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## THE CAUSES OF TURNOVER AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

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### ABSTRACT

There is general agreement that social worker turnover is not desirable. Yet social work administrators who want to institute changes which might reduce the rate of turnover have little accurate information about the causes of worker mobility -- and without such information, any change activity must be based on a trial-and-error approach. In this study general propositions and hypotheses about social work turnover have been deduced from what is known about worker mobility generally and have been assessed in the light of the available literature on social worker mobility.

The effectiveness of social work services depends in no small measure on the quality and quantity of social workers available to man these services. And both quality and quantity are affected negatively by staff turnover, that is, by employed social workers leaving their job for another job, within or outside of social work. Social work administrators and manpower experts agree that high turnover rates are undesirable. But there is little consensus on the causes of turnover.

The literature on turnover, especially among blue-collar and clerical employees, is extensive, but little attention has been paid to turnover among social workers. Price (38), in the most recent book on turnover, lists over 400 items in his bibliography; of these only four have reference to social workers. This study set out to explore what is known about the causes of social work turnover. We attempted to cover the total research literature, but for technical reasons concentrated on studies from the United States, United Kingdom and Israel.\*

We followed Price (38) in our basic explanatory model, but have introduced a number of changes to make the model more useful for the study of social worker turnover. Price discusses three conceptual categories:

1. Correlates or demographic variables - these are the indicators to which turnover is related, such as length of service. Price calls these "correlates" to emphasize that these variables indicate a correlation between variables rather than causation (38:24).

2. Determinants - analytical variables which are believed to produce variation in turnover. The determinant is the independent variable and voluntary turnover, the dependent variable. The linkage is plausible when the independent and dependent variables are related in a nonlinear manner (38:67).

3. Intervening variables are often treated as determinants, but we follow Price since these variables seem to intervene between the determinants and turnover (38:79).

#### Demographic Variables

Demographic variables are descriptive of the leaver, not explanatory of the act of leaving. Thus a person does not leave his job because he is young or because he has held his present position for only a short time; instead, the determinants which may result in the decision to quit seem to have more of an effect on people with certain demographic characteristics, such as a short stay on the job or young age.

Length of service. Workers with short lengths of service usually have higher rates of turnover than those who have been employed for a long time.

Turnover is more prevalent during the first and second year of employment and decreases as the length of service increases. The negative relationship between this correlate and turnover emerges from almost every empirical study, no matter what the occupation or profession; social work is no exception. Thus Tollen (50) noted that turnover is highest for social workers employed between 1 and 2 years and drops for every subsequent year of employment. Fisch (10) presents the identical finding for Israel. No exceptions were found for social workers though Price notes one "deviant" study for teachers (38:27).

Age. Younger workers usually have higher turnover rates than older workers.

This relationship is supported by empirical studies from all professions and occupations, including social work. While age is related to the length of service variable, the two are not identical. Two 39-year old social workers may have had entirely different work histories: one may have worked for the past 15 years for the present organization, but the other may have been a full-time mother and homemaker since her marriage 18 years ago, returning to paid employment only last year. Older women consistently demonstrate lower turnover rates than younger women (37:167). Most turnover studies of social workers confirm the negative relationship between age and turnover (16,22,35,50). Kermish and Kushin (22) note an annual turnover rate of 53.3% for social workers, age 25 years or younger, and less than half of that rate, 24.7%, for the next age group, 26-30 years. Tissue (49:3) writes that "age is the most powerful and consistent predictor of employment plans ... it was the youngest and the oldest workers who were most likely to leave and those in the 40-59 age group who were most likely to stay".

Education. Better educated workers usually have higher turnover rates than less-educated workers.

This generalization does not apply equally to all occupations and professions, but is cited by many researchers. One of the major studies cited in support of the education correlate involved many thousands of social workers (52), yet another well-known study of social workers (50) does not corroborate the finding that there is a positive relationship between education and turnover. Since both study populations consisted of public welfare workers, a group of workers who generally are college graduates without professional social work training, the difference in findings cannot be easily explained.

Level of responsibility. Line workers usually have higher turnover rates than supervisors and administrators.

All studies which examine social worker data related to this characteristic, support the negative relationship between level of responsibility and turnover. Tollen (50) reported a turnover rate of 27.5% for all social workers, including supervisors and administrators, and one of 33.7% for caseworkers only. Even larger differences were reported by Kermish and Kushin (22), with a turnover rate



of 13.2% for supervisors and 36.1% for social worker II. Herman (16) supports this correlate for the Jewish Community Center field. The negative relationship is not necessarily due to the promotion of workers who stay longest. Weinberger (55) found that his respondents stayed considerably fewer years on lower level jobs than in executive jobs; the average lengths for all previous (non-executive) jobs was only 3.71 years, but the executive directors had already been an average of 7.22 years on their current job.

