiple Regression (DV = Intention to Leave) $R^2 = .538, p = .000$		Logistic Regression (DV = Left the Job) $\chi^2 = 19.31, p = .056$	
	B(SE)	Beta	B(SE)	Odds Ratio
In the union	-.090(.072)	-.043	-.003(.271)	.997
General job satisfaction	-.855(.058)	-.677***	-.403(.207)	.668*
Satisfaction job conditions	.001(.057)	.001	-.342(.206)	.711*
Satisfaction clients	.004(.045)	.003	.091(.162)	1.096
Satisfaction workload	-.040(.036)	-.039	.017(.134)	1.017
Satisfaction pay and benefits	.020(.035)	.021	.112(.131)	1.119
Satisfaction flexibility	.039(.036)	.040	.111(.133)	1.117
Satisfaction transfers	.017(.028)	.023	-.013(.104)	.987
Self-efficacy agency	-.114(.068)	-.076*	.093(.242)	1.097
Self-efficacy motivation	-.165(.066)	-.112**	-.361(.230)	.697*
Self-efficacy with job skills	.107(.076)	.058*	-.054(.277)	.947

* $p < .20$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .005$

Chi-square for the logistic regression model is 19.31 ($df = 11, p = .056$) for actual turnover. Self-efficacy in dealing with the agency and self-efficacy with job skills, along with general job satisfaction and self-motivation, are carried over to the complete multiple regression model at $p < .2$. General job satisfaction, satisfaction with job conditions and a sense of efficacy with personal motivation are included in the complete logistic regression model at $p < .2$.

Job Variables

Amount of training and taking Regional Training are significantly negatively correlated with intention to leave the job, while taking Core Training is positively correlated with intention to leave the job. Respondents reporting a higher degree of authority at their agencies express a higher intention to leave, and those who believe that the job suits their values express a lower intention to leave, but neither variable predicts actually leaving. Salary is associated with leaving the job. Respondents who are allowed more time before acquiring a full caseload are less likely to leave the job ($Exp(B) = .851, p < .05$) than respondents who are given less time. Caseworkers who take Regional Academy training courses are less likely to leave ($Exp(B) = .426, p < .05$), as compared with those who do not take the courses. Respondents who take Core Training are about three times more likely to leave the job than workers who do not take the courses. Workers who report a high level of role conflict are about 1.6 times as likely to leave the job as those with a lower level of conflict but do not express a greater intent to leave.

Job variables taken as a set have $R^2 = .327 (p < .000)$ for intention to leave, and $\chi^2(19) = 34.39 (p = .017)$ for actual turnover (Table 3). Quality of administration, degree of formalization and role conflict are carried over to the complete multiple regression model at $p < .2$. The variable hours worked per week, is carried over to the complete logistic model at $p < .2$.

Complete Models

The complete multiple regression model with intention to leave as the outcome (Table 4) includes variables at $p < .2$ selected from each of the previous three multiple regression models. This model has $R^2 = .606 (p < .000)$. Respondents with MSWs express a higher intention to leave

TABLE 3. Job Variables Regressed on Intention to Leave the Job (Multiple Regression) and on Leaving the Job (Logistic Regression)

