Spring 2019

Turnover of outdoor adventure education field staff

Justin M. Hall

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TURNOVER OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION FIELD STAFF

A Thesis
Presented To
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Master of Science in Sports and Recreation Administration

By
Justin M. Hall
Spring 2019
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ABSTRACT

TURNOVER OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EDUCATION FIELD STAFF

by

Justin M. Hall

Spring 2019

Outdoor adventure education (OAE) organizations continually struggle with field staff turnover. Little research exists of this unique worker population and their unconventional living and working conditions warrant further exploration of the variables that best drive this phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to explore the strength and direction of the relationships between turnover predictor variables and intent to turnover (IT) of OAE field staff. Per the suggestion of organizational behavior and OAE literature, and conversations with OAE practitioners, five independent predictor variables were chosen; (a) tenure; (b) career development opportunities; (c) sense of community; (d) compensation satisfaction; and (e) burnout. A survey was developed adopting validated scales that measured each predictor variable and the dependent variable IT, of which a total of 101 OAE field staff successfully completed the survey. To test the predictor variables, two separate multiple linear regressions were calculated. Results suggest that compensation satisfaction’s pay subscale and sense of community are significant negative predictors of IT. These findings contribute to organizational behavior and OAE turnover literature by providing evidence for strong turnover correlates unique to a worker population seldom studied. Additionally, OAE practitioners can use these findings to aid in prioritizing their time and resources when combatting employee turnover.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Outdoor adventure education (OAE) programs offer participant experiences that incorporate elements of physical challenge, interpersonal growth, environmental education, and perceived risk through adventure activity (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). In the 1960s, organizations Outward Bound (OB) and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) pioneered OAE in the United States. Since then, hundreds of public and private organizations have adopted the methods and philosophies developed by OB and NOLS for use in wilderness therapy, corporate adventure trainings, adventure tourism, and collegiate recreation (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Priest & Gass 2005). Due to the dramatic growth in programming over the past few decades, OAE now “serves as the gateway through which millions of people across the world experience adventure-based activities” (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014, p. 1).

The increase of OAE opportunities in the United States subsequently increases the amount participants are exposed to the inherent risks involved with OAE activities (e.g. white-water rafting and mountaineering). Therefore, the need for competent and skilled field staff to manage the safety, well-being, and overall experience of OAE participants is an obvious necessity. However, because the nature of OAE field work requires these front-line employees to operate under physically demanding and emotionally taxing conditions, field staff often experience stress and burnout, and may quit their jobs as a result (Field, Lauzon, & Meldrum, 2016; Thompson, 1984). Furthermore, even though issues surrounding OAE field staff turnover have been problematic to organizations for decades, little research has explored the variables that relate to field staff turnover.
intentions and actual turnover behavior. Therefore, this study hopes to contribute to understanding the problems this overlooked population of workers face and provide OAE administrators advice and direction when experiencing high turnover.

The following will describe the background of turnover related problems within OAE field staff populations. Next, a list of operational definitions will be provided to clarify important terms used in this study, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations will be discussed pertinent to this research. Last, the significance of this study to both OAE literature and practitioners is suggested.

**Background**

OAE field staff are subject to unique working conditions abnormal to other educational and human service professions. They primarily lead multi-day expeditionary programs in remote locations and are tasked with balancing a complex set of variables that include “environmental conditions, program goals, needs of individual participants, and the needs of small groups and other staff members” (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014, p. 36). For example, a field staff in charge of a 22-day expedition can be expected to plan the logistics of food preparation and travel, manage the risk of adventure activities (e.g. whitewater rafting), facilitate group development, and tend to participants’ physical and emotional needs, all while being immersed in adverse environmental conditions of which the participants have little to no experience.

In addition, OAE field staff eat with, sleep near, and interact with their participants 24 hours a day, forfeiting their personal privacy for the duration of the program. Because these job-related characteristics require continuous attention and can last for months without pause, it is no surprise that such experiences result in job-related
challenges and stress. For example, OAE field staff experience post-program psychological adjustments during “transition” periods between expeditions, whose relationships with friends and family are often neglected (Field et al., 2016). Furthermore, field staff who lead multiple back-to-back expeditions may experience feelings of exhaustion and burnout. If no career advancement opportunities are available to field staff, they may feel stagnant or unchallenged. Those, and many more reasons (as discussed in the literature review) can contribute to one’s intention to turnover.

Alternatively, field staff experience benefits by working at OAE organizations which influence their decisions to keep their jobs (Field et al., 2016). Examples of benefits include living in remote areas, professional development opportunities, and access to outdoor adventure equipment and activities (Marchand, 2010). Additionally, some organizations provide free room and board, and a sense of shared values or community within employee cohorts (Marchand, 2010). Furthermore, “seasonal” work schedules allow field staff to recover from and reflect on multiple months of field work, and to take advantage of travel, personal adventure, or other work opportunities during the off-season. According to Werther and Davis (1996), organizations who seek to provide benefits and implement strategies to meet the needs of their employees are likely to retain higher employee satisfaction and lower turnover.

In addition to the unconventional challenges experienced by field staff, OAE organizations also face challenges that affect the retention of their employees. For example, OAE organizations are often confined by seasonal and environmental conditions and rely on breaks from the school season (e.g. summer break) to run programs (Friese, Hendee, & Kinziger, 1998). In addition, they have limited operating
seasons due to the accessibility of land and environmental conditions required to operate adventure activities (Friese et al., 1998). Because many OAE organizations operate seasonally, they are obligated to hire new staff and re-hire former staff on a yearly basis. Due to these unique challenges, OAE administrators are faced with uncertainty regarding the return of former employees. Consistent and high turnover rates experienced annually by OAE organizations reflect these challenges. To further complicate the problems that OAE field staff and organizations face, little research exploring these issues exists, leaving practitioners with limited empirical backing on how to resolve these issues.

According to a review of literature by Kirk and O’Connell (2012) that explored the challenges faced by wilderness-based expeditionary field staff, OAE organizations continually struggle to retain properly trained and experienced field staff. Since the majority of existing OAE research focuses on programmatic outcomes and student experience assessments (Bobilya, Lindley, Fairecloth, & Holman, 2017; Foley, 2009; Goldenberg, Russell & Soule, 2011; Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997; Stonehouse, 2013), research exploring the unique challenges, demands, and characteristics of OAE field staff is rare and infrequent. Thomas (2001) described that “given the relatively smaller size and stature of the outdoor education profession, there has been very little published research on work-related stress for outdoor education practitioners” (p. 13). Furthermore, Kirk and O’Connell (2012) echoed these concerns and suggested that “additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of the unique demands faced by field instructors working full time in wilderness-based expeditionary programs” (p. 16).
Overall, literature directly related to OAE field staff has yielded little data of the demographics, perspectives, and challenges encompassed by this population, and even less studies have attempted to *empirically* compare the relationships of these variables to turnover intentions or actual turnover behavior of field staff. Therefore, even though the day-to-day responsibilities of these workers may look complex, challenging, and overwhelming, little is actually known of the reasons why field staff choose to retain or turnover their jobs.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the variables that best predict turnover intentions of OAE field staff. As explained in the literature review, five variables unique to organizational behavior and OAE research were chosen as factors hypothesized to influence turnover intentions within this population: The variables (a) tenure; (b) career development opportunities (CDO); (c) burnout; (d) sense of community (SOC); (e) and compensation satisfaction (CS) were measured and compared in relation to the variable intent to turnover (IT).

**Definitions**

The following section provides operational definitions of pertinent terms and variables used in this study.

**Outdoor Adventure Education**

This study defines outdoor adventure education (OAE) according to Ewert and Sibthorp’s (2014) definition; “… a variety of learning experiences usually involving a close interaction with an outdoor natural setting and containing elements of real or
perceived risk in which the outcome, although uncertain, can be influenced by the actions of the participants and circumstances” (p. 5).

**OAE Field Staff**

According to Kirk and O’Connell (2012), OAE field staff are individuals who “…are employed full time, either seasonally or year-round, and lead expeditionary programs for paying clients” (p. 18). In addition to the above definition, this study further defines OAE field staff as those employed by organizations whose primary outcomes are educational, developmental, and recreational. For the purposes of this study, those employed by outdoor behavioral healthcare organizations whose primary outcomes, clientele, and expeditionary structures are therapy or rehabilitation based will not be considered OAE field staff.

**Intent to turnover**

Intent to turnover (IT), also called intent to leave or intent to quit, refers to one’s behavioral intentions to quit their job (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). IT is the most proximal precursor to actual turnover behavior and is suggested by organizational behavior literature as the best variable to predict actual turnover.

**Burnout**

Burnout will be operationally defined by seminal authors Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), as a “prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is comprised by three dimensions: (1) exhaustion (i.e. stress); (2) cynicism (i.e. depersonalization); and (3) inefficacy (i.e. reduced personal accomplishment)” (p. 397).
Career development opportunities

Career development opportunities (CDOs) refers to the advancement and promotional opportunities available to field staff within OAE organizations and the OAE industry (Birmingham, 1989). Though the debate of whether or not a well-defined career paths exists, typical OAE related positions such as educator, instructor, coordinator, and director have been identified in research (Medina, 2001; Wagstaff, 2011).

Sense of Community

Sense of community (SOC) is defined by McMillan and Chavis (1986) as a feeling comprised of four elements: (1) membership (a shared feeling of belonging); (2) influence (a shared feeling that members matter to one another and to the group); (3) integration and fulfillment of needs (a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together); and (4) a shared emotional connection (shared commitments of time, common places, experience, and history that members can identify with).

Compensation satisfaction

In this study, compensation satisfaction (CS) is defined by the satisfaction of per diem pay of OAE field staff, as well as additional forms of compensation and benefits provided by OAE organizations (e.g. free room and board, and subsidized professional certifications or trainings).

Assumptions

OAE organizations hire “seasonal” field staff who are often contracted for finite durations of time (e.g. during the spring and summer months). Following the work season, OAE field staff are no longer contractually committed to the organizations they
work for and enter what is often called the “off-season” (Field et al., 2016). The off-season is when data collection for this study occurred. It was assumed that OAE field staff had recently completed their commitments to field-related responsibilities, that opportunities for field work had no longer been available (or substantially reduced) due to the season ending, and that they were able to reflect on their intentions to retain or turnover their jobs for the following work season.

According to Field et al. (2016), it is common for OAE field staff to be disconnected from various media outlets (e.g. cell phones and email) while on the job. However, because data collection took place during the off-season, it was assumed that participants had internet access to participate in an online survey. It was also assumed that participants had the computer skills necessary to participate in an online survey because late demographic data suggests that most OAE field staff have undergraduate level degrees and are between 20 to 30 years old (Marchand, 2009).

Last, this study considered OAE field staff as its own unique population when compared to similar field staff populations of other disciplines (wilderness therapists, summer camp counselors, etc.) as described in the literature review.

Limitations

This study sampled OAE field staff from one organization and therefore it is difficult to relate findings to the OAE field staff population at large. In result, this study’s findings cannot declare causative relationships between variables. However, this study can act as a stepping stone to further understand the demographics of the OAE field staff population, and to discover how their unique circumstances influence their decisions to retain or turnover their jobs.
Furthermore, McCole (2015) argued that “one limitation of many employee retention studies is that they only [sample] existing employees and not those who have left the organization [i.e. those with actual turnover behavior]” (p. 196). Such methods make it difficult for researchers to examine the experiences lived by those who have quit and limits understanding of how these subjects relate to turnover-related variables. This study addressed this issue by measuring employees’ turnover intentions during the “off season” as described in the literature review; a time before actual turnover behavior, when employees are still contemplating about keeping or quitting their jobs.

Last, the method and timing of data collection poses additional limitations. Email survey response rates can be low if participants are not interested in the nature of the survey (Fowler, 2014). In addition, the transient nature of OAE field staff combined with the fact that a small portion of field staff may still be engaged in field work during the off-season may have made it difficult to reach participants and increased non-response.