Sex. Female workers generally have a higher turnover rate than male workers.

A large amount of data has been collected about the relationship between sex and turnover. Price (38:39-40) cites "an impressive amount of evidence" in support of this generalization, but presents other data which contradict this relationship. We have had similar experiences as we reviewed social work studies. Support for the generalization is presented by Fisch (10) who notes a turnover rate of 72% for married females and 23% for married males; others who report higher or slightly higher turnover rates for females include Kermish and Kushin (22), Padberg (31), and Simpson and Simpson (46). However, Tollen (50) suggests that there is no significant difference between male and female turnover rates. On the other hand, Katzell's review of turnover studies (21) concludes that male workers have a higher turnover rate. This view is supported by a large scale study of US social workers (52) and Certingok's earlier study (6). Meld (25) found that early in their career, male community workers were less likely to change their job than women (34% of men and 54% women changed their job within the first two years after graduation), but there were twice as many males as females among those who made 2 or more changes.

One explanation for the inconsistent findings may lie in the fact that women are reported to have different reasons for working than men. For women non-financial motivations are often more important. Working to fill a need for accomplishment or to meet people may be crucial; when these needs are not met by the job, women are more likely to resign than men, but if these needs are met they are more likely to remain than men even when other conditions such as pay are not satisfied (20,45).

Professionalization. Higher degrees of professionalization will probably result in higher rates of turnover.

Social work administrators are convinced that turnover is higher among professional social workers than among untrained personnel. One US government survey found an extremely high rate of turnover among public welfare workers who had received paid study leaves to obtain an MSW degree. But empirical support for this generalization is weak.

Blau and Scott indicate that the turnover rate was significantly higher in the less professional of the two social agencies they studied, but they did not specify turnover rates by workers' level of professionalization (1:256-7). Graduates of professional training programs in English universities are reported to have had significantly higher amounts of social work employment than graduates of other social science programs with social work courses (40).

Marital status. Married women usually have a higher turnover rate than single women. Among men the relationship is reversed with single men generally having a higher turnover rate than married men.

Though Price (38:41) suggests that support for this generalization is unclear, we found support for it in several major social worker studies. Tissue (49, Table 2) supports this generalization, especially for public child welfare workers. Padberg (31:170) reported that 81.2% of his single female graduates were currently working, but only 42.3% of his married female graduates. Rodgers (40) found that 55% of the women graduates from English universities whom she was studying were working at the time of their marriage, but only 15% were working one year later. Herberg (15) reported similar findings for female graduates of US schools of social work. Only one study suggests that the marital status of leavers did not differ significantly from that of stayers (22).

Both Herberg (15) and Lewin (24) report that the relative timing of marriage and professional education is important for subsequent work behavior. Those women who married prior to receiving their professional education consistently have a higher ratio than those who married after completing their professional studies. For the latter, marriage tends to interrupt their career while the former seem to want to combine marriage with a career.

Children and family obligations. Female workers with younger children (or large families) generally have higher turnover rates than those with older children (or smaller families).

Interruption in employment of female social workers is usually associated with child care problems. This generalization is supported by studies from the US (24,31), England (4), and Israel (10, 57,58). However, several researchers report that women with children have a higher commitment to work than those without children (50, 11, 32). This may explain the in-and-out phenomenon, with mothers frequently returning to work as soon as they have solved their child-care problems.

The younger the youngest child, the higher the turnover rate. Tollen (50) reported a 24% turnover rate for mothers whose youngest child was less than six years old, but only half that rate for those whose youngest child was between 6 and 15 years old.

As the size of the family becomes larger, the turnover rate usually becomes larger. According to one report (37:166) this generalization is true for females but not for males. Both US and Israeli census data support the generalization that the proportion of working women decreases as the number of children increases; 43% of all American women without children are working, 25% of those with two children, 19% of those with four children, but only 12% of those with six or more children (17). In Israel, 64% of all women without children, but only 33% of those with children, are working. For Israeli women with three or more children, only 21% are employed (57). Fisch (10) reported similar data for female Israeli social workers.

Geography. The geographic location of the job, as well as the mobility of workers, may be associated with turnover, but these correlates have not yet received systematic attention.

