A study of 8221 Canadian workers finds that access to work-life flexibility benefits reduces involuntary turnover for immigrant women and men. The beneficial effect of using work-life flexibility benefits is attenuated, however, for immigrant women who have relatively low levels of acculturation to Canadian society.

Immigrants represent 20% of the Canadian workforce and 70% of national labour force growth (Zietsma, 2006). Despite immigrants’ strong representation in the workforce, there is extensive documentation of struggles with unemployment and underemployment. Very recent arrivals to Canada, meaning people who have arrived within the last 5 years, have unemployment rates nearly double those of the general population. Recent immigrants who have been in Canada for between 5 and 10 years show higher unemployment than domestic Canadians but lower unemployment than very recent immigrants. Some ethnic groups, such as very recent African born immigrants, experience unemployment rates as high as 20.8% (Gilmore, 2007). Immigrant women are more likely to be unemployed than either immigrant men or Canadian born women.

Underemployment and immigrant skill discounting are well documented phenomena (Krahn et al, 2000; Calleja, 2000; Janigan, 2003). A number of studies have examined immigrant hiring, and a recent literature review concluded that employer perceptions, interpretations, and hiring practices constitute substantial barriers to employment for immigrant workers (Liu, 2007). Indicators of underemployment include the fact that the growth in immigrant employment has been in industries such as food services and transportation, whereas growth for the Canadian born has been in professional, scientific and technical services, finance, and public administration (Gilmore & Le Petit, 2007). These differences exist despite preferences given to skilled and professional immigrants by Citizenship and Immigration Canada when selecting permanent residents. This problem has received a great deal of attention, however research has focused primarily on issues surrounding initial job placement. Very little attention has been paid to post-employment outcomes.

Issues with initial placement certainly contribute to increased unemployment among immigrants, however, immigrants also experience relatively high rates of involuntary turnover (Gilmore, 2008). The Public Policy Forum reports that employers who hire immigrants experience issues surrounding working in teams, lack of familiarity with Canadian workplace norms, language barriers, and cultural misunderstandings (Lopes and Poisson, 2004). These findings suggest that level of acculturation to Canadian society influences immigrant workers’ labour market success.

Although previous researchers have indicated that immigrant workers require supports for effective integration into the workplace, no one has previously investigated employer-provided work-life flexibility benefits as an important source of support for immigrant workers. The need to combine work and family in Canadian society may raise a substantial barrier to workplace effectiveness for immigrant workers, who may be less familiar and comfortable with Canadian methods of accomplishing this task. Employer provision of work-life flexibility benefits may be particularly useful to immigrant workers...
because it increases access to information about how Canadians combine work and family as well as resources and support, which are particularly important for this relatively vulnerable group of workers.

**Background and Hypotheses**

Immigrants, especially those who arrived in Canada more recently, face strenuous adjustment and acculturation challenges (Cabral, 2000; Ataca and Berry, 2002). These challenges range from the concrete – finding childcare, learning how financial institutions operate, etc., to the nebulous – understanding unspoken workplace rules and identifying subtle differences in communication norms. Newcomers, including even the most highly skilled professionals, also frequently discover that their foreign credentials and experience go unrecognized (Calleja, 2000; Janigan, 2003), creating the added psychological burden of underemployment and related changes in social status and self image. All this creates an unusually high stress load. This is evidenced by the fact that expatriates, who face very similar acculturation issues, have a 50 percent probability of experiencing stress-induced health problems during their adjustment period (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008).

One set of tools used by organizations trying to recruit and retain the best talent are work-life benefits, meaning benefits that allow individuals to better balance their working and personal lives. There are two broad categories of work-life offerings. The first are flexibility options, meaning alternatives that allow employees to better manage their schedules. These include flextime, job-sharing, compressed work weeks, and work-at-home options. The second are direct social support offerings, meaning providing access to childcare, counseling, recreational services, eldercare, etc. Already, among non-immigrant workers, these family-friendly benefits have been shown to increase job satisfaction, commitment, productivity, and contribute to an organizational culture of respect for employees (Breaugh & Frye, 2007; Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Hammer et al., 2005; Holtzman & Glass, 1999; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Roehling, Roehling & Moen, 2001; Swody & Powell, 2007). Given the challenges faced by immigrants it is anticipated that they would be heavy users of both flexibility benefits and social support benefits, but only if they feel comfortable requesting and accessing such benefits.