**Delimitations**

For the purposes of this study, the OAE field staff population was delimited to a sample derived from a single OAE organization, and participants were selected on the basis that they embodied field staff roles and responsibilities; excluding all other OAE employees whose roles were not primarily field based (e.g. administrative, logistical, janitorial, etc.).

Regarding participant sampling limitations, Kirby (2006) mentioned that post-hoc sampling of OAE field staff who have already left their organizations may be difficult and require longitudinal designs. To adjust for this discrepancy, the current study sampled OAE field staff during the off-season; a time when seasonal employees usually
decide whether or not to return to work at their organization of employment (McCole, 2015). Thus, this study measured field staff turnover intentions as an indication of actual turnover behavior.

Since this study is not longitudinal in design, and because the time lapse between the off-season, rehire process, and the following work season could allow OAE field staff to change intentions on retaining (or quitting) their jobs, measuring turnover intentions of OAE field staff to reflect actual turnover behavior may have produced inherent error (Mobley et al., 1979). That said, turnover intent has been shown to have “a strong and consistent relationship with actual turnover across multiple studies,” and could be of more use to practitioners who wish to intervene in one’s withdrawal process before actually quitting (Kirby, 2006, p. 16).

Significance of Study

This study aims to advance both academic and practitioner understandings of the OAE field staff population, and the challenges associated with field staff retention and turnover in the OAE industry. Currently, a need for updated and alternative data regarding the demographics, experiences, and perceptions of these field staff exists (Field et al., 2016). Such information may help paint a more defined picture of this ambiguous population within the OAE literature.

Alternatively, interviews conducted with OAE administrators from Outward Bound resonate with the problems of field staff turnover mentioned in OAE literature (M. Fraser, personal communication, February 7, 2018). Over the four decades that OAE field staff turnover rates have been studied, leading OAE organizations continue to produce annual turnover rates of 26 to 33 percent (Wilson, 2010). This is exceptionally high when

Thomas (2001) pointed out that “the causes of work related stress and burnout [leading to turnover] are multi-dimensional” (p. 23). Alternatively, Marchand (2010) suggested that certain factors (e.g. sense of community) can actually contribute to the successful retention of OAE field staff. That said, the empirical data collected in this study may help OAE administrators better understand these multi-dimensional relationships associated with turnover by demonstrating the variables that best predict turnover intentions of OAE field staff.

In summary, OAE organizations hire unique field staff who continually struggle to retain their jobs due to varying work-related factors. The lack of research explaining OAE field staff demographics, job-related challenges and experiences, and turnover force practitioners to seek anecdotal methods to mediate field staff challenges and turnover issues. This study wishes to both fill these academic holes and provide OAE practitioners empirical evidence to make better informed decisions on combatting the problem of field staff turnover.
Chapter II

Literature Review

This literature review provides a thorough explanation of the outdoor adventure education (OAE) industry and the challenges that OAE organizations currently face. In addition, it informs the reader about the front-line field staff who lead OAE expeditionary programs, their demographics, and the unique job characteristics representative of these workers. Last, OAE field staff turnover is linked to a formal discussion regarding turnover theory, and the variables suggested as predictors of intent to turnover will be discussed as supported by organizational behavior and OAE literature.

Outdoor Adventure Education

According to Friese et al. (1998), OAE is a subset of wilderness experience programs; “Organizations that conduct outdoor programs in wilderness or comparable lands for purposes of personal growth, therapy, rehabilitation, education, or leadership/organizational development” (p. 40). Such programs include wilderness therapy, summer camp, rites of passage, environmental education, and expeditionary and adventure-based programs. This study focused on the latter type of wilderness experience program; expeditionary based OAE programs.

Many different names are given to describe OAE programs such as adventure education, adventure recreation, wilderness courses, outdoor education (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Hattie et al., 1997). For the purpose of this study, the term outdoor adventure education (OAE) is defined by Ewert and Sibthorp (2014):

A variety of teaching and learning activities and experiences usually involving a close interaction with an outdoor natural setting and containing elements of real or
perceived danger or risk in which the outcome, although uncertain, can be influenced by the actions of the participants and circumstances. (p. 5)

Organizations who provide OAE-type experiences share unique goals and objectives. These include physical challenge, character building, team building, personal growth, education, and leadership development (Friese et al., 1998). Furthermore, OAE uses experiential education methodology to engage participants in adventurous activities of perceived and inherent risk (e.g. mountaineering) that provides them with compelling tasks to accomplish, often involving group problem solving and personal challenge (Priest & Gass, 2005). Through this process, participants are instructed and encouraged “…to overcome self-imposed perceptions of their capabilities to succeed [and] as a result, they learn a great deal about themselves and how they relate to others” (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. 18).

Over the past few decades, the number of OAE-type organizations has grown dramatically as they have become embedded within governmental organizations, colleges and universities, and K-12 schools (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). Today, Outward Bound (OB) and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) continue to lead the industry; they are most noticeable throughout OAE media and research literature, and their partnerships with land management, wilderness medicine, and risk management organizations are well defined (Friese, 1998; NOLS, 2016). In fact, OB and NOLS together annually reach over sixty-six thousand participants in the United States alone, and account for over a million alumni (NOLS, 2016; Outward Bound, 2016). Due to their influence on the OAE industry, it is no surprise that programming outcomes, educational models, and expeditionary structures developed by these organizations have been adopted
by other OAE organizations around the country and throughout the world (Friese, 1998; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014).

**Expeditionary OAE characteristics**

Due to the large impact OAE programs have on peoples’ wilderness experiences, it is worth understanding the parameters that make OAE programs unique, and in which OAE field staff work. A pivotal meta-analysis by Hattie et al. (1997), which outlined the effects of OAE on its participants, also described the characteristics unique to expeditionary OAE programming:

(a) Wilderness or backcountry settings; (b) small groups (usually less than 16); (c) assignment of a variety of mentally and/or physically challenging objectives, such as mastering a river rapid or hiking to a specific point; (d) frequent and intense interactions that usually involve group problem solving and decision making; (e) a nonintrusive, trained leader(s); and (f) a duration of two to four weeks. (p. 44)

The prolonged exposure of professionally programmed multi-day expeditions can contribute to participants’ transformative growth, more so than outdoor programs that do not offer multi-day experiences (Hattie et al., 1997). Consequently, participants are not the only people affected by the expeditionary structure. The field staff who instruct, facilitate, manage, and guide these groups, and who are subjected to leading multiple back-to-back expeditions, are forced to endure the burdens and challenges of such job-related experiences.

**OAE Field Staff**

At times, OAE field staff responsibilities, skillsets, and job-related challenges are similar to those of field staff associated with other types of wilderness experience
programs, such as outdoor behavioral healthcare, adventure recreation and tourism, and environmental education. This association can be observed in OAE literature where varying field staff populations are represented or studied together (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Marchand, 2010; Thomas, 2001; Thompson, 1984). On the other hand, distinctions separating OAE field staff from other populations (such as the type of clientele being served or specific organizational goals) have been inferred by researchers as well (Field et al., 2016; Friese et al., 1998; Russell & Hendee, 2000; Wilson, 2010).

Therefore, this study discusses literature from various types of wilderness experience programs to better define and differentiate the OAE field staff population. Doing so will reveal how characteristics unique only to OAE field staff may influence their job-related experiences. Such an approach is useful when investigating a population that lacks substantial understanding, in addition to investigating the factors that most influence OAE field staff decisions to retain or turnover their jobs.

**OAE field staff job characteristics.** The field staff who lead expeditionary programs face unique occupational circumstances compared to populations of other education professionals who work in more traditional settings (e.g. classroom teachers). For example, their job responsibilities include managing the risk of technical activities (e.g. whitewater rafting, mountaineering, and rock climbing), managing the health and safety of students, planning itineraries and logistics, and of course, teaching OAE curriculum (Field et al., 2016; Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Wilson, 2010). Additionally, they are faced with daily challenges concerning the social, emotional, physical, and environmental aspects of expeditioning (Marchand et al., 2009).
For example, throughout a 24-hour workday, field staff are challenged by and responsible for tending to the varying needs of their participants. At any moment, field staff may be compelled to counsel those experiencing home sickness, administer first aid, or discipline misbehaving participants. In addition to teaching participants the technical skills necessary for wilderness travel and adventure activities, field staff are responsible for instructing their participants how to cook, use the bathroom, clean, and sleep comfortably in wilderness settings. Such auxiliary skills allow participant groups to achieve member autonomy and self-sufficiency, which is a common outcome in OAE expeditionary programming.

To alleviate the burden of managing expeditionary groups of up to 15 participants, and to engage in activities that require high levels of risk management, it is common to co-lead programs with one or two additional field staff (Vernon & Seaman, 2012). Co-leading offers opportunities to enhance the expedition experience by providing skill diversity, risk management, management of job demands, and emotional support of those in leadership positions (Vernon & Seaman, 2012). Even so, the varying job-related responsibilities leadership teams face are often tested while being immersed in harsh and remote areas for weeks on end (Vernon & Seaman, 2012).

**OAE field staff demographics.** In addition to the particular responsibilities and challenges faced by OAE field staff, their changing demographics are also worth mentioning. Over 30 years ago, Thompson (1984) described OB field staff as youthful and transient, suggesting that field staff often work non-traditional and seasonal lifestyles, possess adventurous spirits, and value altruistic behaviors. Thompson (1984) further describes this population as required to possess proficiencies in wilderness and
adventure education, as well as student management skills in counseling and social understandings of the student populations being served.

In the decades since Thompson (1984) made those observations, specific demographic characteristics have changed, such as gender and education level. Today, men and women are equally represented in field staff roles and field staff show an increase in education level (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012). However, the transient lifestyles and multifaceted skillsets of field staff described by Thompson (1984) remain consistent with recent research describing today’s generation of OAE field staff (Field et al., 2016; Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Vernon & Seaman, 2012).

**Turnover Theory**

This section of the literature review discusses turnover theory, how it relates to turnover in OAE, and explains suggested predictor variables that relate to OAE field staff turnover. For the purposes of this study and according to the literature reviewed in this paper, the term “turnover” solely concerns the voluntary turnover of employees; turnover is voluntary when it is “self-initiated” by the employee, versus turnover that is involuntary or “organization-initiated” (Mobley et al., 1979, p. 496). Reasons attributing to voluntary turnover include familial obligations, health or transportation difficulties, job dissatisfaction, or work condition dissatisfaction (Jamison, 2003). While involuntary turnover (e.g. employee dismissal or layoffs) can benefit organizations by improving efficiencies, voluntary turnover may hinder organizations from fulfilling their missions (Wilson, 2010).

Voluntary employee turnover has demanded the attention of organizational behavior researchers and management practitioners for decades. Several theories have
been developed attempting to explain the process and uncover the predictors of voluntary employee turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mobley et al., 1979; Schaubroeck, Cotton, & Jennings, 1989; Steers & Mowday, 1981). Within those theories, various predictors have been identified as strong correlates of employee turnover, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, stress, work group cohesion, autonomy, leadership, promotional opportunities, company tenure, withdrawal behaviors, and turnover intentions (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Cotton and Tuttle (1986) categorized these and other possible turnover predictors into (a) external; (b) work-related; and (c) personal correlates.

Among these external, work-related, and personal correlates of turnover, a variety of predictor variables exists, however, many do not apply to all populations of workers. For example, work-related predictors, such as job satisfaction, could have substantially different effects on employee turnover across populations of temporary versus permanently hired employees (Lee & Mitchel, 1994). Furthermore, according to Cotton and Tuttle (1986), factors such as industry type and a study’s location can affect the relationship that turnover predictors have with actual turnover behavior. Due to these discrepancies, understanding the variables that best predict turnover of populations less studied (e.g. OAE field staff) can be challenging. Therefore, it is necessary that researchers continue to explore the relationships between common or lesser known turnover predictors and non-traditional worker populations.

That said, a consensus of consistent turnover predictors has been suggested by researchers. According to Steel and Ovalle (1984), “individual variables that bear a ‘consistent’ relationship to employee turnover are age, tenure, satisfaction with job
content, overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and behavioral intentions to quit” (p. 674). In fact, those turnover predictors retained their strength and consistency 16 years after the Steel and Ovalle study (Griffeth et al., 2000).

