Staff Turnover in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Sector in South Africa

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This dissertation titled
Staff Turnover in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Sector in South
Africa

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation presents two frameworks of what drives the ICT workers’ decisions to terminate their employment with their employers, using in-depth interviewing of 38 ICT participants in different industry sectors in South Africa. The findings show external labor markets (ELMs) and internal labor markets (ILM) turnover factor across information and communication technology sectors and demographic attributes.

ELM factors were especially complex, with AA forcing employers to increase race and gender representation with individuals from South Africa’s historically disadvantaged groups. Affirmative action puts a premium tag on hiring women and Black people. AA therefore, provided mobility for these groups and restricted mobility for White males. Despite the shortage of skilled ICT professionals in the sector, AA gives preferential treatment which dissatisfied the undesignated groups, thus forcing them to have intentions to leave their jobs or the country.

ILM factors were less complicated than ELMs, with general dissatisfaction with internal company policies about pay, promotions and the scopes of their jobs causing them to terminate their jobs. Compensation was the most influential turnover, with professionals always looking for more money and promotions. If there was perceived lack of commitment by the employee from the organization, they were highly likely to
leave. Some ICT professionals chose to leave their permanent jobs to work on short-to-medium term projects which were flexible.

Across demographic groupings, Black men were the most hoppers but preferred workers in the ICT sector, as described by some managers and other male workers. The corporate ICT culture was still a barrier for female workers and caused women not to stay long because of unwelcoming environment. The preferential employment of Black males increased their mobility and slowed down the entry of women in core ICT work and managerial positions. The voluntary turnover of the ICT professionals was mainly caused by organizational rewards, affirmative action, and a host of other workplace factors.

Keywords: Affirmative action; Employment Equity Act; ICT workers; information and communications technology; external labor markets; internal labor markets; job mobility; job hopping; job satisfaction; organizational commitment; psychological contract; segmented workforce; social networks; South Africa; turnover; turnover intentions; qualitative interviewing

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Drew McDaniel
Professor of Media Arts and Studies
To my family and friends in South Africa and Athens
For your support during this journey
Thank you for your prayers and encouragement
This dissertation is dedicated to you
You all made it easier for me
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Historical Background of South Africa

The starting point for the historical analysis of South Africa extends way back in the 1600s. Since the Europeans settled in South Africa in the 15th century, Black South Africans had suffered the injurious effects of colonialism for hundreds of years. The following provides historical details of the political actions that have led up to post-apartheid South Africa. The context shows how the past events influenced the employment arena, particularly the communications sector in SA. It is crucial to note that employment and industrial relations cannot be alienated from the bigger socio-political context in which they operate. So, for the purpose of this study, I highlight the factors that show how historical affairs shaped the events that prevail in the South African labor market. I draw attention to just a few of the more significant political events to exemplify the extent and difficulty of the work environment in South Africa. My point of departure analyzes SA’s social and political landscapes from the colonial era, the apartheid era and to the present SA.

Colonial Period

In the early 1600, the Dutch initially started a refreshing station at the Cape of Good Hope (the present-day city of Cape Town) for the Dutch ships that came from the East Indies. The settlement later became the commercial site of the Dutch East India Company that traded with India and Indonesia. In 1652, the Dutch established a permanent colony at the Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch company had brought the Malay and Indonesian employees from Southeast Asia who were later allowed by the company
to settle in Cape Town as farmers. They settled among the indigenous Khoikhoi and San people, who according to Terreblanche (2002) were “the aboriginal nations that lived in Southern Africa for at least 8000 years before the first White settlers” (p.154). The descendents of all these groups were assimilated into Black communities. Many of these groups included imported slaves from other regions. The offspring of the settlers, the native South Africans, and the slave populations from Indonesia were referred to as the Malay or Cape Coloreds which means people of mixed races. According to Mesthrie (2002), “the roots of the large colored population of the Western Cape go back to this period, with a multiple ancestry that involves the Eastern and African slaves, and the offspring of European and non-European” (p.15).

The British settlers also arrived in South Africa in the 1700s and their arrival in the Cape caused some resentment from the Boers. In 1795, the British took control of Cape Town and later the coastline of Natal. The British occupation of the land became a serious threat to the Afrikaners and that led to the Anglo-Boer wars. Moreover, the British also imported laborers from India to work in the sugar plantations in Natal (Mesthrie, 2002). The question of the wars between these two groups is beyond the scope of the present study and has been recorded well by other researchers.