Social worker vacancies may be more difficult to fill in rural areas and in areas far away from the metropolitan centers. Turnover may be especially high in these areas because professional workers tend to be attracted to jobs in larger cities (46:220). At the same time there is a report of high turnover rates for London probation workers who were attracted from inner city jobs to the suburbs where housing costs were lower and promotion opportunities better (4). For whatever the reason, moving from the area of work may be an important reason for attrition, as Padberg (47) reported for the social work graduates he studied.

Personality characteristics. Higher rates of turnover are usually associated with higher degrees of achievement motivation, aggression, independence, self-confidence and sociability; lower rates of turnover



are usually associated with higher levels of emotional stability, maturity, sincerity, and with lower degrees of achievement orientation.

No studies of social workers which deal with this characteristics were located. The generalization comes from Porter and Steers' exhaustive review of turnover studies (37) and is based on the findings from a number of professional and occupational fields. One study of technical and professional personnel concluded that a high achievement orientation was the best predictor of turnover. On the other hand, Bowey (2), an English student of turnover reported that few personality characteristics could be associated consistently with leavers.

Summary of Demographic Variables. Fairly strong support was found for the relevance of five of the ten demographic variables while inconsistent or insufficient findings were located for the remaining five.

| <u>Medium to strong support</u> | <u>Inconsistent or weak support</u> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| length of service               | education                           |
| age                             | sex                                 |
| level of responsibility         | professionalization                 |
| marital status                  | geography                           |
| children and family obligations | personality characteristics         |

#### The Determinants of Turnover

Next we will examine the analytical variables which are thought to produce variations in turnover rates. Here we generally refer to voluntary turnover, that is severance from the job on the initiative of the employee. These are the turnover behaviors which are believed to be avoidable, if only the employer were to introduce certain changes. Which changes, if any, to introduce depends, in the first instance, on determining the power or effectiveness of various determinants of avoidable turnover.

Working conditions. Turnover rates will usually be high when working conditions make for impossible job demands or make it impossible for social workers to be of real help to their clients.

In the research literature, this variable has been defined in various ways; as a result, different investigators have reported seemingly contradictory findings. Thus Fisch (10) and Tissue (49) noted that working conditions were of little importance as a reason for

leaving the job, while Berlin and her colleagues (57) found that working conditions were a major reason for changing jobs. When working conditions refer to the physical condition of the office or to irregular hours of work, they do not seem to effect turnover. The only deviant case to this generalization was an early study of turnover among US settlement house workers (Vinter, 1957). On the other hand, when policies and regulations, or worker deployment, prevent workers from offering effective help, higher turnover rates may result. Kermisch and Kushin (22), for example, tabulated the frequency of complaints of social workers who had resigned; first came "overwhelming job demands" and third, "inability to be of real help to the client". Tissue (49), reporting reasons given by social workers under the age of 30 who planned to resign noted that only 18% mentioned "working conditions" (our first definition), but 37% "department philosophy and policy" and 20% "dissatisfaction with all social work". We interpret the latter reasons as reflecting on the workers' inability to be of help.

Work group. High rates of turnover are probable if the work environment does not permit participation in a cohesive and rewarding work group.

Turnover will be high where conditions are such as to inhibit the development of small group cohesiveness and thus prevent worker participation in primary-like work groups. This generalization appears frequently in the turnover literature and has found consistent empirical support since the early Western Electric studies. Only when pay is of primary concern is group participation of lesser importance. However, the small cohesive group may also have dysfunctional consequences since such groups may refuse entry to new workers, thus causing excessive turnover during the induction stage (2, 33). No studies of social work turnover which included this determinant were located.

Morale. High rates of turnover are probable if the work environment is characterized by low levels of worker morale.

This generalization may be related to the previous one. Some have assumed that small group participation, integration and morale are the same thing; others suggest that participation causes integration and integration, high morale (38). But there may be additional factors which may be important for establishing and maintaining worker morale. Research on morale as a determinant for social worker turn-

over is sparse. Only Kermish and Kushin (22) report "poor atmosphere and poor morale" as the second most frequently cited reason for social worker attrition.

Pay and promotion opportunities. Low pay and poor promotion opportunities will probably result in high turnover rates.

Pay may be less important a reason for turnover among professionals, generally, and among social workers, in particular, especially since their vocational choice is often made for reasons other than pay. Nevertheless it appears reasonable, as Price (38:69) stated, that "pay still possesses a considerable degree of attractiveness to them". Yet research on professional turnover often does not include pay as a variable because it is thought unimportant (38:136).