**Turnover in OAE**

The problem of field staff turnover has plagued OAE organizations for almost forty years. In the 1970s and 1980s, estimates of field staff turnover suggested the average work span of OAE field staff ranged from two to five years (Birmingham, 1989). In the first comprehensive study of OAE field staff retention and turnover, Birmingham (1989) reported a 28.8 percent turnover rate of field staff from the Colorado Outward Bound School. Additionally, OAE practitioners voiced concerns about the longevity of the career paths available to field staff. According to Ross (1986), “[although] outdoor education had become a solid, respected member of the alternative educational community, things had not stabilized for instructors who want to make a career of this field of education” (p.34).

The instability and turnover challenges reported back then remain an issue for organizations today. According to Marchand et al.’s (2009) study of outdoor behavioral healthcare field staff, nearly half (45%) had been in their positions for less than five months. Wilson (2010) reported an average turnover rate of 26 percent of NOLS field staff, and 33 percent of OB field staff. In 2017, the Northwest Outward Bound School experienced a slightly lower turnover rate of 23 percent, however, 29 percent of newly hired field staff had not continued with the organization the following season (C. Riestenberg, personal communication, April 27, 2018). When compared to the United States’ national turnover rate of 3.6 percent in 2018, the difference is alarming and
warrants further examination of the variables contributing to such high OAE field staff turnover (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Some researchers blame these high turnover rates on inherent characteristics unique to OAE field staff. Non-traditional schedules allow field staff to take “cyclical” or seasonal breaks (often during winter months) which can influence them to change careers, or to enlist with different organizations the following season (Birmingham, 1989; Field et al., 2016). Kirby (2006) suggested that field staff populations are prone to turnover because:

Their professional identity is likely not yet formed; they have the resources to indulge their own curiosity and cushion a couple of wrong turns; they have few or no familial attachments or obligations; and they are often driven by a strong sense of their own right to explore different careers until they land on a “passion” or “calling.” (p. 4)

However, these “inherent” turnover theories disregard the positive and negative job-related experiences that contribute to field staff retention and turnover found in organizational behavior and OAE literature. These job-related, demographic, and lived experiences of OAE field staff, and their relationship to turnover, is what that this research aimed to explore.

**Impacts of OAE field staff turnover.** High rates of field staff turnover can impact OAE organizations in various ways. Wilson (2010) suggested that “high rates of turnover leads to a relatively low level of experience in instructor pools, which may directly or indirectly lead to decreases in [participants’] educational outcomes and safety” (p. 24). Additionally, Galloway (2007) found that the manner in which wilderness field
staff respond to medical incidents largely depended on the experience level of the individual. Therefore, if high turnover can affect the experience level and in turn, medical responsiveness of field staff, the health and safety of program participants may be affected as well.

In addition to jeopardizing participant outcomes and safety, field staff turnover can consume an organization’s resources due to the amount of time, energy, and costs that are associated with recruiting, selecting, hiring, and training new employees (Kirby, 2006; Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; McCole, Jacobs, Lindley & McAvoy, 2012). In addition to these direct costs are hidden costs, such as increased workload, feelings of uncertainty, and erosion of the morale of field instructors who remain (Kirby, 2006). For example, organizations may be forced to overwork remaining field staff to the point of exhaustion, leading to burnout. Additionally, organizations may be forced to cancel scheduled programming opportunities, and as a result lose revenue due to the inability to fill staffing holes (Kirby, 2006). Finally, losing experienced field staff who are capable of mentoring and training new employees may negatively impact an organization’s support network, sense of community, and comradery.

**Benefits of retaining OAE field staff.** In contrast to the negative impacts of OAE field staff turnover, OAE organizations benefit from being able to retain their employees by maintaining “positive staff culture and a workforce with extensive experience in group facilitation, judgement and decision making…” (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012). Additionally, Wagstaff (2011) suggested that field staff of higher tenure possess mastered competencies and are more able to mentor, influence, and manage other field staff of less
experience, eventually becoming the “…sages of the profession that leave influencing legacies in the work place or industry wide” (p. 118).

Thus, according to Wagstaff (2011), the retention and proper development of field staff can provide significant benefits to the workforce, the organization, and its outcomes. However, organizations can only profit from such benefits once the process of hiring, developing, and retaining quality field staff no longer remain problematic. One way to achieve field staff longevity and reduce field staff turnover is to better understand the variables that most predict field staff turnover.

**Predictors of turnover in OAE.** What variables within the control of OAE organizations make the retention of quality field staff so problematic? Known turnover predictors suggested by organizational behavior literature (as previously mentioned) have already been explored within field staff populations with marginal success (Kirby, 2006; Wilson, 2010). Examples include job satisfaction, job embeddedness, pay satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational climate, burnout, and in addition, a number of demographic variables such as tenure, gender, age, and education level (Birmingham, 1989; Kirby, 2006; McCole, Jacobs, Lindley, & McAvoy, 2012). Additionally, researchers have used quantitative and qualitative methods to explore less common variables associated with turnover unique to field staff populations. These approaches revealed that sense of community, job demands, job challenges, gender, career development opportunities, job stressors, and perceived job expectations relate to field staff retention and turnover as well (Marchand et al., 2009; Marchand, 2010; Thomas, 2001).
However, it is unknown how well these turnover predictors actually relate to OAE field staff because many of the findings were derived from outdoor behavioral healthcare (OBH) field staff or mixed populations of various outdoor educators. Also, instead of comparing the “most common” turnover predictors found in organizational behavior research to field staff turnover intentions (such as Kirby, 2006), this study intends to examine more explicit variables unique to the OAE field staff population. Therefore, in addition to the research suggested by organizational behavior and OAE literature, conversations with Northwest Outward Bound School (NWOBS) administrators and the analysis of an in-house NWOBS staff survey have aided in the selection of variables to be examined for this study. The following variables were ultimately selected: (a) intent to turnover (IT); (b) tenure; (c) career development opportunities (CDO); (d) burnout; (e) sense of community (SOC); and (f) compensation satisfaction (CS).

**Stress-retention turnover model.** In addition to exploring the variables related to turnover, researchers have developed various theoretical models to better explain the withdrawal process (i.e. withdrawal predictors, turnover intentions, and withdrawal behavior) experienced by employees and the associated predictor variables that influence them to quit their jobs. This study used the stress-retention turnover model (SRTM, Figure 1) develop by Schaubroeck et al. (1989) and refined by Podsakoff, J. LePine, and M. LePine (2007) as a theoretical framework to support the selection of the OAE predictor variables mentioned above.
The decision to use this model is two-fold. First, this model incorporates the most common and most often studied variables (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions) found in human resource management and organizational behavior literature that predict turnover within the withdrawal process (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Second, variables related to OAE field staff turnover (e.g. burnout) are associated and can be linked to the “common” predictor variables represented in this model. To make these associations more clear, OAE predictor variables (in parenthesis) were added to the adjacent predictor variables represented by the SRTM in Figure 1.

As the SRTM suggests, various turnover predictors positively or negatively relate to each other during the employee withdrawal process. This was useful when hypothesizing the direction of the relationships that this study’s OAE predictor variables (e.g. burnout) have on field staff turnover behavior. Furthermore, as depicted by the SRTM’s arrows, most variables directly or indirectly relate to “turnover intentions.” For example, through its direct and positive relationship with organizational commitment, the variable “challenge stressors” has an indirect and negative relationship with intent to
turnover (IT). Researchers suggest that IT is a critical and reliable stage in the withdrawal process where employees feel strongly to quit or retain their jobs (Griffeth, et al., 2000; Mobley et al., 1979). This supports the current study’s decision to use intent to turnover as a dependent variable.

Finally, what differentiates Podsakoff et al.’s (2007) revised SRTM from other turnover models is the addition of strain, hindrance and challenge stressor variables as independent turnover predictors. Strain relates to feelings of burnout, emotional exhaustion, and fatigue. In addition, hindrance stressors relate to job-constraints, hassles, and role overload (an antecedent of burnout), while challenge stressors relate to role-demands, pressure to complete tasks, and time urgency. According to Podsakoff et al. (2007) strain, hindrance and challenge stressors account for significant amounts of variance in employee turnover such that:

Hindrance stressors directly negatively relate to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and, through these effects and the indirect effects of strain, positively relate to turnover intentions, turnover, and withdrawal behavior. In contrast, challenge stressors directly positively relate to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and, through these effects, negatively relate to turnover intentions, turnover, and withdrawal behavior. (see Figure 1, p. 447)

Because OAE field staff experience elements of strain, hindrance and challenge stressors, the SRTM fully supports the associated predictor variables selected for this study, and aids in hypothesizing the direction of the relationship these variables have on OAE field staff turnover intentions. Overall, the individual components of the SRTM combine to represent a model that (a) compliments relevant turnover theory
developed by organizational behavior researchers; and (b) can be applied to the external, work-related, and personal turnover predictors unique to OAE field staff.

**Variables Used in this Study**

The variables selected in this study to predict turnover intentions of OAE field staff were (a) tenure; (b) career development opportunities (CDO); (c) burnout; (d) sense of community (SOC); and (e) compensation satisfaction (CS). Figure 2 demonstrates these variables, along with the hypothesized relationship (positive and/or negative) to turnover intentions and actual turnover behavior. An explanation of why these variables were chosen and how they relate to the SRTM (Figure 1) is provided.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 2. Variables that predict IT relevant to OAE field staff. Plus and minus signs indicate the hypothesized direction each variable may relate to IT.*

**Intent to Turnover**

As the most proximal precursor of actual turnover behavior, intent to turnover (IT), also called intent to leave or intent to quit, remains the best and most accurate
predictor of actual turnover behavior (Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley et al., 1979). According to Mobley et al. (1979), IT is representative of three withdrawal-related attitudes; (a) thinking of quitting; (b) alternative job-search intentions; and (c) intent to quit. The relationship between IT and actual turnover is stronger the closer in time IT is measured and the event that turnover behavior occurs (Mobley, et al., 1979). In other words, the less time that lapses between an employee’s predicted IT and the event of actually quitting, the less likely “impulsive behavior” (e.g. changing one’s mind regarding their decision to stay or quit, after having measured IT) will occur. To reduce impulsive behavior from attenuating the IT-actual turnover relationship, this study measured IT after OAE field staff completed seasonal contracts, no longer had field work responsibilities, and when they contemplated whether or not to return the following season (as opposed to measuring IT in the height of their work season).

Therefore, this study attempted to examine the relationship between predictor variables and IT, as opposed to actual turnover behavior. In context of OAE field staff, measuring turnover predictors of those who already quit their jobs proves difficult. According to Kirby (2006), “the study of field staff after they have departed [is] a nearly impossible task given this population’s transient nature and the general difficulty of researching post hoc events” (p. 15). Also, predicting an individual’s IT may be more useful to practitioners because “employers can attempt to intervene if an employee is [still] engaged in the withdrawal process, whereas the employer’s influence ends once the employee has quit” (Kirby, 2006, p. 15). For these reasons, organizational behavior and OBH researchers have used IT as a key variable in comparison with other, more distal turnover predictors relative to the populations being studied (Kirby, 2006; Van
Breukelen, Van Der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004; Wallace, 2011). This research intended to do the same; the strengths of the relationships of turnover predictors to IT was examined, a method not yet applied to the OAE field staff population.

**Tenure**

Within organizational behavior research, the demographic attribute “tenure” has shown meaningful and consistent prediction of turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Defined as the duration one remains employed at an organization, tenure has shown to be negatively related to turnover such that the longer an employee retains her or his job, the less likely she or he is to quit (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986).

