

## Shocks and Nurse Turnover

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## Shocks, Images and Nurse Turnover

Stressful Work Environments: Evidence from four countries  
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## Theoretical Context

- Turnover Really Matters
- Labour Market School: determinist, quit is exogenous (result of external variables)
- Psychological School: voluntarist, quit is endogenous (owned by the leaver)
- Unfolding Model and Image Theory: hyper-voluntarist – emphasises decision processes

## The Decision to Leave

- Not 'rational choice': decisions are based on habit (inertia) values, and screening
- Role of *shocks*: a single, jarring event that prompts initial thoughts of quitting
- These bypass screening, break with habit
- Extant literature: avoidability (Campion 1991), non-work domain (Cohen 1999; Price 2000) and work domain (Hom & Griffeth 1995 et al)

## Hypotheses

1. Expected shocks are more likely to be positive, and result in decisions to quit that are unavoidable.
2. Negative shocks are more likely to be work-related, and associated with dissatisfaction. They are more likely to affect others.
3. Work-related shocks will be less likely to be salient. They will be more likely to be associated with extensive search for an alternative.
4. Influential shocks are more likely to be salient. The duration of decision time (from thoughts of quitting to finally leaving) will be shorter.
5. Specific shocks are more salient and result in decisions to quit that are unavoidable.
6. Leavers reporting shocks will fall into distinct clusters.

## Sample

Respondents: 352 Nurses (90% women)

- All full time, grade D (qualified) or above
- All voluntary leavers in tax year 2000-2001

Participating Organizations: 8 NHS Trusts

- Range of acute / community Trusts
- Geographically dispersed
- Four large, city based teaching Trusts

## Results

- All H supported: consistent with extant literature, image theory & develops Lee et al (1999)
- 2 Cluster solution:  
Positive, expected, personal, specific shocks > unavoidable (n53) (eg spousal relocation)  
Negative, unexpected, work-related, global shocks > avoidable (n103) (eg perceived inequities during promotion round)

## Implications

- Organisations may overestimate how much they can successfully intervene so: 1 Turnover initiatives should be targeted; 2 Need for exit interviews and leaver monitoring
- Different occupations are likely to have different profiles of shock (nurses in professional teams, in bureaucracies, central pay, seller's labour market)
- Use of proxy variables (intent to...) is problematic (non-work domain may not be considered)
- Clash between values and resource constraints > sensitivity at critical times (promotion & training allocation) here to avoid shocks from perceived procedural injustice, other times maybe to monitor the effects of implementing widespread change