**Work-Life Balance and the Impact of Benefits on Involuntary Turnover**

Conflicts between family needs, life activities and work have significant consequences. In particular family interfering with work conflicts (FIW) can lead to negative work attitudes, tardiness, absenteeism, and leaving early (Boyar et al, 2008), as well as lowered productivity, increased turnover (Mayerhofer et al, 2008), and reduced job satisfaction (Heraty et al, 2008). Burnout, defined as “a severe negative psychological experience that is a reaction to work-related stress” (Acker, 1999, p.112), has also been linked directly to work-family conflict for both genders, with the more significant impact occurring among females (Pundzius, 1993; Sigauw and Honeycutt, 1995) This is hardly surprising, other literature has also identified females as suffering from a greater degree of work-life conflict than males (Heraty et al, 2008; Mayerhofer et al, 2008). In addition, as would be expected, being married and having children in the home is positively correlated with subjective experiences of conflict (Boyar et al, 2008).

These issues, however, can be mitigated for both genders by work-to-family support, such as scheduling flexibility and direct social support benefits. Research has demonstrated that the absence of scheduling flexibility is linked to higher rates of work-life conflict, particularly when forced to work odd hours, such as weekends (Mayerhofer et al, 2008). In addition the need to personally provide home care for dependents has a negative impact, as demonstrated by the positive correlation between number of hours of care provided and perceived family demand, leading to work-family conflicts (Boyer et al,
2008). The former are mitigated by flexible hours and the ability to work at home, the latter by direct organizational support for childcare and eldercare.

These types of work-life benefits have been shown to have many positive impacts (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Holtzman & Glass, 1999; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Roehling, Roehling & Moen, 2001; Swody & Powell, 2007). On an attitudinal level they may act as an incentive when recruiting, and motivate existing employees to work harder and contribute more (Konrad and Mangel, 2000). They also increase job satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Swody & Powell, 2007).

We anticipate that access to and use of work-life flexibility benefits will reduce involuntary turnover among workers. Several previous studies have shown that use of work-life flexibility benefits reduces voluntary turnover intentions (Allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Behson, 2005; Casper & Harris, 2008; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999), but we are unaware of any studies examining the association between using work-life flexibility benefits and involuntary job loss.

We expect that work-life flexibility benefits will reduce involuntary job loss for two reasons. First, there is evidence that work-life flexibility benefits are positively associated with attendance, productivity, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Baltes et al., 1999; Eaton, 2003; Kossek, Colquitt & Noe, 2001; Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006; Lambert, 2000), although some null findings have been reported (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Kossek & Nichol, 1992). Better performing employees are less likely to lose their jobs for cause, and may be less likely to be selected by the employer for layoffs.

Second, studies suggest that work-life flexibility benefits are negatively associated with stressors such as work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Behson, 2005; Breauh & Frye, 2007; Frye & Breauh, 2004; Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999; Voyeranoff, 2004), and resulting psychological distress (Grzywacz & Buss, 2003; Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002). Employees with elevated stress and strain levels are likely to provide less value-added to the employer and cost more in terms of healthcare and other types of benefits. As such, these employees are most likely to suffer involuntary job loss.

H1: Work-life flexibility benefits are negatively associated with involuntary turnover.

**Immigrants’ Needs for Work-Life Flexibility Benefits**

Demanding schedules and time pressures are hardly a unique phenomena in today’s workplace. Recently arrived immigrants, however, often experience excessive demands beyond those felt by other members of society. There are several reasons for this. Adjustment to a new life is, in and of itself, a significant stressor. In addition many new arrivals have family obligations. For example, among the 61,600 economic class immigrants admitted to Canada between October 2000 and September 2001 56% were principal applicants and 44% spouses and dependents (Statistics Canada, 2003). Immigrants arriving with a spouse and/or children may be the only family member who speaks English or French. This means that family members need assistance with routine daily tasks due to language barriers (Scott, 2001). Children also require high levels of parental intervention and psychological support as they deal with acculturation stress, including problems coping with behavioural expectations within Canadian classrooms (Scott, 2001).