In addition, employee tenure can influence turnover predictors within the SRTM (Figure 1). According to Wright and Bonett (2002), the relationship between organizational commitment and job performance rely heavily on tenure; such that if organizations can provide their employees of varying tenure with opportunities that meet their needs, desires, and skill levels, organizational commitment and job performance will increase. However, according to Wright and Bonett (2002), organizations only have a short window of time to provide these outlets to new employees due to the *honeymoon effect*. The honeymoon effect occurs when organizational commitment and job performance of new employees increase during the start of their tenure, but decline after a certain period of time when organizations are no longer able to reliably provide challenges and meaningful tasks to their employees (Wright & Bonett, 2002). In an OAE context, field staff who have completed all available trainings and development opportunities may feel stagnant and unchallenged. This indicates that the needs of new
employees differ from employees with longer tenures and higher experience levels, and that the way organizations meet these needs in creating positive commitment-performance relationships may differ based on employee tenure.

According to OAE practitioners, it can take up to three years to fully develop the skillsets of OAE field staff (E. Halm, personal communication, April 5, 2018). This development involves the transformation of field staff beyond entry-level, self-indulging motives towards more altruistic, service-oriented, and professional identities (Wagstaff, 2011). Such a process is slow and requires long term commitments of field staff (Wagstaff, 2011). Consequently, the honeymoon effect (as mentioned above) experienced by entry level-field staff may hinder opportunities for them to fully develop competencies and achieve longer tenures. To further confound the problem, those who remain (post honeymoon effect) require a higher level of challenge in order to maintain motivation, and if given repetitive job tasks (as a response to shortages of qualified field staff) field staff motivation will decrease (Barnes, 2001).

In these situations, perhaps the needs of field staff with low and high tenure differ and are not being satisfied by their organizations, eventually resulting in high turnover levels. According to Kirk and O’Connell (2012), “even within the same organization, the strategy for satisfying the needs of one employee may be very different to that required for another” (p. 22). Furthermore, regarding OAE field staff tenure, Wagstaff (2011) suggests that “long-term commitment can result in continued growth or stagnation depending on levels of engagement in professional development” (p. 118).

To further investigate how field staff tenure relates to one’s decision to leave her or his organization, this study explored tenure as a predictor of IT. Based on
organizational behavior literature and the SRTM (Figure 1), it was hypothesized that tenure would have a positive relationship with IT. However, the honeymoon effect and the effectiveness that OAE organizations meet (or do not meet) the needs of their field staff may impact the direction of the tenure-IT relationship.

**Career Development Opportunities**

As mentioned above, OAE field staff of higher tenure that experience an absence of development opportunities, challenges, and meaningful tasks may feel a sense of stagnation. Providing career development opportunities (CDO) is a way organizations can combat feelings of stagnation because they enhance organizational loyalty, encourage motivation and productivity, and guide individuals through career transitions (McDonald & Hite, 2005). According to Simonsen (1997):

Career development is an ongoing process of planning and directed action toward personal work and life goals. Development means growth, continuous acquisition and application of one’s skills. Career development is the outcome of the individual’s career planning and the organization’s provision of support and opportunities, ideally a collaborative process. (p. 6-7)

In addition to loyalty, motivation, and productivity, organizations can use CDO to address turnover. Werther and Davis (1996) suggests that CDO can “develop promotable employees, assist with workforce diversity, further personal growth, satisfy employee needs, and lower turnover” (p. 317). In further support, Podsakoff et al.’s (2007) SRTM (Figure 1) suggests that individuals who remain challenged, motivated, and who are given opportunities for professional growth, show negative relationships with turnover. In other words, if employers maintain challenge stressor opportunities (e.g.
opportunities for career development and challenging job demands), their employees are less likely to have intentions of turning over. In the context of OAE field staff, the CDO-turnover relationship has rarely been explored empirically. In fact, the first and only researcher to examine the correlation between CDO and field staff turnover was Birmingham (1989) who found a near significant relationship.

Even though researchers suggest CDO may reduce turnover, improve motivation, and create a pool of promotable talent, the reality within OAE career development is that field staff face limited opportunities for advancement beyond the instructor level (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Thomas, 2002). Examples of these limited positions beyond the field staff role are outdoor program coordinators, directors, or educators in elementary, high school, college, or university settings (Medina, 2001). Obtaining these positions may require field staff to seek higher level academic degrees or gain significant amounts of personal experience. Even so, OAE researchers lack a consensus of the *internal* CDO that OAE organizations can provide to most appropriately meet these professional goals and reduce the turnover of OAE field staff (Medina, 2001). As a result, OAE field staff are faced with ill-defined career paths that “…makes consideration of long-term employment in [OAE] very difficult for both new and veteran field [staff]” (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012, p. 23).

Regardless, strategies to implement CDO have been suggested. In his study of work-related stress in the outdoor education profession, Thomas (2002) found that outdoor education organizations in Australia offer various CDO to their employees including internal and external trainings, flexible job opportunities (i.e. office time, travel, and professional development), university study, and training in areas other than
technical skills. However, the CDOs implemented by some of the organizations (e.g. corporate training and environmental education organizations) that Thomas surveyed may not fit the needs of OAE field staff. Also, because the individual needs within OAE field staff may differ, internal professional development trainings (e.g. skill based trainings) may only benefit those with certain experience levels. Therefore, in order to further our understanding of how CDO relate to OAE field staff retention and turnover, this study examined CDO as a predictor of IT.

Burnout

Burnout is a phenomenon originally found within the human services industry and is a turnover predictor common to both organizational behavior and OAE research. According to Maslach et al. (2001), “burnout is a problem specific to the work context… [resulting from] a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by three dimensions; (a) exhaustion; (b) cynicism; and (c) inefficacy” (p. 397). Exhaustion is the most widely reported dimension, which involves distancing oneself (emotionally and cognitively) from work as a coping mechanism to work overload (Maslach et al., 2001). While exhaustion occurs from work overload, the dimension cynicism is the result of social conflict, and can happen when an employee depersonalizes the service recipient by ignoring qualities that make them unique or engaging people (Maslach et al., 2001). The third dimension of burnout, inefficacy, refers to the reduced personal accomplishment of an employee, usually due to a lack of relevant resources (Maslach et al., 2001).

Combined, the three dimensions of burnout have been viewed as hindrance stressors that directly or indirectly connect to more common predictors of turnover such
as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to turnover, and actual turnover behavior (Maslach et al., 2001). Furthermore, Podsakoff et al.’s (2007) SRTM (Figure 1) suggests that burnout (as a hindrance stressor) has negative relationships with job satisfaction and organizational commitment and positive relationships with turnover behavior. It should be noted that although correlations between burnout and job satisfaction are commonly found to be negative, the correlation between the two is not strong enough to deem them identical constructs; thus, burnout is recognized as a separate turnover predictor critical to the employee withdrawal process (Maslach et al., 2001).

Even though researchers agree that burnout has a significant relationship to employee turnover, it is still unclear whether burnout levels change over time, or if burnout occurs earlier or later in one’s career. Some researchers believe that burnout ought to occur later in one’s career because it is a result of prolonged exposure to chronic job stressors (Maslach et al., 2001). However, research also shows that new employees can show increasing levels of exhaustion and cynicism, leveling off by their second year (Dunford, Shipp, R. Boss, Angermeier, & A. Boss, 2012). Perhaps this discrepancy results from the varying nature of different job types and the job-demands unique to one’s role. After all, Maslach et al. (2001) suggested that burnout is rooted from a mismatch between the nature of a person and the nature of the person’s job characteristics; that some people are not fit for the job they signed up for (Maslach et al, 2001).

Because the burnout-turnover relationship remains prevalent to the human service industry, it’s no surprise that OAE field staff who work remotely for days on end, face-to-face with program participants, also experience symptoms of burnout. For this reason,
burnout and work-related stressors are constructs that have received the most empirical attention in studies of field staff populations. For example, findings from Thomas’ (2001) study of work-related stressors of Australian outdoor educators revealed that (a) long work hours; (b) time away from home; and (c) difficulties maintaining relationships, were commonly experienced stressors attributing to burnout. Due to finding a variety of stressors that contribute to field staff burnout, Thomas (2001) suggested that “the causes of work-related stress and burnout are multi-dimensional…[and] that work-related stress appears to be a complex interplay of numerous factors” (p. 23).

Additional research continued to explore the numerous stressors related to field staff burnout and turnover. For example, Marchand et al.’s (2009) study of OBH field staff job-related stressors and retention found that field staff were most affected by difficulties outside of the work setting, such as how work affected their relationships with friends, family, and significant others. They also found that 73% of instructors felt “sometimes” affected by their work schedule and 65% felt their work responsibilities to be “overwhelming.” In similar research that studied the antecedents of turnover for OBH field staff, Kirby (2006) found that burnout among field staff was relatively high when compared to other human service sectors (e.g. social services and mental health). The same study also found a significant relationship between burnout and field staff who intended to quit or were looking for another job.

Since burnout is a predictor of turnover within the human services industry and because research has revealed hindrance stressors that influence burnout of other field staff populations, the current study explored burnout as a turnover predictor of OAE field staff.
Sense of Community

Unlike most “front country” jobs that allow employees to return home after the work day and separate work from their personal lives, OAE field staff experience unique living conditions that can intertwine the two. This is because OAE organizations operate in remote locations and often provide communal living arrangements for their field staff who require a space to rest, plan for, and transition between expeditions (Wilson, 2010), making it difficult to completely detach from the work environment. As a result, these unconventional work-conditions often lead to extensive time away from friends and family, and can make it difficult to maintain those relationships exterior to the work environment and OAE community (Field et al., 2016; Marchand, 2009). For new employees, this problem can be exacerbated by the fact that “newcomers typically have few established relationships with supervisors, co-workers, work groups, or the organizations…” (Allen & Shanock, 2012, p. 351). Thus, if OAE organizations are not careful, the remote isolation, combined with a lack of social support systems for newly hired field staff can lead toward voluntary turnover (Allen & Shanock, 2012).

To address this problem, OAE researchers and practitioners suggest that a strong sense of community (SOC) reflecting a shared purpose, or value base, can increase field staff motivation (Barnes, 2001). Furthermore, Allen and Shanock (2012) suggest that such socialization tactics can “bind newcomers to the organization through enhanced [organizational] commitment and reduced turnover” (p. 363). Fortunately, OAE field staff are not the only seasonal employees subjected to such unique socialization problems and researchers have explored constructs unconventional to traditional turnover
predictors to further understand the issues related to such unique living and working situations.

Psychological SOC is a construct that can explore the extent of socialization of seasonal employees and is defined as “a feeling that members have a belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Research that measured SOC levels of seasonal employees in the winter ski and summer camp industries found significant negative relationships between SOC and turnover (McCole et al., 2012; McCole 2015). If this is the case, perhaps the extent of socialization of OAE field staff can be useful in determining the importance and value of community among the OAE industry. Furthermore, perhaps assessing SOC within OAE organizations can help explain field staff turnover and retention.

Of the few researchers to have explored the community-turnover relationship of OAE field staff, Birmingham (1989) found that SOC, interpersonal relationship issues, and arranged housing all had statistically significant negative relationships to turnover. According to Birmingham (1989), “the less they felt an organization tried to create a SOC and the less they felt included in that community, the more likely they were to leave” (p. 93). She continued to suggest that field staff who struggled to maintain long-term relationships with significant others and family members, or felt that housing was not assigned fairly, were more likely to turnover as well. Birmingham’s finding was the first to empirically explore the community-turnover relationship and reveal the importance of community building within OAE organizations.
More recently, research that examined a management perspective on work-related stress in the outdoor education profession found that outdoor education administrators were well aware of the value and importance of creating supportive communities for their employees (Thomas, 2002). However, because “building supportive communities is workplace specific, and there was no easy ‘one size fits all’ solution,” the factors of organization type, structure, size, and personality types all influenced the strategies used to build these communities (Thomas, 2002, p. 59).

The latest study in exploring the community-turnover relationship was conducted by Marchand (2010), who interviewed OAE field staff and administrators from Outward Bound (OB) Minnesota about the variables that contributed to the retention of OB Minnesota field staff. Expanding Thomas’ (2002) theory that developing SOC depends on various factors, Marchand’s (2010) findings suggest that factors such as the incorporation of an internship program for new-hires and requesting a three-year commitment of new-hires was important for the development of SOC and commitment to the organization. Additionally, free room and board, the equity between administrators and field staff, and the peacefulness and remoteness of their living area, all contributed to SOC within the organization (Marchand, 2010).