Support for the pay generalization is found in Herman's study of Jewish Community Center executives (16), Cetingok's study of St. Louis social workers (6), and Butterworth's report on English social workers (4). Tissue (49) suggested that pay and promotion opportunities are especially important a consideration among mature workers, those 30 years or older; 34% of those workers thought about quitting because of inadequate pay and benefits and 43% were concerned with poor promotion opportunities - for the younger group of workers, the responses were, respectively, 22% and 18%. Fisch's (10) respondents did not think that pay was a very important consideration for their own decision to terminate work, but he received a different picture when he asked why others quit their job and how best to attract people to social work; in both instances pay was rated as very important.

From the research of Tollen (50) and Sali (58) it emerges that pay is a major consideration for men but not necessarily for women. According to Sali, one out of every five Israeli social workers who left his job did so because of a better job outside of social work; to appreciate this statistic, we must remember that most leavers are mothers of young children who quit because of family responsibilities, so that most of those who quit for other reasons evidently do so in order to take a better job in another field.

Met expectations. The larger the gap between the positive and negative experiences encountered on the job and the expectations from the job, the greater the probability for a high turnover rate.

When a new worker's expectations are not substantially met, the likelihood that he will leave his job will increase. When workers lack the opportunity to achieve what they expected when they were hired, they may resign their job if they have other opportunities. No empirical studies were located which investigated this variable for social worker turnover.

Autonomy. The lower the level of autonomy and the less control workers have over their work, the greater the probability for a high turnover rate.

We assume that every worker requires some level of independence and control over his work situation (33). This requirement for a measure of autonomy is stronger for professional workers than for others. Job severance may result when this autonomy is not allowed. Even among automobile assembly line workers, store employees and clerical workers, autonomy and turnover are negatively related (37). Weinberger (55) found that a similar relationship held for social workers. He concluded that for social workers autonomy was more important than either status or income.

Worker autonomy may be related to the size of the organization. Miles and Petty (27) cited several studies which reported a positive correlation between size and formalization, standardization, centralization, and lack of autonomy. And Smits (48) found that the turnover rate for rehabilitation counselors varied significantly with agency size. Price (51) suggested that centralization was the crucial variable which related with autonomy; when decision-making power is centralized, workers will lose control over their work situation. In this connection, we recall Blau and Scott's observation that ordinarily physical distance between the central headquarter and subunits decreases the former's control and increases the latter's autonomy (1:171). When the larger and more diffused organization adopts higher levels of centralization to retain control over its staff, autonomy will be more limited and greater turnover may result. No empirical studies of the impact of this variable on social worker turnover were located.

Routinization. The higher the degree of routinization, the greater the probability for a higher rate of turnover.

Routinization is the degree to which workers are required to perform their work role in a repetitive manner. Empirical research on this variable has generally been limited to blue collar workers, but

the generalization may apply to all occupational groups (37). It is usually thought that routinization is highest among unskilled workers and lowest among the professions. But work in some of the professional groups demands more routinized performance than in others. Degrees of bureaucratization may be positively related to degrees of routinization; if this assumption is correct, social work which is known for its relatively high level of bureaucratization will also be more routinized than other, less bureaucratized professions. Yet Blau and Scott (1) have shown that the level of routinization varies in different social work agencies.

Only two social worker studies have examined tangentially the relation between routinization and turnover. Weinberger (55) found that the absence of creativity and lack of challenges were given as the most important reasons for dissatisfaction with the job, an expression which often led to turnover. Tissue (49) found few differences between social workers who intended to leave their jobs and those who intended to stay when asked to identify problems with their job; only too-much-paper-work was viewed as more of a problem by those intending to leave - and too-much-paper-work may be an indicator of routinization. However, these studies provide weak support for this generalization; no other empirical studies for social work turnover were located.

Supervision. The more unsatisfactory the supervision which social workers receive, the greater the probability for higher rates of turnover.

Supervision occupies a special place in the social work profession; in many ways social work supervision is unlike the supervision practiced in other occupations and professions. Therefore, findings about the impact of supervision on turnover which come from non-social work settings may not be entirely transferable. Nevertheless the evidence cannot be ignored. In a review of ten empirical studies, Porter and Steers (37) cite only one which did not support a negative relationship between supervision and turnover.