Adding to time pressures is the fact that new immigrants have extensive bureaucratic obligations to meet, and can frequently access advice only during standard business hours. Furthermore even those with conversational language skills frequently need to make time to attend some sort of language classes.
offered through local settlement agencies. For immigrants who arrived between October 2000 and September 2001, for instance, 30% took courses in one of the official languages (Statistics Canada, 2003). Finally, difficulties with foreign credential recognition are common and well-documented, and frequently result in the immediate need for further job training (Calleja, 2000; Janigan, 2003). One study found that 66.3% of recent immigrants found they needed to access further education. A total of 45% actually obtained further education within their first 6 months in Canada, while 9% reported wanting to but having no time (Statistics Canada, 2003). All of these demands can create intense pressure. Scheduling flexibility, such as flex-time, compressed work-weeks, and job-sharing may allow people to better manage these competing demands.

Direct support locating family, social and recreational services can help reduce what the expatriate literature refers to as “daily hassles” (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008). These are the day-to-day inconveniences created by having to adjust to a new way of doing just about everything: accessing healthcare and childcare, finding recreation and social outlets, dealing with financial institutions, shopping, etc. In a study of Iranian immigrants in Canada the experience of daily hassles was linked directly to psychophysical distress (Safdar et al, 2003). Such stress is also one of the reasons that expatriates have a 50 percent probability of experiencing stress-induced health problems (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008). Addressing these developing mental and physical health needs then creates additional daily hassles, leading to a downward spiral. This is where work-life benefit offerings can begin to make a difference.

One of the foremost programs that could benefit immigrants is EAP services, particularly free counseling. Sensitive counseling could help mitigate culture shock induced psychological distress, which, if untreated can lead to negative outcomes such as loss of self-esteem, depression, severe anxiety, family breakdowns, and domestic violence (Cabral, 2000). For those experiencing severe distress EAP service providers can provide references to government sponsored counseling and mental health services for further support. This assistance is crucial due to well-documented issues accessing such services among immigrant populations, in part due to widespread ignorance regarding their existence and where to find them (O’Mahony and Donnelly, 2007; Blignault et al, 2008).

**Immigrants’ Use of Work-Life Flexibility Benefits**

Work-life flexibility benefits have the potential to mitigate acculturation problems, but only if the services are actually accessed. Even among non-immigrant populations, these programs are often under-utilized. Reasons for not leveraging these benefits are varied. First, communication of the benefits may be a problem. One study found that a mere 45% of organizations communicated their work-life benefits clearly (Catalyst, 1997). Furthermore, in the U.S., there have been well publicized lawsuits involving usage of family benefits leading to employment discrimination, up to and including wrongful termination (Pinto, 2008). A Canadian study found that many professionals believe using work-life flexibility options is a career-limiting move (Catalyst, 2006). The potential career impacts of benefits utilization contributes to an atmosphere of reluctance, with usage of work-life benefits being seen as a risk.

This reality is reflected in a recently proposed model, which included the following variables related to benefits usage: employee perception of the motivation of the organization, perceived organizational commitment - meaning sincerity behind offering work-life balance options, and employee’s level of trust that their manager will be supportive and discrete (Swody & Powell, 2007). While this model remains untested, it is worth noting that many of the anticipated reasons for under-utilization of benefits represent “fuzzy” areas, the nebulous unsaid rules that separate what organizations and managers say from what they actually mean. Reading these gray zones properly is much more difficult for immigrant workers, particularly those who arrived more recently and/or come from a country with a greater cultural distance. Cultural distance is especially significant when one considers that
changes to immigration policy over the past 15 years have reduced the number of newcomers from similar cultures, such as Western Europe, and increased the numbers from very culturally distinct areas, such as Asia (Laroche, 2000; Leung, 2001).