Since Birmingham’s (1989) study of the SOC-turnover relationship, OAE researchers have not quantitatively measured SOC levels and compared them to turnover intentions of the OAE field staff population. However, because recent studies suggest that SOC is linked to the well-being and retention of OAE field staff, additional quantitative research may reevaluate the significance that SOC has on OAE field staff and its relation to turnover.
Compensation Satisfaction

Decades ago, seminal turnover theorists discovered that the variables *level of pay*, *pay satisfaction*, and *job benefits* relate to overall job satisfaction and employee turnover. For example, Mobley et al. (1979) discussed findings where higher pay was associated with retention, and pay satisfaction was negatively associated with turnover. However, the same authors also mentioned studies that found little to no relationships between pay satisfaction and turnover. Furthermore, the strength of the pay-turnover relationship may depend on the population being studied. According to Cotton and Tuttle (1986), the pay-turnover relationship of blue-collar and non-managerial employees was less significant. More recently, a meta-analysis of turnover predictors reaffirmed this unstable relationship noting “[the] effect sizes for pay and pay related variables were modest in light of their significance to compensation theorists and practitioners” (Griffeth et al., 2000, p. 479).

The uncertainty of the pay-turnover relationship extends to OAE literature. Since the 1980s, researchers have voiced concerns regarding the disproportionate and extremely low levels of pay of OAE field staff (Ross, 1986). Birmingham (1989) found that although satisfaction in pay was not significantly correlated to field staff turnover, her participants’ “intense dissatisfaction in pay levels” may have forced them to leave the OAE profession (p. 108). Many of Birmingham’s participants also commented that an increase in pay would increase retention and that pay becomes an issue especially when staff are no longer willing to survive on “poverty wages”.

Throughout the 2000s, low pay and pay dissatisfaction of OAE field staff continued to remain a problem. Thomas (2002) noted that outdoor education
organizations “struggle to pay employees what they’re worth” (p. 58). For example, wages of OAE field staff new-hires start as low as 70 dollars per day. Additionally, low pay of OAE field staff is commonly provided in the absence of other benefits such as overtime pay (Allen-Craig & Moonen, 2002).

A separate study by Thomas (2001) found that low pay contributed to the stress of 42% of outdoor education employees from “non-school” organizations (e.g. non-profits and private companies). Also, Wilson (2009) found that the only predictor that explained variance in daily instructor job satisfaction was an instructor’s satisfaction with pay. Such stress and dissatisfaction associated with low pay is analogous to Podsakoff et al.’s (2007) SRTM (Figure 1) which suggests that stress and job dissatisfaction is positively related to turnover.

To further complicate the issue, trainings and certifications (e.g. within wilderness medicine, water based, avalanche, rescue, and rock climbing skillsets), and the purchase of personal outdoor equipment specific to the activities field staff lead, can be prerequisites of being hired or promoted by OAE organizations (Medina, 2001). Certifications and equipment are expensive to acquire, often requiring recertification or replacement after a duration of time, and whose “…costs are not commensurate with the pay given to entry-level outdoor leaders” (Warren, 2002). Furthermore, Warren (2002) suggested that because “low pay and lack of benefits are the norm rather than the exception in the [OAE] field,” only field staff with sources of income external to their OAE jobs can sustain themselves; often discriminating against field staff coming from low socio-economic backgrounds.
As a result, complaints of low pay and the lack of traditional employee benefits, combined with the expensive trainings and certifications required of field staff, have led OAE organizations to be creative in field staff compensation. For example, in 2007, NOLS increased levels of pay in an explicit effort to increase field staff retention (Wilson, 2010). Also, OB has provided rent-free room and board, and free use of outdoor equipment as a benefit for working with the organization, allowing field staff to save money that would be otherwise spent on property and equipment rentals (Marchand, 2010). In an effort to improve the retention of their field staff and to make certifications more affordable, some OB schools offer to pay for or subsidize professional certifications such as whitewater rescue or single-pitch rock climbing certifications (M. Fraser, personal communication, April 5, 2018).

Overall, the pay-turnover relationship within organizational behavior and OAE literature remains inconclusive. However, it is clear that today’s field staff remain highly dissatisfied with current pay and compensation levels. Therefore, organizational efforts to increase pay and provide alternative forms of compensation or benefits may help reduce dissatisfaction. For this reason, this study acknowledged that pay and alternate forms of compensation (e.g. free room and board) should be assessed as a singular construct and was hypothesized to negatively relate to IT. Thus, the relationship between overall “compensation satisfaction” to IT of OAE field staff was examined. Such findings could provide practitioners with a better understanding of how field staff feel about current forms of compensation being offered.
Summary

For decades, the OAE industry has used remote areas and inherently risky activities to educate and impact the lives of their participants. Multi-day expeditions unique to OAE not only produce challenging experiences for their participants, but also require the physical and mental endurance of the field staff who lead these trips. Inevitably, the job demands and work-related characteristics inherent to OAE field staff take its toll on these employees, resulting in high turnover rates. Though organizational behavior literature suggests a wealth of information regarding variables that predict turnover, the reasons why OAE field staff continue to leave their organizations at high rates are not fully understood. Based from literature relevant to OAE turnover and input from a partnership with the Northwest Outward Bound School, the variables (a) tenure; (b) career development opportunities (CDO); (c) burnout; (d) sense of community (SOC); and (e) compensation satisfaction (CS) were chosen as predictors of OAE field staff turnover intentions (IT). Furthermore, this study sought to collect current demographic information to explore changes within this unique and dynamic population.

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested to determine the strength and direction that the selected predictor variables have with intent to turnover.

H1: There will be no significant linear relationship between OAE field staff tenure, CDO, burnout, SOC, and CS with IT.
Chapter III

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was developed using quantitative instrumentation to examine the relationships between predictor variables and OAE field staff turnover intentions. The following chapter describes the participant sample, and addresses selection criteria and participant characteristics pertinent to this study. Additionally, instrumentation that was used to measure each predictor variable is explained, along with corresponding validity and reliability information when applicable. Next, procedures regarding the administration of this study’s survey and methods of data collection is provided. Last, the type of data analysis used to interpret the survey data is explained.

Participants

A total of four Outward Bound (OB) schools agreed to participate in the survey, including the Northwest Outward Bound School (NWOBS), Outward Bound California (OBCA), North Carolina Outward Bound School (NCOBS), and the Colorado Outward Bound School (COBS). All participating programs are non-profit organizations affiliated with OB USA and offer expeditionary OAE programming to youth, college-aged, and adult clientele.

Due to these partnerships, a convenience sampling method was used to produce a sample of OAE field staff participants. Only those 18 years old and older were allowed to participate in the survey, and both female and male field staff were encouraged to take part. Each OB school employed about 30 to 80 field staff, and when combined, produced a total of 200 potential participants. An a-priori power analysis suggested that a minimum
sample of 75 respondents was necessary to obtain adequate power to test this study’s null hypothesis (Field, 2009).

Additionally, this study surveyed only the field staff employed by NWOBS, NCOBS, OBCA, and COBS. Administrators, directors, managers, or employees of non-field based positions were excluded from the survey. Furthermore, employees who lead programs that are not expeditionary in nature (e.g. inner-city or “front country” programs) were not asked to participate. To prevent non-field staff employees from participating in the survey, a selection criteria question was implemented in the beginning of the survey that asked potential participants about their primary job-role. Those who did not meet the selection criteria were thanked for their time and directed out of the survey.

**Instruments**

The survey was comprised of both basic demographic questions, and instrumentation retrieved from organizational behavior literature. The variables of interest in this study adopted either the entire or partial use of instruments for measurement purposes. These instruments include; (1) the Intent to Leave Scale (ILS); (2) Organizational Career Management Scale (OCMS); (3) Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators’ Survey (MBI-ES); (4) Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS); and (5) the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The following section describes pertinent information about these instruments. For the participants’ sake, the complete survey was named the “Outward Bound Field Staff Survey” (OBFSS) and had been converted to a PDF format provided in Appendix A.
Demographics

The OBFSS asked basic demographic questions including: (a) age; (b) gender; (c) education level; (d) race/ethnicity; and (e) field staff tenure. Tenure was measured by the total number of seasons an individual had been employed by their organization. This approach allowed field staff to report a tenure score that was easy to recall.

Although the demographic variable tenure was used to predict OAE field staff turnover, the variables age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity was included in the survey for the purposes of supplemental analysis.

Intent to Turnover

Based on Jaros’ (1997) Intent to Leave Scale (ILS), a 2-item scale was used to measure one’s intent to turnover (IT) and reflected a combination of withdrawal attitudes related to IT, such as intent for alternative job-search, and intent to quit. Participants were asked; “how likely are you to search for employment with another organization to replace your current position with Outward Bound in the next year” and “how likely are you to permanently leave Outward Bound in the next year.” Responses were collected using 5-point Likert-type scales which ranged from (1) very unlikely to (5) very likely. Items were averaged to create an overall IT score.

Instead of using a single item IT scale that simply asks whether or not one intends to quit their job, and producing a “yes” or “no” response, the two-item ILS proves to be more useful in accounting for the gradations of intensity of turnover intentions, and helped to “…prevent potential misclassification errors by better separating out those field staff who intend to turn over from those with less intense feelings” (Kirby, 2006, p. 44).
The ILS has shown high reliability in past studies with alpha coefficients exceeded .80 in samples used by Jaros (1997) and a Cronbach’s alpha of .85 by Pepe (2010).

**Career development opportunities**

The instrument that measured OAE field staff career development opportunities (CDOs) was adopted from the Organizational Career Management Scale (OCMS) developed by Sturges, Guest, Conway, and Davey (2002). The OCMS was created to measure the extent that participants experience career management help and developmental opportunities within contemporary organizations. The OCMS contains 6 items that measure “formal” interventions such as training or skill development that may help develop one’s career. Specific words within certain OCMS items were altered to better measure CDO in context of OAE. Example items include; “Outward Bound provides training to help develop my career” and “I am given work which has developed my skills for the future.” Responses of the six items were provided on 5-point Likert-type scales which ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Items were averaged to create an overall CDO score. Reliability tests produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .77 for Sturges et al.’s (2002) study.

**Sense of community**

The Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS) was developed by community-psychology scholars and designed to assess the four dimensions of sense of community (SOC); (1) needs fulfillment; (2) group membership; (3) influence; and (4) emotional connection (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008). Variations of the BSCS have been used to measure overall SOC within neighborhood-type communities, as well as within
seasonal worker communities of the summer camp and winter ski industries (McCole et al., 2012; McCole, 2015; Peterson et al., 2008).

Thus, this study adopted the BSCS to measure the overall SOC of OAE field staff. This instrument encompassed an 8-item, positively worded scale with 5-point Likert-type response formats ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Specific words within certain BSCS items were altered to better measure SOC in context of OAE. For example, the word “neighborhood” was replaced with “OB community.” This type of adaptation is common within studies that have used the BSCS to measure SOC of various populations (McCole, 2015). Example questions include “I feel like a member of the OB community” and “I feel connected to the OB community.” Peterson et al. (2008) found construct validity within the BSCS and reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .92 for overall BSCS scores.

**Compensation satisfaction**

In general, organizational behavioral theorists categorize compensation satisfaction (CS) as a sub-category within the job satisfaction construct. A commonly used instrument developed to assess employee attitudes in job satisfaction is the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS; Van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, & Frings-Dresen, 2003). According to Spector (1985), the JSS is applicable to all organizations even though it had been developed for the human services sector. Within the JSS, two of its nine subscales measure facets of pay and fringe benefit satisfaction, and for the purposes of this study were combined to measure overall CS.

The response format of the pay and fringe benefit subscales (containing 4 and 3 items respectively) was a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to
(5) strongly agree. Scoring accounted for positively and negatively worded items, and the sum of all seven items produced an overall score for CS; higher scores indicated higher CS. An example pay-related question includes “I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.” An example fringe benefit-related question includes “I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive from OB.” Regarding internal reliability, the pay and fringe benefit subscales produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .75 and .73 respectively (Spector, 1985), while the JSS met criteria for construct validity in a study by Van Saane et al. (2003).