The empirical studies of social worker turnover which reported on the supervisory variable do not support this generalization. It may be that social workers learn how to cope with poor supervisors during their professional studies. Kermish and Kushin (22) note that poor supervision is only the fourth most cited reason for social workers intending to leave their job. Tissue (49) reported that only

9% of the workers under age 30 and 13% of those above that age gave relations with their supervisor as a reason for intending to quit. The non-significance of the relationship between inadequate supervision and turnover was also supported by Fisch (10).

One study of social workers gave partial, but weak support to the generalization. Miles and Petty (27) studied the supervisory style of 51 directors of U.S. county social service departments; distinguishing between two supervisory styles - initiating behavior and consideration - they found that the former is viewed by social workers as a pressure irritant and leads to higher (but not high) levels of turnover.

Summary of Determinants. Eight determinants were identified from the literature. These variables logically seem to be causes of turnover. But for only three determinants were we able to discover sufficient data to hazard a preliminary conclusion for social worker turnover. Support was found for two determinants: working conditions and pay/promotion. No support was found for inadequate supervision. For the five other generalizations we were unable to locate sufficient data to determine whether there is any significant relationship. The weak data base may be due to the fact that we located only a small number of applied studies and a relatively large number of doctoral dissertations. The focus of the latter may have been more on theory-verification than on identifying the causes of available turnover.

#### The Intervening Variables

The determinants do not always "cause" turnover. Low pay, for example, or lack of autonomy, does not result directly in the behavior which we call turnover. Instead, the determinant may trigger off a set of consequences which, under certain conditions, may result in a person leaving his job. These certain conditions are called here the intervening variables. Satisfaction is the degree to which workers have a positive orientation toward working in the organization. Workers with positive orientations are satisfied; those with a negative orientation are dissatisfied. In many studies it has been shown that dissatisfied workers are more likely to quit their jobs than satisfied workers. Yet according to Vroom (53:176-79) the correlation between measures of job satisfaction and turnover is rarely more than 0.30 and an English researcher of labor turnover, Branham (3:96), found no link between turnover and job satisfaction, "although one might expect that this should be so". Dissatisfaction may not lead

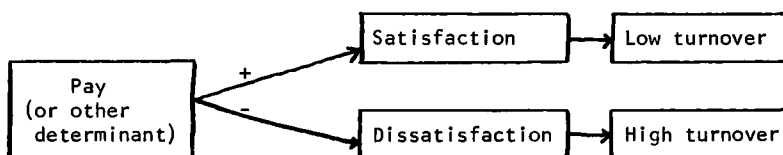
to quitting if the worker receives satisfaction in another system; the worker who is content with his pay may not terminate, even though he is dissatisfied with his job.

A relatively large number of empirical studies of social worker turnover have investigated the satisfaction-hypothesis. Generally no control groups were used and frequently the turnover indicator was anticipated (intended), not actual turnover. This may explain the strong support which at least seven researchers gave to the negative relationship between job satisfaction and social work turnover (13, 23, 26, 41, 42, 47, 48).

Knowledge about the possible relationship between job dissatisfaction and turnover is not particularly helpful to the social work administrator who in any event will prefer satisfied to dissatisfied workers. What he really needs is information about the causes of dissatisfaction. Only one study (23) of social workers in mid-career, 20-25 years after graduation, offered a clue: least satisfied with their career were social workers in direct practice positions. But we cannot conclude from this study that direct practice leads to dissatisfaction; in fact, it may be that younger workers prefer direct practice to administrative jobs, but those who after 20-25 years have not yet been promoted to supervisory or executive positions may well be dissatisfied with their lack of advancement.

What is the role of satisfaction in the turnover process? Price (38:80) suggests that satisfaction is the product of the determinants described above. A high amount of pay, for example, is likely to produce a high amount of satisfaction about pay and about the job. Satisfaction is a variable which intervenes between pay (or any other determinant) and turnover. A high level of the variable will lead to satisfaction and low turnover while a low level will lead to dissatisfaction and high turnover (See figure 1).

FIGURE 1



Opportunity is the availability of alternate jobs or alternate roles. The greater the opportunity for another job or another role, the greater the probability of turnover.

Bowey (2:16) noted that turnover "may be influenced by alternative job opportunities for the employee". Dissatisfaction will result in turnover only when opportunity is relatively high; when opportunity is low, dissatisfied workers generally do not leave unless they can fill another role, such as housewife or retiree. Blau and Scott (1:114) observed that there were more alternate employment opportunities in the large city than in the small county seat. "As a result, some of the best workers in City Agency left for other jobs. Workers who were ambitious, versatile, and oriented toward professional social work often (left) ... However, the best workers in County Agency tended to remain, since there were no important competitors for the abilities they had to offer".