The idea that country of origin impacts service usage is further supported by documented evidence that cultural distance is relevant to service usage patterns within medicine, particularly mental health. Place of birth, for example, plays a determining role in rates of accessing medical care via consulting a general practitioner. This finding is likely due to uncertainty and difficulty in gaining access combined with different culturally-based expectations regarding which services such an individual should perform (Laroche, 2000). O’Mahony and Donnelly (2007) found that female immigrants have difficulty accessing mental health services due to lack of understanding of the healthcare system, language barriers, and different perceptions regarding the appropriateness of Western style mental health practice. This finding was replicated in a later study of Chinese immigrants in Australia, which found that both genders experience cultural barriers to accessing community counseling services (Blignault et al, 2008). Females from cultures with low scores for individualism and strictly delineated gender roles faced further constraints due to the intense stigmatization of women who, by requesting care, are perceived as placing personal needs before family needs (O’Mahony and Donnelly, 2007).

These findings have important implications for the reasons why immigrants may not access work-life flexibility benefits, including being unaware of their existence, being unsure about one’s right to use the services or what the unstated consequences might be, and being unwilling to ask for fear of seeming foolish, stupid, or demanding. Confidentiality and privacy concerns can also be a problem, especially for sensitive EAP services such as mental health support (Blignault et al, 2008). Privacy issues may be particularly important for those individuals whose home countries were run by oppressive regimes where “moles” in the community report undesirable behaviours to authorities. Finally the cultural context that the individual comes from may inhibit them. For example admitting to mental health needs carries a significant social stigma in many cultures (O’Mahoney and Donnelly, 2007; Blignault et al, 2008).

Childcare and eldercare programs face similar difficulties. One of the key problems is that care needs to be not only accessible and affordable, but also culturally acceptable. Immigrants from cultures with norms of highly formalized respect for the aged, for example, may find the thought of institutionalized eldercare repugnant, making utilization of these services unlikely regardless of possible benefits. Similarly many immigrants come from countries with very different perceptions of appropriate child rearing techniques. This makes some parents reluctant to use institutional childcare programs. Immigrants from countries where children have few rights often feel that their children’s expectations regarding their relationships with adults are inappropriately altered by behaviours learned from the dominant culture (Cabral, 2000). Conversely those from very laissez-faire cultures feel their children are unable to understand or comply with strict Canadian behavioural norms, and are therefore unfairly punished and ostracized (Scott, 2001)

The Impact of Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as the process by which individuals change as the result of being influenced by contact with another culture (Berry, 1990). Research has shown that the acculturation process involved in adjusting to a new culture is stressful for immigrants (Weaver & Kim, 2008). Immigrants whose country of origin is more culturally different or distant from the host country must adjust to a larger cultural gap and experience greater uncertainty and misunderstanding of the host culture as a result. Another cause of the greater difficulty of the acculturation process for immigrants from more culturally distant countries is discrimination and negative attitudes among host country nationals (Berry, 2006; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Perhoniemi, 2006). Findings indicating that immigrants from more culturally distant countries have poorer health outcomes (Lindström, Sundquist & Östergren, 2001)
indicate that the acculturation process is more difficult for these individuals.

Work-life flexibility benefits are likely to be particularly valuable for immigrants from more culturally distant countries because those workers are most vulnerable and most likely to require supports. Finding information about resources for combining work and family responsibilities is likely to be more difficult for more culturally distant immigrants. Going through required selection and application processes is likely to be more difficult for immigrants from more culturally distant home countries. Employer-provided supports greatly reduce the amount of effort and energy that must be devoted to obtaining information about work-life flexibility resources as well as streamlining the selection and application process. Whereas managing the interface between work and life is challenging for anyone with substantial family responsibilities, doing so in a new host country that is very different from one’s home country is particularly difficult. Hence, employer-provided work-life flexibility benefits are likely to be most beneficial to outcomes for immigrants from culturally distant countries.

H2: Work-life flexibility benefits are more strongly negatively associated with involuntary turnover for immigrants than for domestic Canadians.

H3: Work-life flexibility benefits are more strongly negatively associated with involuntary turnover for immigrants with a relatively low level of acculturation to Canada.