**Burnout**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the most commonly used instrument in measuring employee burnout (Brewer & Shapard, 2004). Furthermore, to better assess the burnout levels of employees in educational settings, the MBI Educator’s Survey (MBI-ES) was developed and consists of a three-subscale structure that measures (a) emotional exhaustion; (b) cynicism; and (c) professional efficacy. However, researchers found that when measured alone, the emotional exhaustion subscale results in higher reliability and validity as a measure of burnout than when the three original subscales are combined (Brewer & Shapard, 2004; Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2000). For this reason, this study adopted 8 items from the MBI-ES’ emotional exhaustion subscale as an overall measure of employee burnout.

Responses to the 8-item MBI-ES emotional exhaustion subscale was provided on 7-point Likert-type scales that offered frequency ratings varying from (0) never to (6) every day. The average of all 8 items produced an overall burnout score; higher scores indicated higher levels of burnout. An example question includes, “I feel emotionally
drained from my work” (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986). Reliability tests of the emotional exhaustion subscale provided a Cronbach’s alpha of .86 (Schutte et al., 2000). Also, Schutte et al. (2000) demonstrated factorial validity of the MBI-ES across occupational groups, suggesting that the MBI-ES can be used with varying populations such as OAE field staff.

**Procedures**

This study surveyed participants during the last week of September through the first week of November, 2018. During that time, most field staff had completed a season of work for their respective Outward Bound organizations. Surveying NWOBS, NCOBS, OBCA, and COBS field staff during the off-season was challenging due to their transient nature and distribution around the world. According to Sinclair, O’Toole, Malawaraarachchi, and Leder (2012), an internet-based survey could offer advantages in improving data quality and could be beneficial when email lists of specialized populations (such as OAE field staff) are easily accessible. Because OB administrators use email as the primary method of contacting their employees during the off-season, administering a survey via electronic means made sense.

Therefore, to effectively contact OB field staff, an email invitation with a link to the survey was sent to program administrators of the participating OB schools, which was then forwarded electronically to their respective field staff. Those asked to participate were informed that the survey was voluntary and remained completely confidential. Last, the survey was only administered to potential participants once human subjects approval had been received by Eastern Washington University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).
Analysis

Survey data collected from the internet was entered into IBM’s SPSS v.24 statistics software. Preliminary descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the demographic responses regarding age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level, and tenure. In addition, scoring and descriptive analysis was conducted for the variables intent to turnover (IT), CDO, burnout, SOC, and CS.

Multiple linear regression model analysis was used to test the study’s null hypothesis. Since the strengths and directions of the relationships between the independent variables and IT are largely unknown within the OAE field staff population, the first analysis was calculated using an exploratory, forced-entry approach in which all five predictor variables were simultaneously entered into the model. Next, a blockwise entry method was calculated, in which only significant and near significant predictors found in the first analysis were entered into the model, yielding the most parsimonious model predicting IT; such a model helped to answer this study’s research question by representing the strongest and most significant predictor variables of IT.
Chapter IV

Results

This chapter provides a summary of the information collected from the Outward Bound Field Staff Survey including the return rate, demographic data, and descriptive statistics of each univariate scale. Also, methods used within multiple linear regression analysis and subsequent results related to this study’s null hypothesis will be discussed.

Survey Return Rate

This study’s survey was sent to 200 OAE field staff participants belonging to four different Outward Bound organizations in the United States. A total of 126 responses were received electronically yielding a return rate of 63%. Prior to analysis, the data was checked for accuracy, completeness, and consistency as recommended by Fowler (2014). Furthermore, when non-response to individual survey items occurred, scores were adjusted as recommended by the instrument’s original author(s). Ultimately, 25 responses were eliminated due to the survey’s initial qualifying question or lack of completeness and 101 participant responses were deemed usable for analysis.

Demographic Information

Table 1 summarizes the demographic information collected of OAE field staff participants. Most respondents were between the ages of 21 and 32 (73%), had an undergraduate education or higher (92%), and were ethnically White (83%). Additionally, more females (54%) responded to the survey than males (44%). Of the four Outward Bound organizations that participated, almost half of all respondents were represented by the Norwest Outward Bound School (44%). Participant tenure (the
number of seasons an individual has worked for their particular OB organization) had a mean of 6.32 seasons, however 58% of respondents worked 5 seasons or less.

Table 1
Demographic Information of OAE Field Staff Respondents (n=101)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>21-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-28</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-32</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-36</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-40</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-binary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tenure (seasons worked) 6.32 1-30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure (seasons worked)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College Credit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical or Trade Training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Summary of Univariate Scales

The scales used in this study measured intent to turnover (IT) as the dependent variable, and tenure, career development opportunities (CDO), sense of community (SOC), compensation satisfaction (CS) and burnout as independent variables. Compensation satisfaction was the only scale used in this study comprised of subscales (pay and fringe benefits), and as mentioned later, its subscales aided in further understanding the CS-IT relationship.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for each scale and subscales used in this study. The mean IT score for all 101 respondents was 2.82 on a scale range of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the highest level of IT. The reliability test for IT was .61 using Cronbach’s α. Even though this α value is lower than recommended, it still represents a respectable correlation between items, due to the IT scale being comprised of only two items. According to Field (2009), scales containing few items often experience inherently low reliability scores due to the way Cronbach’s α is equated.

### Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity / Race</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Ethnicities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean CDO score was 3.60 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the highest perceived extent of career development opportunities available to oneself within their organization. The reliability for CDO was .80 using Cronbach’s $\alpha$.

The mean SOC score was 3.88 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the highest overall level of SOC. The reliability for SOC was .88 using Cronbach’s $\alpha$.

The mean CS score was 18.30 on a scale of 7 to 35, with 35 indicating the highest overall level of CS. The reliability for CS was .78 using Cronbach’s $\alpha$. The CS subscale pay had a mean score of 9.43 on a scale of 4 to 20, with 20 indicating the highest level of pay satisfaction. The CS subscale fringe benefits had a mean score of 8.87 on a scale of 3 to 15, with 15 indicating the highest overall level of satisfaction of fringe benefits. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ for the pay subscale was .76 and .59 for the fringe benefits subscale. Similar to IT, the $\alpha$ value for fringe benefits is lower than recommended, but still represents a respectable correlation between items due to the scale being comprised of only three items.

The mean burnout score was 2.29 on a scale of 0 to 6, with 6 indicating the highest overall level of burnout. The reliability for burnout was .92 using Cronbach’s $\alpha$. 
Table 2

Summary of Dependent and Independent Variables (n=101)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Scale Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Turnover</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.00-5.00</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Scale Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure (seasons worked)</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1.00-30.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Opportunities</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.83-4.83</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>2.13-5.00</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation Satisfaction</td>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>7.00-28.00</td>
<td>7-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS Pay&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>4-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS Fringe Benefits&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8.87</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>3-13</td>
<td>3-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.00-5.25</td>
<td>0-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Included are <sup>a</sup>Compensation Satisfaction subscale Pay and <sup>b</sup>Compensation Satisfaction subscale Fringe Benefits.

**Multiple Linear Regression Hypothesis Testing**

This study’s null hypothesis states that there will be no significant linear relationship between tenure, CDO, burnout, SOC, and CS with IT. To test the null hypothesis and determine the strengths and directions that the five predictor variables have with IT, two multiple linear regressions were conducted.

Multiple linear regression assumptions suggested by Field (2009) were addressed using SPSS v.24. First, bivariate Pearson’s correlations were calculated to test for multicollinearity between predictor variables; all Pearson’s correlations were lower than .80. Also, histograms and normality probability plots were used to test for non-normality and heteroscedasticity of residuals, in which none was found. All assumptions for regression analysis suggested by Field (2009) were met.

The first multiple linear regression was calculated to predict IT using an exploratory, forced-entry approach in which all 5 predictor variables (a) tenure; (b) CDO; (c) SOC; (d) CS; and (e) burnout, were simultaneously entered into the model.
Results indicate a significant regression equation was found (F(5,95) = 8.33, p < .001), with an R² = .31. As seen in Table 3, SOC and CS were significant, negative predictors of IT (β = -.20, p = .05; and β = -.27, p < .01 respectively). Additionally, burnout was near significant (β = .16, p = .08) and positively associated with IT. The remaining two variables (tenure and CDO) were shown not to be significant or near significant predictors of IT. This analysis provides support to reject the null hypothesis.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure^a</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDO^b</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC^c</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS^d</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-2.65</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. R² = .31. ^a Tenure measured as the number of seasons worked. ^b Career Development Opportunities scale. ^c Sense of Community scale. ^d Compensation Satisfaction scale.

The next analysis involved calculating a second multiple linear regression using a blockwise entry method, where only significant and near-significant predictors found in the first analysis were considered. Also, because CS proved to be the strongest predictor in the first analysis, it seemed valuable to explore which of its subscales were driving that significance; thus, CS’s subscales were split into separate independent variables. The predictor variables simultaneously entered into the second multiple linear regression analysis were (a) SOC; (b) CS’s pay subscale; (c) CS’s fringe benefits subscale; and (d) burnout.
Results indicate a significant regression equation was found (F(4, 96) = 12.55, p < .001), with an $R^2 = .34$ and $\Delta R^2 = .03$ from the first analysis. As seen in Table 4, SOC remained a significant, negative predictor of IT ($\beta = -.23, p = .01$). Also, CS’s pay subscale was found to be a significant, negative predictor of IT ($\beta = -.45, p < .001$).

Burnout remained a near significant ($\beta = .16, p = .08$) and positively associated predictor of IT. Interestingly, CS’s fringe benefits subscale showed no actual or near significance, suggesting that pay is a stronger type of compensation that predicts IT compared to compensation in the form of fringe benefits. In summary, this study’s null hypothesis is rejected as predictors (a) SOC; and (b) CS’s pay subscale were significant predictors of IT of OAE field staff.

Table 4
Multiple Regression Coefficients Using Blockwise-Entry of four Independent Variables and Intent to Turnover as the Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC$^a$</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>-2.61</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS Pay$^b$</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-4.52</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS FB$^c$</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. $R^2 = .34$, $\Delta R^2$ from Table 3 = .03, $^a$Sense of Community scale. The Compensation Satisfaction (CS) scale from Table 3 had been replaced by its subscales $^b$CS Pay and $^c$CS Fringe Benefits.
Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the variables that best predict intent to turnover (IT) of outdoor adventure education (OAE) field staff. With guidance from organizational behavior and OAE research, five predictor variables were ultimately chosen for analysis, two of which were found to be significant predictors of IT. This chapter discusses the demographic results and hypothesis testing using multiple linear regressions (the strengths and directions of the relationships each predictor variable has with the dependent variable IT). The implications of these results for OAE field staff, organizations experiencing turnover, and the limitations of this study will also be discussed, as well as possible directions for future research.

Demographics

The demographics collected in this study both resemble and differ to that of past OAE research. First, this study aligned with trends found in recent OAE field staff research in areas of gender and education level (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Wilson, 2009). Unlike the OAE field staff population mentioned in Birmingham’s (1989) study where 63% of participants were male and only 44% had a bachelor’s degree, the current study revealed that 54% of participants identified themselves as female and 73% of participants claimed to have a bachelor’s degree. However, the percentage of participants with an education level of at least a bachelor’s degree or higher (92%) increased only slightly from Birmingham’s (1989) study (83%).

In terms of age, the participants of this study averaged 30 years old, and over 74% of participants were at least 25 years old. These statistics better align with the ages of
OAE field staff in the 1980s where about 80% were at least 26 years old, compared to recent OAE literature which suggest that field staff populations are trending younger, between the ages of 22 and 26 years old (Birmingham, 1989; Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Wilson, 2009). The discrepancies in age between the current study and recent OAE literature could be due to the fact that both the current study and Birmingham (1989) used participants from the same organization (Outward Bound), while the participants of recent OAE literature came from multiple OAE organizations.