After the British won the war and gained control of the land and the mineral resources, they promulgated the Native’s Land Act in 1913 which initiated racial segregation by dividing the land into White and native areas. According to De Klerk (2002), the native areas were what later became homeland reservations for Black Africans. The Native’s Land Act and its mandate to allocate land played a significant role in shaping the Group Areas Act that followed during the apartheid era.
**Apartheid Period**

In 1948, the political powers shifted from the British to the Boers when the Nationalist Party (majority Afrikaners’ party) won the elections and formally legalized apartheid. Apartheid was a system that promoted separateness of different racial groups in SA. The objective of the system was the protection of White supremacy and racial purity. After they won the elections, the apartheid government passed several laws to racially categorize individuals, to control and restrict the employment of Blacks, the education of various racial groups and the areas in which different groups could stay, and intermarriages between Blacks and Whites. For instance, the legal codes categorized citizens as Black or White. White often referred to individuals whose ancestry was exclusively European. The population group referred to as Blacks comprised the indigenous Black Africans, Coloreds, and Indians. Indians have South Asian ancestry and were brought from India by the British, and Blacks referred to indigenous Africans “while Colored was often explained as being mixed descent; it included people of Khoisan, Malays [immigrants from Southeast Asia who were brought by the Dutch and settled in Cape Town], Griquas and Chinese origin” (DOH, p. 2) or anyone whose ancestries came from multiple races. These racial groups suffered discrimination under apartheid governments (Thomas, 2002) and subjective tests such as the physical appearance and the pencil test were used to determine individuals’ racial categories.

According to Afolayan (2002), SA’s racial classifications came about

In 1950, [when] the [South African] government passed the Population Registration Act, which sought to classify everyone living in South Africa according to his or her race based on physical appearance, general acceptance,
and social recognition. This law created considerable hardships, especially for those of mixed race [coloreds], and most especially in a society in which generations of White masters and rulers had sired numerous children by Black and Asian women, their slaves and servants (p.437).

Several other legal frameworks such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act were passed to forbid marriages between people of different races and to prohibit all sexual relation between Whites and non-Whites. These two laws are not important to the present study and will not be discussed in detail.

Besides the arbitrary Population Registration Act, there were other laws that were harmful and impacted employment in South Africa. The strongest frameworks that affected industrial activities and relations were the Group Areas Act of 1950, Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Job Reservation Act (JRA) of 1954. These three repressive laws are relevant to the present study because they created inequality and the complexity in the job market in South Africa.

The Group Areas Act of 1950

The first attribute of the apartheid system was the Group Areas Act of 1950. For example, the Group Areas Act forced the actual physical separation of residential areas (Smith, 1990). The Separate Amenities Act created separate public facilities, and the racial segregation policy served to guarantee the political and economic power of the White minority (Smith, 1990; Ramamurthi, 1995). In addition, this restricted people from working in certain geographical areas unless they had passes [temporary permits that allowed them to live in White areas]; the pass holders were usually unskilled workers or
individuals who held a much lower place in the social hierarchy, such as domestic employees.

_Bantu Education Act of 1953_

Apartheid in SA existed for almost fifty years and its negative effects can still be felt in post-apartheid. Another source that had the significant impact for employability in the SA labor market was the Bantu Education Act. The primary objective of Bantu education was to prepare an obedient labor force (Leonard, 1995). The Act specifically promoted the inferior education for Blacks and disrupted the English medium missionary schools where some Blacks alternatively attended, discredited the use of English language and promoted Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This had detrimental effects because English and Afrikaans were regarded as the official languages of the economy in SA. Greef and Nel (2003) suggested:

> In a historical context, the State spent more resources on the educational advancement of Whites. The State furthermore prohibited Black persons from entering educational institutions earmarked for Whites. Under these circumstances, it is only natural that the best person for the job turned out to be White rather than Black, and employers merely reacted rationally to the particular racial distribution of skill produced during the apartheid era (p.27).

Leonard (1995) added that it was viewed “unwise” to integrate “Black people” into business if they were not integrated in government (p. 64). For the practical reasons associated to the job market, the reduced use of English restricted all the non-Whites from the jobs and educational opportunities that could make them competitive in the job market (Kallaway, 2002). Racism was so ingrained in education, primarily to reinforce
the privilege of the minority White group at the expense of the majority Black groups (Dovey & Mason, 1984, cited by Kongolo & Bojuwoye, 2006). Access to the acquisition of employability skills by Blacks was therefore denied because of poor education. The Blacks endured lower educational levels, high unemployment, and low-paying jobs. During apartheid, there were designated career opportunities for women and for Blacks. The primary career options for Black South Africans were education and nursing.