Method

We used the Workplace and Employee Survey (WES) data collected by Statistics Canada in 2003 and 2004 to test our hypotheses. Statistics Canada uses a stratified sampling method based on industry, region, and size to draw the workplace sample from the Business Registration List, which contains all businesses operating in Canada. The employee sample is then drawn based on lists provided by each responding employer. Twenty-four employees are randomly selected by each company, and all employees are surveyed if the company has fewer than 4 employees. The employers and employees who responded to the 2003 surveys were also surveyed in 2004 to create a longitudinal database. Annual response rates to the WES exceed 80%.

In this study, we used data from the 2004 employee survey to measure the dependent variable of involuntary turnover. For measures of the predictors and control variables, we used information from both the employee and the workplace surveys in 2003. Creating a one-year lag between the independent and the dependent variables facilitates the testing of causal relationships. The datasets consisted of 20,834 employees in 2003 and 16,804 employees in 2004.

We focused only on those employees who responded to both the 2003 and 2004 surveys. In this study, analysis was limited to respondents working for companies with 100 or more employees in order to focus on companies large enough to provide formal work-life flexibility benefits programs to their employees. Respondents working part-time hours, defined as averaging less than 30 hours per week over the course of the year, were excluded from analysis. The final sample for this study contained 3054 domestic Canadian women, 3721 domestic Canadian men, 683 immigrant Canadian women, and 763 immigrant Canadian men.

Measures

Immigrant status. Immigrant status was obtained from an item on the employee survey asking respondents whether or not they were born in Canada.
Involuntary turnover. The dependent variable used in the analysis was involuntary turnover occurring for any reason (i.e. layoff, dismissal) between the 2003 and 2004 data collection as reported by the employee. Employees were asked about the job reported in the interview in 2003, “Did you leave this job or did the job come to an end?”. If the employee indicated that the job had come to an end, it was counted as involuntary turnover for purposes of analysis.

Work-life flexibility benefits. The WES surveys provide information on both the availability and use of benefits, as reported by employees. The employee survey included five items measuring the provision of work-life supports to employees. Dummy variables were created to indicate whether each employer reported providing childcare benefits, elder support, employee assistance programs, fitness and recreation services, and other personal support or family services. An index of access to work-life supports was created by taking the mean of these five dummy variables ($\alpha = .66$).

To measure benefits usage, the employee survey asked respondents whether they had used the same five supports in the last 12 months. Dummy variables were created to indicate employee usage of childcare benefits, elder support, employee assistance programs, fitness and recreation services, and other personal support or family services. An index of usage of work-life supports was created by taking the mean of these five dummy variables ($\alpha = .28$).

A further measure of benefits usage was provided by a set of questions in the employee survey asking respondents about their use of flexibility options in the time or place of work. Dummy variables indicated whether or not each employee used a reduced work week, a compressed work week, flexible hours, job sharing, and a work-at-home option. An index of usage of flexibility options was created by taking the mean of these five dummy variables ($\alpha = .13$).

Usage measures did not show high internal consistencies, as indicated by low Crobach’s alphas. The higher internal consistency for the “access” index indicates that employers who offered one type of work-life support tended to offer many of the others. We would not expect usage indices to show the same level of consistency, because an employee’s need for one type of support does not imply need for another type. Furthermore, the flexibility options tend to be substitutes for each other. For instance, a person does not use both a compressed work week and a reduced work week. Hence, the usage indices are formative rather than scale indicators.

Acculturation. Our measure of acculturation included three items, and high scores indicated lower levels of acculturation toward Canadian norms. First, employees reported which language they used most often at home. Responses of “English” or “French” were coded 0, other responses were coded 1. Other studies measuring acculturation have considered language use to be an important indicator (Deng & Walker, 2007; Weaver & Kim, 2008).

Other research has shown that immigrant adjustment to the host culture increases over time (Markovizky & Samid, 2008). Our second indicator of acculturation was length of time in Canada, as reported in the employee survey. Employees reported the year they arrived in Canada so that a high score indicated a lower level of acculturation.