However, this discrepancy may also be explained by the difference in field staff populations studied. For example, when comparing age to outdoor behavioral healthcare (OBH) field staff from Marchand et al.’s (2009) study where 43% of participants were 25 years old or younger, OAE field staff participants from this study tended to be older with only 21% of participants landing between the ages of 21 and 25.

Regarding ethnicity, 83% of participants in this study identified themselves as White, and about 10% identified themselves as multi-ethnic. The predominance of White OAE field instructors is a theme unchanged in OAE literature, as well as across other field staff populations (e.g. OBH field staff; Kirby, 2006; Kirk & O’Connell, 2012; Marchand et al., 2009). To this day, certain barriers (e.g. socioeconomic and lack of knowledge) and attitudes (perceived discrimination) may continue to keep non-White people from becoming OAE field instructors (Warren, Roberts, Breunig, & Alvarez, 2014).

**Hypothesis Testing Using Multiple Linear Regression**

This study explored the relationships between turnover predictor variables and IT of OAE field staff. Although this study did not intend to test the validity of Podsakoff et
al.’s (2007) stress-retention turnover model (SRTM, Figure 1), the model helped to select pertinent predictor variables relevant to organizational behavior research and hypothesize the direction of their relationships to IT. In addition, OAE turnover literature, and conversations with NWOBS administrators aided in choosing the five independent predictor variables; (a) tenure; (b) career development opportunities (CDO); (c) sense of community (SOC); (d) compensation satisfaction (CS); and (e) burnout.

In short, the results of this study suggest that CS’s pay subscale and SOC are significant negative predictors of turnover. These findings support the relationships suggested by the SRTM (Figure 1) where CS and SOC are directly related to IT. Contrarily, this study found that the direct relationships of burnout, career development opportunities, and tenure with IT (resulting from the multiple linear regression model) were non-significant. Based on the SRTM, the relationships between these non-significant variables and IT are distal and indirect, suggesting that moderating relationships (not tested in this study), may have altered their significance.

Compensation Satisfaction

Of the five independent variables, compensation satisfaction (CS) yielded the strongest relationship to the dependent variable IT. Initially, this study defined CS as a singular construct that combined pay with alternative forms of compensation (e.g. free room and board, subsidized trainings, etc.). The scale which measured CS was adopted from the Job Satisfaction Survey and consisted of two subscales; (a) pay satisfaction; and (b) fringe benefit satisfaction (Spector, 1985).

Pay satisfaction. The second linear regression model revealed that CS’s pay subscale drove CS’s significance more so than its counterpart, fringe benefits. The
significant and negative pay-IT relationship suggests that as pay satisfaction of OAE field staff decreases, their intent to turnover increases.

Organizational behavior and OAE research have yet to definitively conclude that pay is a strong predictor of IT. For example, a meta-analysis by Williams, McDaniel, and Nguyen (2006) suggested that the pay-IT relationship is moderate at best, and a weaker relationship exists between pay satisfaction and actual turnover behavior. Others suggest that the strength of this relationship largely depends on the populations being studied (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Singh & Loncar, 2010). In regard to OAE field staff, research suggests that dissatisfaction and stress have been associated with low pay (Birmingham, 1989; Thomas, 2001; Wilson, 2008); however, significant relationships between pay and IT have not been explored.

This study's findings show that the pay-IT relationship is indeed meaningful and unique to OAE field staff. Podsakoff et al.'s (2007) SRTM (Figure 1) suggests that predictor variables most proximal to IT yield stronger, more direct relationships with IT. This corresponds to why a significant and negative pay-IT relationship was found in comparison to other, more distal predictor variables (burnout, tenure, and CDO); pay satisfaction (a facet of job satisfaction) happened to be one of the most proximal predictors of IT used in this study.

Decades ago, Birmingham (1989) suggested that OAE field staff “…continue to work despite an intense dissatisfaction with pay levels” (p. 108). However, this finding suggests that in response to pay dissatisfaction, today’s field staff are actually intending to leave their organizations. The antecedents of pay dissatisfaction were not explored in this study, but perhaps increased costs of living (e.g. groceries, transportation, healthcare,
etc.) in proportion to consistent low pay of OAE field staff has helped to drive the significance of the pay-IT relationship (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Only recently may OAE field staff who have been accustomed to “just dealing” with low pay are now considering leaving their jobs in search for higher paying opportunities.

Additionally, perhaps today’s field staff have heightened feelings that they are not being paid the amounts they deserve. Williams et al. (2006) mentioned that “the primary determinant of pay level satisfaction is the discrepancy between the pay that should be received and the amount of pay actually received” (p. 394). In other words, because field staff feel they are underpaid and not being paid the amount they deserve, their satisfaction in pay decreases. Thus, the widening gap between perceived and actual pay may result in higher turnover intent of OAE field staff.

Though it may be difficult for OAE organizations to simply adjust one’s budget and increase field staff pay, providing higher, more livable wages may not only reduce turnover, but provide longer-term benefits such as curbing costs associated with recruiting, selecting, hiring, and training new employees. OAE organizations that continually avoid pay increases (or consider low pay as irrelevant) may experience heightened field staff turnover. At the very least these organizations should consider ways in which to improve field staff pay satisfaction.

**Fringe benefit satisfaction.** Researchers proposed that providing various forms of compensation may help organizations retain their employees (Marchand, 2010; Singh & Loncar, 2010). Organizational behavior literature has even included various forms of compensation (pay and non-cash payments) in the definition of pay (Williams et al.,
2006). However, this study found that alternative forms of compensation (measured here as *fringe benefits*) do not influence field staff decisions to keep (or quit) their jobs.

The first linear regression model had two forms of compensation combined into a single predictor variable (CS). In result, it was difficult to interpret the facet which contributed most to its significance. Thus, as suggested by Williams et al. (2006), CS’s subscales (pay and fringe benefits) were treated as separate predictor variables in the second linear regression model, and yielded *fringe benefits* a non-significant predictor of IT.

This finding suggests that fringe benefit compensation is not effective in reducing the turnover intent of OAE field staff, nor does it influence the pay-IT relationship. Thus, current efforts made by OAE organizations to provide these alternative forms of compensation (free room and board, free or discounted training, benefits, etc.) should better reflect the type of compensation that today’s field staff really value; higher paying wages. Administrative efforts to increase actual pay may reduce the turnover intent of field staff, while providing other forms of compensation may not.

**Sense of Community**

Sense of community (SOC) was the other significant predictor variable found in this study. The negative SOC-IT relationship suggests that as one’s sense of community increases, IT decreases. According to Podsakoff et al.’s (2007) SRTM model (Figure 1), SOC (as a facet of *organizational commitment*) is a proximal and direct predictor of IT. This may explain why SOC, like *pay satisfaction*, yielded a significant relationship to IT compared to the more distal predictor variables as suggested by the SRTM.
In terms of organizational behavior literature, SOC had seldom been used to predict IT; instead, the related construct organizational commitment is more renown in organizational behavior research. However, when used as an alternative lens to explore the turnover of unique populations (e.g. transient and seasonal employees), SOC has proved itself meaningful and differentiated its significance from organizational commitment. For example, Birmingham (1989) found significant negative relationships between SOC, interpersonal relationship issues, and arranged housing to turnover of OAE field Staff. This study also aligns with more recent qualitative literature that suggests SOC is related to the retention of OAE field staff (Lewis & Kimiecik, 2018; Marchand, 2010). For example, Lewis and Kimiecik (2018) mentioned sense of community as vital for maintaining an outdoor leader’s lifestyle. Furthermore, this study compliments SOC literature that found significant and negative SOC-IT relationships of similar, seasonal employees in the winter ski and summer camp industries (McCole et al., 2012; McCole, 2015).

According to authors Klein and D’Aunno (1986), who were among the first to explore SOC in the workplace, SOC is important because it provides friendship, commitment to group tasks, and a sense of belonging to one’s organization. “The more homogeneous a group of employees, the more likely they are to both perceive and value community” (Klein & D’Aunno, 1986, p. 368). Thus, because OAE field staff share similar skillsets, life styles, living arrangements, and work-related tasks, they may be more receptive to SOC than other types of workers. For example, SOC may help field staff cope with unconventional work conditions such as working in remote locations and spending extensive time away from family and friends. According to Lewis and Kimiecik
(2018), SOC can allow for a deeper sense of understanding, appreciation, and comradery between OAE field staff.

In support of the benefits mentioned above, this study suggests that SOC can be used to reduce turnover intentions of OAE field staff. Administrators should provide interventions that heighten feelings of SOC. For example, McCole (2015) recommended that team building exercises which include both first year and experienced employees can build SOC and reduce turnover. Also, most Outward Bound schools in remote locations provide lodging and communal dining facilities to their field staff intended to foster community development. However, Thomas (2002) suggested that developing community is work-place specific and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Thus, administrators should be creative in developing team building opportunities that effectively develop SOC within their organizations. Once employers successfully develop community, “…[OAE field staff] may have higher quality experiences, remain in the industry for a longer time, and return for multiple seasons;” a consequence most organizations would happily accept (Lewis & Kimiecik, 2018, p. 319).

Non-significant Predictor Variables

The variables burnout, tenure, career development opportunities (CDO), and CS’s fringe benefit subscale (mentioned above) did not yield significant relationships in predicting IT of OAE field staff. Although each of these variables was suggested by organizational behavior and OAE literature to relate to employee turnover, this study suggests those relationships lack significance, and that the variables pay satisfaction and SOC better predict IT of OAE field staff.
**Burnout.** When the near-significant predictor variable *burnout* was removed from the multiple linear regression model, the $R^2$ value was reduced by only two percent, suggesting that burnout had little influence in predicting IT compared to pay and SOC. That said, burnout’s near-significance was positively related to IT which resonates with findings from literature investigating the burnout-IT relationship within the human services industry (Maslach et al., 2001; Podsackoff et al., 2007).

Furthermore, this study aids in differentiating OAE field staff from other field staff populations experiencing burnout. For example, outdoor behavioral healthcare (OBH) research suggests that OBH field staff experience high levels of burnout and that significant burnout-IT relationships exist (Kirby, 2006; Marchand et al., 2009). Perhaps OBH field staff experience higher levels of burnout (compared to OAE field staff) due to differing job responsibilities, clientele, and organizational outcomes. Even though OAE field staff may be less inclined to leave their jobs due to burnout than other field staff populations, OAE organizations should be careful not to increase current burnout levels of their field staff, which may eventually lead to higher levels of turnover as experienced by OBH field staff.

**Tenure.** Organizational behavior research suggests that tenure is a meaningful and consistent negative predictor of turnover. Also, OAE research suggests that first year field staff are more likely to leave their jobs (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012). In contrast, this study found no significance between tenure and IT. In fact, tenure held a slightly positive (though insignificant) relationship with IT. This suggests that OAE field staff can experience high levels of IT, regardless of the number of seasons one has worked for their organization.
In result, OAE administrators should be aware that predictor variables significant to IT, such as pay satisfaction and SOC, are relevant to both new and experienced field staff. New hires, as well as tenured field staff should be considered when implementing strategies to increase pay satisfaction and SOC. On one hand, organizations that reduce new-hire turnover may save time, energy, and costs associated with recruiting, selecting, hiring, and training new employees. On the other, reduced turnover of experienced field staff may contribute to “positive staff culture and a workforce with extensive experience in group facilitation, judgement and decision making…” (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012).

**Career development opportunities.** Career development opportunities (CDO) is another variable suggested by organizational behavior research to negatively predict volunteer employee turnover (McDonald & Hite, 2005; Werther & Davis, 1996). However, similar to Birmingham’s (1989) finding, this study found CDO to have no significance in predicting IT of OAE field staff. Though insignificant, CDO was found to have a negative relationship with IT and agrees with organizational behavior research in the direction of the CDO-IT relationship.

Still, according to Wagstaff (2016), rewarding career paths exist to OAE field staff who are aspired, practice purposeful navigation, and are supported by their organizations. When taking into consideration this study’s findings, perhaps one’s aspiration to forge a career in OAE is decided less by the extent organizations provide CDOs, but more on one’s motivation and “purposeful navigation” of the industry. OAE field staff may enter the profession already knowing that career development will extend beyond what a single organization can provide. Thus, intent to turnover of OAE field
staff may be driven by more immediate factors than career development opportunities (i.e. pay).