Variables	Multiple Regression (DV = Intention to Leave) $R^2 = .327, p = .000$		Logistic Regression (DV = Left the Job) $\chi^2 = 34.39, p = .017$	
	B(SE)	Beta	B(SE)	Odds Ratio
Salary	.007(.000)	1.277	.000(.000)	1.000**
Caseload Size	-.001(.003)	-.024	-.002(.008)	.998
Time to Full Caseload	.002(.017)	.007	-.161(.071)	.851**
Hours Worked/Week	-.001(.010)	-.006	.051(.034)	1.053*
Percent Time on Paperwork	-.001(.003)	-.026	-.008(.010)	.992
Amount of Training	-.211(.092)	-.134**	.170(.309)	1.186
Took Core Training	.286(.120)	.150**	1.073(.440)	2.923**
Took Regional Training	-.234(.115)	-.129**	-.853(.390)	.426**
Stress from Conditions	.059(.069)	.057	-.275(.227)	.759
Stress from Job Duties	.085(.070)	.082	.251(.240)	1.286
Stress from Fear Factors	.038(.050)	.048	-.045(.174)	.956
Stress from Time Pressures	.077(.075)	.070	-.106(.225)	.900
Peer Support	.007(.067)	.006	-.067(.215)	.935
Quality of Supervision	-.048(.062)	-.048	-.122(.195)	.885
Quality of Administration	-.109(.069)	-.106*	-.001(.223)	.999
Degree of Authority	.132(.065)	.131**	.229(.214)	1.257
Degree of Formalization	-.131(.078)	-.101*	-.018(.254)	.982
Role Conflict	.098(.066)	.098*	.441(.219)	1.555**
Job Suits Values	-.175(.055)	-.194**	-.181(.181)	.834

* $p < .20$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .005$

than respondents with other degrees. Commitment to the field of public child welfare and general job satisfaction are significantly negatively associated with intention to leave.

The complete logistic regression model (Table 5) includes variables at $p < .2$ selected from each of the previous three logistic regression models. This model has $\chi^2(18) = 57.37$ ($p < .000$), predicting outcome group membership significantly. Again, males are about 3.5 times as likely as females to leave the job. Respondents who are allowed more time before acquiring a full caseload are less likely to leave the job than respondents who are given less time ($Exp(B) = .724, p < .05$).

TABLE 4. Individual, Response-to-Job and Job Variables from Tables 1-3 at $p < .2$ Regressed on Intention to Leave the Job (Multiple Regression). $R^2 = .606$, $p = .000$

Variables	B(SE)	Beta
Male	-.120(.076)	-.051
BSW (BA, AA, PhD)	.108(.099)	.037
MA (BA, AA, PhD)	.087(.084)	.039
MSW (BA, AA, PhD)	.170(.068)	.094**
Commitment to public child welfare	-.304(.037)	-.319***
Supervised for license	-.113(.092)	-.041
General job satisfaction	-.636(.058)	-.502***
Self-efficacy with agency	-.056(.061)	-.917
Self-efficacy with personal motivation	-.049(.061)	-.033
Self-efficacy with job skills	.010(.071)	.006
Amount of training	-.047(.050)	-.032
Took core training	.006(.066)	.003
Took regional academy	-.099(.061)	-.057
Quality of administration	-.004(.040)	-.004
Degree of authority	.039(.038)	.039
Degree of formalization	.028(.042)	.023
Role conflict	.003(.039)	.003
Job suits values	.042(.033)	.047

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .005$

DISCUSSION

The study falls short in a number of ways, but also leads to some practical conclusions. The response rate is only 34%, and this varies across counties. It is difficult to speculate about the effects of response rates, but it seems likely that in studies such as this more satisfied and cooperative workers, presumably less likely to leave, are more likely to comply with the study. The constraint of the two-year time limit of this study limits the applicability of these findings. Though the initial two years on a job may be the most important in terms of turnover, a complete understanding of the patterns and reasons for turnover requires a longer longitudinal study. In particular, the time constraint of this study precludes the examination of the role of Title IV-E stipends in the deci-

TABLE 5. Individual, Response-to-Job and Job Variables from Tables 1-3 at $p < .2$ Regressed on Left the Job (Logistic Regression); $\chi^2 = 57.37$, $p = .000$

Variables	B(SE)	Odds Ratio
Male	1.225(.362)	3.403***
Latino (Whites)	-.734(.427)	.085
African-American (Whites)	.630(.416)	1.878
Asian (Whites)	-.471(.656)	.625
Other (Whites)	.666(.642)	1.946
US-born	.881(.471)	2.414
Never married (married)	.027(.316)	1.027
Divorced or widowed (married)	-.527(.400)	.590
Commitment to public child welfare	-.223(.172)	.800
General job satisfaction	-.441(.273)	.643
Satisfaction with job conditions	.018(.245)	1.018
Self-efficacy with personal motivation	-.269(.251)	.764
Salary	.000(.000)	1.000
Time to full caseload	-.172(.063)	.724**
Hours worked per week	.005(.027)	1.005
Took core academy	.250(.355)	1.284
Took regional training	-.255(.323)	.775
Role conflict	.310(.184)	1.363

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .005$

sions of new workers to remain on the job. The placement of variables in the three categories of the study is somewhat arbitrary. In particular, career commitment, union membership, job stressors, and congruence of the job with individual values could have been categorized differently.