Our third indicator of acculturation was cultural distance between the immigrants home country and Canada as the host country. Culture distance was calculated using country scores from the Hofstede (1980, 2001) and GLOBE studies (House et al., 2004). For the GLOBE study “practice” rather than “ideal” scores were used as these reflect perceptions of actual day-to-day practice. Examining the correlations between country scores for the Hofstede and GLOBE measures, the only significant positive correlation observed was that between Hofstede’s collectivism and GLOBE’s in-group collectivism ($r =$
We created z-scores by dividing each country’s Hofstede and GLOBE collectivism score by the standard deviation across countries. Cultural distance from Canada was calculated by subtracting each country’s z-score from the Canadian z-score and squaring the difference. The resulting two difference measures were then summed to generate a two-item cultural distance score. Immigrants to Canada were assigned the cultural distance score for their home countries. Domestic Canadians were assigned a cultural distance score of 0. Immigrants who reported being from a country for which we did not have both Hofstede and GLOBE scores were excluded from the study, resulting in the removal of 528 respondents.

The three indicators of language usage, years in Canada, and cultural distance were subjected to principal components factor analysis, which resulted in a clear one-factor solution (α=.67). Factor scores were calculated to create the acculturation index used in the analysis. A higher acculturation score indicated a lower level of acculturation.

**Controls.** Several variables were controlled in the analysis to rule out potential alternative explanations for our findings. Family structure is important to work-life interface issues (Grover & Crooker, 1995), and was assessed by survey items asking whether or not employees had a spouse or common law partner living in the home (1=yes, 0=no), and employees’ reported number of dependent children under the age of 18. Workplace time demands are also important factors affecting work-life interface (Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002). Working odd hours, weekends, or rotating shifts can increase the challenge of combining work and family, so we created a control variable indicating whether or not the employee worked a standard work week (1=yes, 0=no). We defined a standard work week as working a minimum of 6 hours a day between the hours of 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, from Monday to Friday.

The gender-role model of work-family interface (Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991) implies that women benefit more than men do from work-life flexibility benefits because women’s traditional role of homemaker conflicts more with paid work than men’s traditional role of income provider. Many studies have documented that women experience more work-family conflict than men do (Carlson, Kacmar & Williams, 2000; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Grönlund, 2007; Hill, 2005; Moen, Kelly, & Huang, 2008; Roehling, Roehling & Moen, 2001; van Daalen, Willemsen & Sanders, 2006; Voydanoff, 2004; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006). Less research has examined gender differences in responses to work-life flexibility benefits, however, a number of studies support the gender-role model’s implication that these benefits improve work experiences more for women than they do for men (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Casper & Harris, 2008; Greenberger et al., 1989; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Given the differences in associations observed for women and men, it is important to control for gender in the analysis, which we did by conducting separate analyses for women and men (see Analysis section below).

We controlled for race/ethnicity because people of color may have different involuntary turnover experiences due to the impact of workplace discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003; Hom, Roberson & Ellis, 2008). The employee survey presented respondents with 19 categories plus “other” and asked them to indicate from which groups their parents or grandparents descended. Respondents were allowed to check as many categories as applied to them. We created a dummy variable indicating those respondents who checked “Canadian” only (1=yes, 0=no; there was no category of “white” or “Caucasian” in the survey) rather than categories such as “Black” or “South East Asian.”

Finally, we controlled for occupational category by creating a set of five dummy variables indicating professional/managerial, administrative, sales/marketing, skilled trades, and production/unskilled (reference group in the multivariate analysis).
Analysis

Because our outcome variable of involuntary turnover was dichotomous, we used logistic regression to test the hypotheses. The four groups of domestic men, domestic women, immigrant men and immigrant women had significantly different means and standard deviations on many of the study variables, indicating that these populations should not be combined in analysis. So, we created four separately logistic regression analyses to test the hypotheses. Control variables were entered in step 1 of the logistic regression. Indices measuring access and use of work-life flexibility benefits as well as acculturation were entered in step 2. In step 3, we entered three multiplicative interaction terms to examine the interaction of acculturation with the three indices of work-life flexibility benefits access and use.