**Limitations**

One of the main limitations of this study is that it is not experimental, but correlational research. Though significant predictor variables were found, the relatively low $R^2$ value (.34) suggests that most of the variance in OAE field staff turnover intentions have yet to be explained, and that other significant predictors of IT (not included in this study) exist.

Another limitation concerns the lack of diversity within the study’s sample frame. The participants used in this study were conveniently sampled from a single OAE organization, Outward Bound (OB). Thus, this study may better represent the experiences and turnover intentions of OB field staff rather than the turnover intentions of the larger OAE field staff population. If field staff affiliated with OAE organizations apart from OB were invited to participate, results would be more generalizable. That said, because OB is one of the original and largest OAE field staff employers in the United States, and past OAE literature has effectively used OB to study various research areas, the use of OB field staff in this study may aid in developing a base understanding of the turnover intentions of the OAE field staff population as a whole.

Last, it is worth mentioning that a higher survey response rate would have been helpful. When exploring the response rate of this study’s OB field staff participants, it became clear that some OB schools yielded much higher respondents than others. For example, 44% of respondents were affiliated with the Northwest Outward Bound School (NWOBS), while only 13% of respondents were affiliated with the Colorado Outward
Bound School. This discrepancy may be due to the way Outward Bound administrators forwarded the electronic survey to their employees; NWOBS sent a direct invitation (with a link to this study’s survey) to each field staff’s private email. Conversely, administrators from two of the participating Outward Bound schools had imbedded the survey’s invitation link in a monthly newsletter (containing supplementary information) sent to individual field staff. Although this was done in an effort to prevent their employees from receiving too many emails, field staff who received monthly newsletters may have overlooked the survey invitation link within that newsletter.

**Directions for Future Research**

As mentioned above, there ought to exist variables not included in this study that predict IT of OAE field staff. OAE researchers should continue to use organizational behavior and human resource management literature to form a general understanding of employee turnover and its primary, most reliable correlates. However, due to the unique living and working conditions that OAE field staff experience, researchers should also continue to explore predictor variables unique to this population that are not commonly discussed within organizational behavior turnover literature. Additional exploration of turnover predictors most relevant to OAE field staff will help administrators develop initiatives that address these specific turnover-related problems.

Even though complex relationships between predictor variables exist, this study used basic multiple linear regression to test only the direct relationships between predictor variables and IT. In result, this study (nor the SRTM) does not report any significant direct relationships between distal predictor variables and IT. This non-significance could be due to the unexplored effects of moderating variables on the
relationships between distal, indirect predictor variables (e.g. burnout) and IT.

Moderating variables could explain how and why this study’s more distal predictors were found insignificant. For example, could a decrease in SOC (as a moderating variable) actually increase one’s feeling of burnout, as suggested by Podsakoff et al.’s (2007) SRTM, and thus increase turnover intentions? Such exploration of inter-variable relationships requires more in-depth analysis, but could reveal how certain turnover predictors respond in the presence of others.

Once reliable turnover predictors have been established for the OAE field staff population, the next step could be to develop a theoretical model representing OAE field staff turnover. Such a model would help both researchers and practitioners visually recognize the main antecedents of turnover pertinent to this unique population, as well as the strengths and direction of their relationships to turnover. Also, a turnover-themed model could accompany and add insight to existing models that investigate the development cycle, experiences, and life themes of OAE field staff (Field et al., 2016; Lewis & Kimiecik, 2018; Wagstaff, 2011).

Last, those who collect survey data and perform quantitative analysis in an effort to discover significant predictor variables should consider supplementing findings with additional qualitative analysis. This has been commonly suggested by quantitative OAE researchers, and in response, qualitative studies on field staff experiences have been conducted. However, a mixed methods approach could help strengthen or debunk findings, based on how well the quantitative and qualitative data complement each other.
Summary

Outdoor adventure education (OAE) organizations continually struggle with field staff turnover. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between turnover predictor variables and intent to turnover (IT) of OAE field staff. Per the suggestion by organizational behavior and OAE literature, and conversations with OAE practitioners, five independent predictor variables were ultimately chosen; (a) tenure; (b) career development opportunities; (c) sense of community; (d) compensation satisfaction; and (e) burnout. Results of multiple linear regression analysis suggest that compensation satisfaction’s pay subscale and sense of community are significant negative predictors of IT. These findings contribute to organizational behavior and OAE turnover literature by providing evidence for strong turnover correlates unique to a working population seldom studied. Additionally, OAE practitioners can use these findings to prioritize their time and resources toward combatting key IT related predictors unique the OAE field staff population.
References


Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.nr0.htm


Wright, T. A., & Bonett, D. G. (2002). The moderating effects of employee tenure on the relation between organizational commitment and job performance: A meta-
Appendix A

Letter to Outward Bound Administrators

Hello Outward Bound Administrators,

After many months of preparation, the “Outward Bound Field Staff Survey” is complete and ready for distribution. Thank you for your patience and support throughout this process!

Reminder: This survey is intended for “field staff” only (i.e. assistant instructors, lead instructors, and/or course directors who work directly with students in the field).

Please forward the link of this survey to your field staff (link provided below), you may wish to add a note to your field staff containing the following message:

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Dear [NWOBS/COBS/OBCA/NCOBS] Field Staff,

In an effort to help Outward Bound recognize and address the work-related challenges that field staff experience, Justin Hall (6-year NWOBS field staff) has developed a short survey for YOU, in part of his graduate thesis at Eastern Washington University, focusing specifically on field staff retention and turnover.

I support this research and your participation in this study is highly encouraged, appreciated, and will help create opportunities to improve field staff satisfaction and longevity within our community.

For more information and to participate in this brief 5-10 minute survey, please click on the following link: [Outward Bound Field Staff Survey-hyperlink]

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This survey is now “live” and will continue to collect responses from now through Friday, November 9th (to allow for those currently working in the field to take the survey). I will track responses coming from all schools and send you “survey reminders” of which to forward to your field staff midway through October, and again one week before closing the survey Friday, November 9th.

When finished, the survey’s raw data and results (along with my official analysis) will be shared with you. As always, I appreciate your continued support and thank you for agreeing to distribute this survey to your field staff!

Cheers,
Justin Hall
Appendix B

Informed Consent Statement

Hello Outward Bound Field Instructors!

My name is Justin Hall (6-year NWOBS field instructor), and I’ve developed a survey in partnership with Outward Bound as part of my graduate thesis at Eastern Washington University, to aid in our understanding of the work-related challenges that field instructors experience, and to mediate retention and turnover problems within our organization.

We hope that you take 5-10 minutes to complete this survey. Your participation is highly appreciated, valued, and will help create opportunities to improve field instructor satisfaction and longevity.

Please know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that your responses are anonymous. You may skip any questions that you are not comfortable answering and you may opt out of the survey at any time.

Your consent to participate in this study is implied when you begin the survey. If you are under the age of 18, please do not take the survey.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (Justin Hall) at 503-869-8981 or jhall59@eagles.ewu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact Ruth Galm, Human Protections Administrator, 509-359-7971 or rgalm@mail.ewu.
TO: Justin Hall, Department of Physical Education, Health & Recreation

FROM: Ruth A. Galm, EWU Human Protections Administrator

DATE: September 25, 2018

SUBJECT: Outdoor Adventure Education Field Staff Turnover (HS-5615)

Human subjects protocol HS-5615 entitled “Outdoor Adventure Education Field Staff Turnover” has been approved as an exemption from federal regulations under CFR Title 45, Part 46.101(b) (1-6).

Student research qualifying for an exempt IRB review is valid for a period of one year. If subsequent to initial approval, the research protocol requires minor changes, the Office of Grant and Research Development should be notified of those changes. Any major departure from the original proposal must be reviewed through a Change of Protocol application submitted to the IRB before the protocol may be altered. Please refer to HS-5615 on future correspondence as appropriate as we file everything under this number.
Appendix D

Outward Bound Field Staff Survey

Hello Outward Bound Field Instructors!

My name is Justin Hall (6-year NWOBS field instructor), and I've develop a survey in partnership with Outward Bound as part of my graduate thesis at Eastern Washington University, to aid in our understanding of the work-related challenges that field instructors experience, and to mediate retention and turnover problems within our organization.

We hope that you take 5-10 minutes to complete this survey. Your participation is highly appreciated, valued, and will help create opportunities to improve field instructor satisfaction and longevity.

Please know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that your responses are anonymous. You may skip any questions that you are not comfortable answering and you may opt out of the survey at any time.

Your consent to participate in this study is implied when you begin the survey. If you are under the age of 18, please do not take the survey.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (Justin Hall) at 503-869-8981 or jhall59@eagles.ewu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact Ruth Galm, Human Protections Administrator, 509-359-7971 or rgalm@mail.ewu.

1. Do you work, or have worked, as a field instructor for Outward Bound in 2018? (e.g. assistant instructor, lead instructor, course director, etc.)

☐ Yes
☐ No

2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary or Third-gender
- Prefer not to answer

Prefer to self-describe

4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (if currently enrolled, the highest degree received)
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college credit, no degree
- Trade, technical, or vocational training
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

5. What is your ethnicity (or race)?
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White / Caucasian
- Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

6. How many seasons have you worked for Outward Bound as a field instructor?

7. How many total field-days have you worked during your career with Outward Bound? (please provide the most accurate number)

8. Which Outward Bound school do you primarily work for?
- Colorado Outward Bound School
- North Carolina Outward Bound School
- Other (please specify)
Please remember your responses remain anonymous and will not be used for hiring purposes.

9. In the next year, how likely are you to search for employment with another organization to replace your current position with Outward Bound?

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10. In the next year, how likely are you to permanently leave Outward Bound?

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Outward Bound Field Staff Survey

The following statements regard your feelings toward career development opportunities, sense of community, and compensation satisfaction within Outward Bound. Please indicate how you feel in response to each statement by selecting the extent of which you agree or disagree.

11. Outward Bound provides training to help develop my career.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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12. I am given opportunities for career advancement in Outward Bound.

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13. I am given an effective personal development plan.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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14. I am given work which develops my skills for the future.

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15. My program directors (or supervisors) make sure that I get the training I need for my career.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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16. My program directors (or supervisors) give me clear feedback on my performance.

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17. I share the same values of people in the OB community.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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18. The OB community helps me fulfill my social needs.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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19. I feel like a member of the OB community.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

20. I belong in the OB community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

21. I have a say about what goes on in the OB community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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22. People in the OB community influence one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

23. I feel connected to the OB community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>
24. I have a good bond with others in the OB community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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25. I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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26. Pay raises are too few and far between.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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27. I feel unappreciated when I think about what OB pays me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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28. I feel satisfied with my chances for pay increases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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29. I am NOT satisfied with the benefits I receive from OB. (e.g. free room and board, pro-deals, professional training opportunities, accident insurance, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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30. The benefits I receive at OB are as good as what most other outdoor education organizations offer. (e.g. free room and board, pro-deals, professional training opportunities, accident insurance, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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31. There are benefits I do not have which should be provided by OB.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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Outward Bound Field Staff Survey
The remaining 8 statements regard job-related feelings. Please indicate the answer that best describes how often you feel that way.

32. I feel emotionally drained from my work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>A few times a season or less</th>
<th>Once a month or less</th>
<th>A few times a month</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>A few times a week</th>
<th>Every day</th>
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33. I feel used up at the end of a work day in the field.

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<th>Never</th>
<th>A few times a season or less</th>
<th>Once a month or less</th>
<th>A few times a month</th>
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34. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day in the field.

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<th>Never</th>
<th>A few times a season or less</th>
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35. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.

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36. I feel burned out from my work.

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<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
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37. I feel frustrated by my job.

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38. I feel I'm working too hard on my job.

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<thead>
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<th></th>
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39. Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.

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VITA

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Internship, EPIC Adventures, Spokane, Washington, 2018-2019