There are important differences in predictors between intention to leave and actually leaving. In part, this is because workers leave for unanticipated reasons. Also, however, intention to leave is an attitude, with an uncertain connection to behavior. Attitudes toward the job and the field of public child welfare predict intention to leave but not actually leaving.

Job variables are associated less with retention than one would expect. However, time to a full caseload is a strong predictor of leaving the job, while not being related to intention to leave. Receiving a full caseload too soon after beginning work does drive workers to leave the job,

but apparently is not a factor that affects their attitudes or intention to leave. This is an important management implication that is immediately applicable.

The association of role conflict with leaving the job is a crucial finding. Role conflict reflects a mismatch between individual expectations, and specific contextual demands of the job. Worker expectations in this case do not seem to be based on either personal values or professional education, since these variables are not associated with turnover. Likewise, it is not clear what about the job context is problematic, since a number of possible factors, such as caseload size, bureaucratization, training, and salary, are not associated with leaving the job. Since the items refer to “things that should be done differently,” “unnecessary things,” and “incompatible policies,” there must be certain agency-specific policies and procedures that interfere with the felt ability of workers to carry out their jobs. Presumably these specific practices could be identified and either changed or more fully explained to workers. Here is another finding potentially of value to child welfare administrators concerned about turnover.

The relationships between retention, educational level, and the job training variables are not straightforward. Since one of the goals of education is to instill values, how the values of new workers interact with their expectations, role conflict, and work experiences are issues that administrators may want to devote attention to in the preparation of new workers. Retention needs to be studied further in conjunction with new worker training, special educational preparation for public child welfare jobs (Title IV-E programs), and the role of supervision in new worker training.

While some workers express stronger intention to leave than others, these are not necessarily the workers who do leave. While the literature is not consistent on the relationship between demographic factors and turnover, it is a striking finding of this study that males are three times more likely to leave the job than females, though they do not express a higher intent to leave. In this study, while not statistically significant, there is some evidence that Latinos and Asians are more likely to remain on the job than Whites and African-Americans, though they do not express differences in intention to leave. Workers with MSWs are more likely to intend to leave the job than those with other degrees, but in fact are no more likely to do so.

There is a possibility that those who intend to leave may leave within a few years. However, that expressing intent to leave does not necessarily translate into leaving a job for many workers is an important lesson

for administrators. Almost half of the workers that strongly intended to leave in fact remain, indicating a possible morale problem.

After consideration of these factors potentially related to turnover, general job satisfaction remains probably the best measurable indicator of potential turnover. Consistent with the literature (Acker, 1999; Vinokur-Kaplan et al., 1994), this study affirms that those who are generally satisfied with their job are more likely to stay on the job. Landsman (2001) considers job satisfaction as a precursor to organizational commitment and occupational commitment, while Freund (2005) considers organizational commitment as a precursor to job satisfaction. In both models these factors precede intent to stay in the organization and in the occupation.

To continue to motivate public child welfare workers to remain in their jobs, it may help if administrators and supervisors develop ongoing organizational strategies designed to promote individual workers' sense of job satisfaction. The new insights from this study are that administrators may be able to increase job satisfaction by slowly increasing new caseworkers' caseloads, and by addressing the role expectations of new workers through training or with supervision. It is particularly important to address workers' satisfaction in the early stage of employment, when they are making their decisions to stay or leave this area of practice. When job satisfaction is increased, avoidable turnover may be reduced, possibly through an increase in organizational commitment.

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