Results

Findings for control variables indicated that for domestic Canadian men, having children reduced the probability of involuntary turnover but being married increased that probability. Odds ratio calculations indicated that the effect of an additional child on the odds ratio was .84 (e to the power of -.17), which means that an additional child reduced the probability of involuntary turnover by 16%. The effect of being married on the odds ratio for domestic Canadian men was 1.54, indicating that being married or living with a partner increased the probability of involuntary turnover by 54%.

Three control variables were statistically significant for domestic Canadian women. The effect of being married or living with a partner on the odds ratio for this group was 1.51, indicating a 51% increase in the probability of involuntary turnover. Occupational category was also influential for domestic Canadian women. The effect of being in a professional or managerial occupation on the odds ratio was 1.73, indicating a 73% increase in the probability of involuntary turnover in these occupations compared to unskilled or production jobs. The effect of being in a marketing or sales occupation on the odds ratio was 1.97, indicating a 97% increase in the probability of involuntary turnover in these occupations compared to unskilled or production jobs.

Two control variables were significant for immigrant women. The effect of an additional child on the odds ratio was .76, indicating a 24% decrease in the probability of involuntary turnover. The effect of being in a professional or managerial occupation on the odds ratio was 2.20, indicating a 120% increase in the probability of involuntary turnover in these occupations compared to unskilled or production jobs for immigrant women.

H1 predicted that work-life flexibility benefits would be negatively related to involuntary turnover. Findings of the logistic regressions shown in Table 1 indicated that access to and use of work-life flexibility benefits was unrelated to involuntary turnover for domestic Canadian men and domestic Canadian women. Both immigrant men and immigrant women, however, were significantly less likely to experience involuntary turnover when they had greater access to work-life supports. Odds ratio calculations for immigrant men (women) indicated that the effect of a unit increase in access to work-life supports on the odds ratio was .17 (.11), indicating an 83% (89%) reduction in the odds of involuntary turnover. Hence, H1 received partial support.

H2 predicted that work-life flexibility benefits would be more strongly negatively associated with involuntary turnover for immigrants than for their domestic Canadian counterparts. This prediction was partially supported in that access to work-life flexibility benefits significantly reduced involuntary turnover for immigrant men and women while being unrelated to involuntary turnover for domestic Canadians.
Table 1: Logistic Regressions Predicting Involuntary Turnover (1=Yes, 0=No)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Domestic Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>Domestic Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Immigrant Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>Immigrant Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N Children</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Canadian)</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>†</td>
<td>-1.64</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Work Week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Manager</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Trade</td>
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<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>†</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.32</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.33</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to work-life supports</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.81</td>
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n: 3721  3054  763  683

Notes.

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; † p < .10.

1The production/unskilled category served as the reference in the analysis.
H3 predicted that work-life flexibility benefits would be more strongly negatively associated with involuntary turnover for immigrants with a relatively low level of acculturation to Canada. This prediction was tested by the multiplicative interactions between work-life flexibility benefits indices and acculturation entered in the last step of the logistic regression equations. The interaction between use of work-life supports and acculturation was significantly associated with involuntary turnover for immigrant women.

Odds ratio calculations indicated that access to work-life supports for an immigrant with a very low acculturation score (.1) was associated with an odds ratio of .19 (e to the power of (-.04-2.22+.586)). By comparison, the odds ratio was .61 (e to the power of (-.04-2.22+1.758)) for an immigrant with a moderate acculturation score (.3), and the odds ratio climbed to 1.95 (e to the power of (-.04-2.22+2.93)) for an immigrant with an acculturation score of .5. Hence, immigrant women who were very much acculturated to Canada, as indicated by use of an official language at home, a relatively long number of years in Canada, and a relatively small cultural distance between their home country and Canada benefitted from access to work-life supports, such that a one-unit increase in access was associated with an 81% reduction in their involuntary turnover rates. Immigrant women who were moderately acculturated to Canada (acculturation score of .3) benefitted somewhat less from access to work-life supports, such that a one-unit increase in access was associated with a 39% reduction in involuntary turnover. Immigrant women who were less well-acculturated to Canada (acculturation score of .5) did not benefit from access to work-life supports. Indeed, for this group, a one-unit increase in access was associated with a 95% increase in the probability of involuntary turnover. These findings are in the direction opposite our prediction, and as such, failed to support the hypothesis.