Scotch (43) attributed much of the attrition from the Jewish Community Center field due to "external competition", that is, "expanding opportunities in academia and treatment agencies. Similarly English social work administrators told us of the turnover problem in the years immediately after the Seabohm Report when, because of the rapid expansion of social work positions, there were many opportunities for better jobs.

Price (38:81) stressed the relative dimension of this variable. Opportunity includes aspects of supply and demand. By supply Price means the number of alternate jobs available; by demand, the number of workers competing for the jobs available. Thus when 500 workers compete for 500 vacant jobs, the opportunity is greater than when 2000 workers apply for the same 500 jobs.

However the opportunity ratio is quite different for workers who are not limited to work roles. For workers who have the opportunity to occupy the housewife or retiree role, the demand factor is not relevant. The demand factor also takes on different dimensions for those leaving work in order to return to school. The importance of no-work opportunities for American social workers was presented by Tissue (49); 21% of the workers under the age of 30 intended to leave work in order to return to school and the same percentage, in order to raise a family.

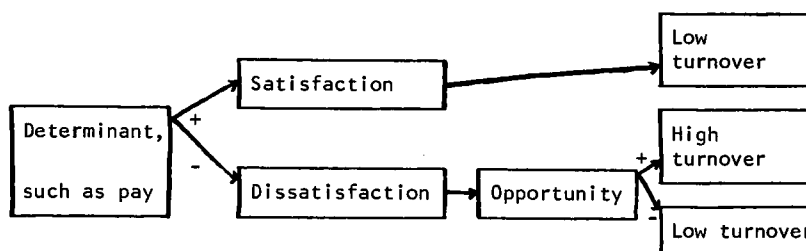
Opportunity will affect turnover only when workers have knowledge about alternate opportunities and when they can transfer to



another role without paying too high a price (loss of pension rights, seniority, tenure, etc.). If workers do not know about other opportunities or if the cost is too high, they will not quit their job, no matter how desirable the alternate opportunities. For social workers, opportunity may not be related to general economic conditions. In most other occupations and professions, there is a noticeable reduction of opportunity during times of depression and general unemployment; without alternate jobs, workers tend to remain on their present job even when there is a strong "push" to find another. Social work job opportunities, on the other hand, may actually expand during such times. And as long as there is a general shortage of social workers, opportunity will continue, even in the face of budget reductions.

The opportunity variable may explain some of the inconsistent findings concerning the satisfaction variable. Dissatisfaction will lead to turnover only when opportunity is high. When no suitable alternate roles are available, workers will generally stay on their job, even if they are dissatisfied. Figure 2 presents the revised relationship between determinants, satisfaction, opportunity, and turnover. Opportunity is not crucial when workers are satisfied; but when

FIGURE 2



workers are dissatisfied, high or low opportunity will make the difference in turnover.

Cost of leaving one's job compared with the cost of remaining on the job. As the cost of leaving increases and the cost of remaining decreases, turnover will generally become less likely. The cost of leaving includes the loss of income, loss of pension rights, seniority and tenure, loss of special benefits, and so on. The cost of remaining on the job includes such items as transportation costs, child care

costs, costs for professional equipment, advanced training, etc. The employer can (subject to union agreement) manipulate both sets of cost so as to influence turnover. He can decrease the cost of child care, for example, by reimbursing these costs or by offering low-cost child care services on the premises. He can increase the cost of leaving by making benefits non-transferable. While no empirical research on this variable was located, it would appear that cost functions as an intervening variable (like opportunity) and not as a determinant.

Summary of Intervening Variables. A fairly strong relationship between turnover and two of the three variables discussed in this chapter (satisfaction and opportunity) emerges from a review of the literature, while the third variable is hardly mentioned. However, the empirical studies cited treated these variables as determinants and not, as suggested, as intervening variables.

#### Discussion

The foregoing review summarizes what is known about the causes of social worker turnover. It would be an understatement to say that very little is known. The repeated studies of the satisfaction-hypothesis have deflected attention from those areas which need further investigation. The concentration on intentions (which are relatively easy to measure) have led to a neglect of studies of actual turnover. Studies involving leavers and control groups of stayers are very rare, but without these it is impossible to know whether a given characteristic applies only to leavers or also to stayers. If, for example, those who continue to work are as dissatisfied as those who have resigned, then a high level of dissatisfaction cannot be considered a cause of turnover. Clearly social worker turnover is an area which demands further empirical research.

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