**Discussion**

We found that work-life flexibility benefits that employees know about and have access to reduce involuntary turnover among immigrant women and men. Access to work-life flexibility benefits had no relationship to involuntary turnover among domestic Canadian women or men, however. Together, these findings suggest only partial support of our thinking that work-life flexibility benefits help workers to reduce involuntary turnover. We argued that access to work-life flexibility benefits provides material support to help employees manage work-family conflict and thereby reduce absenteeism, stress and burnout. We further argued that access to work-life flexibility benefits provides psychological support to employees that increases performance as a result of increased motivation to stay with the current employer. The fact that our findings support the operation of these theoretical mechanisms for immigrants but not domestic Canadian workers suggests that immigrants are more vulnerable to the threat of involuntary job loss due to the damaging effects of work-family conflicts on performance.

We also found, contrary to our predictions, that immigrant women who were less acculturated to Canadian society were less likely to benefit from access to work-life flexibility benefits. We had reasoned that because less acculturated individuals are more vulnerable to the stressors resulting from work-family conflict, they are in greater need of the supports provided by work-life flexibility benefits. Hence, we predicted that access to these benefits would be more strongly negatively associated with involuntary job loss for less acculturated immigrants. Our findings indicated, however, that while access to work-life flexibility benefits greatly reduced the likelihood of involuntary turnover for immigrant women who were more acculturated to Canadian society, they did not help the outcomes of less acculturated women.

We offer two possible explanations for this apparently anomalous finding. First, it is possible that employers offering work-life flexibility benefits expect higher levels of performance from employees in return. Relatively unacculturated immigrant women may not be able to learn as quickly or perform as
well in Canadian jobs because of misunderstandings due to language barriers, lack of knowledge of Canadian business norms, and/or difficulties adjusting to the challenges of combining work and family in a highly unfamiliar culture. For these reasons, immigrant women with a low level of acculturation to Canada might be more often fired for cause from these more demanding jobs.

Second, it is possible that the work-life flexibility benefits offered by Canadian employers are less helpful to immigrant women with a low level of acculturation to Canada. The types of supports offered might be less culturally appropriate for this group. Furthermore, this group might be less willing to access supports that are offered because their relative unfamiliarity with the Canadian culture heightens uncertainty about the possible career impact of using work-life flexibility benefits. If access to benefits is less helpful to this group, then the benefits are less likely to reduce their involuntary turnover rate.

The fact that acculturation moderated the impact of work-life flexibility benefits on involuntary turnover for women but not men supports taking a gender-role perspective for research in this area (Gutek, Searle & Klepa). Because women experience more work-family conflict than men do, their workplace outcomes are more strongly influenced by work-life flexibility benefits, with the result that providing benefits that are accessible and appropriate are particularly critical for women. Further research is needed to determine the underlying reasons why less acculturated immigrant women do not benefit as much from work-life flexibility benefits offered by their employers. Perhaps qualitative studies that gain an in-depth employee perspective are needed to illuminate these issues. Although a body of research has examined the factors creating barriers to hiring for immigrant workers (Krahn et al, 2000; Calleja, 2000; Janigan, 2003), very little research has focused on immigrant workplace experiences after the initial hire.

Like all research, this study has its limitations. Many measures were taken from employee survey responses, however, data for the outcome variable of involuntary turnover were collected in 2004 and predictor variables were collected in 2003. Hence, common methods bias is not a major concern as a plausible alternative explanation for our findings. Also, the acculturation measure incorporated indices at the country level from separate sources, and for this reason, an important component of the acculturation measure did not rely on employee survey responses. A benefit of using the WES data is access to a large representative sample, which generated a sufficient number of immigrant employees to allow their experiences to be studied in detail. This benefit allowed us to detect the valuable positive effect of access to work-life supports for immigrants and largely outweighs the disadvantages of having to rely on survey-based measures.
References


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The effects of place and provider as a function of dependent type and work-family climates. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44: 29-44.