*The Job Reservation Act of 1954*

Employment for Blacks was constrained by the JRA and education for Blacks was harshly controlled under the Bantu Education Act. The primary function of JRA was to preserve and guaranteed jobs (Jordan, 1977). Specifically, this policy excluded non-Whites from many jobs and training programs while it protected Whites from labor market competition from other races. It also made certain forms of skilled work the exclusive preserve of Whites (Jordan, 1997) and made possible the prohibition of the employment of Blacks. In addition, the JRA outlawed Black managers and relegated them to jobs such as assistant officers. For example, in one of his parliament speeches, Verwoerd, the Minister of Native affairs at the time explicitly described how the natives should be excluded from prestigious positions. According to Kallaway (1984), he said that:

> There is no place for the native in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor. For this reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim in the absorption of the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed. (p.92)
As a result of such job discrimination, in the late 1980s, only 17% of technicians, 3% of architects, and 0.1 per cent of engineers were Black (Vally & Khouri-Dhager, 1998).

**Post-Apartheid Period**

In 1994 SA had its first democratic election and apartheid formally ended. According to Bosch (2003), the move toward democracy and the eventual collapse of apartheid occurred as the inevitable result of an interplay between several key factors, which can be summarized as follows:

1) Internal: the apartheid system began to unravel economically and become less sustainable; and increased insurrection and protests within the country by a unified Black population made it “ungovernable”.

2) Regional: South Africa was losing its economic and military domination of the region as a result of political change, particularly in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique; and,

3) International: Events in the global arena, such as the end of Cold War, as well as the ideological failure and international condemnation of apartheid through, among others, economic sanctions (p. 19).

As SA changed into a democratic society, there were imperative changes that happened and several race-based legislations were outlawed and that pointed to a transformation from racial inequality in its many forms. The abolition of the controversial Immorality Act, Prohibition of Mixed Marriages and the Group Areas Act signified respect for people’s choices and tolerance to be around people who might be different from one another. This was in key contrast from what took place in SA for almost five
decades. For this reason and others, the transformation that happened in SA highlighted the changes that were generated by both the political and social systems.

Reforms in Education and the Workplace in the South African Labor Market

The post-Apartheid South African constitution declared that everyone has the right to a basic education and enroll in universities if they qualify and study what they want. Similarly, economically active citizens could take up jobs of their choice including career options not opened to them during apartheid. These goals of employment and education for the post-apartheid South Africa stand as a sharp departure from the goals of Bantu Education and JRA. The learning institutions and the workplace are usually the social institutions where people are empowered, have to be team players, and work with others even if they hardly know each other. These social institutions are critical in any society because that is where individuals learn to work and live in harmony with others.

Studies have indicated that there were new career opportunities for women and Blacks (James, Smith, Roodt, Primo and Evans (2006). Furthermore, there is also a developing trend of tertiary institution students pursuing other career fields such as engineering, medicine and information technology (James, et al., 2006). It can be argued that education opens doors and makes others understand the perspectives of others. Educated people more often partake in important and highly regarded roles than less educated workers. Finally, it is generally assumed that knowledgeable and educated individuals can tolerate the differences, strive to ensure the civil liberties and respect the rights of others.
Concluding Remarks on Historical Background

Given that SA is still in transition and the workplace is slowly transforming and still struggles with what could be called long term political and social problems, empowerment through education for the historically disadvantaged groups should ensure equitable employment for all. However, the drastically different approach from has placed increased strain on employers who are implementing many legal provisions for their inadequately skilled human resources. Moreover, it could be expected that people’s attitudes and long-held belief systems would not change overnight. The continuing resentments between racial groups took fifty years to instill and it is important to realize that integration may also take some time before people truly trust one another.

Even under the new government’s transformation policy, where there are attempts to redress inequities and prohibit employers from continuing discriminatory labor practices (Greef and Nel, 2003), the racial codes are still used in South Africa. This is unique to South Africa as I could not find any other country that still classifies people in racial categories such as this. Folson (2005) argued that current legislations in South Africa still draw from racial purity ideologies, particularly in the areas of access to education and labor. Reformists argued, however, that the goal of the continued use of racial codes, particularly in AA, is to rectify inequities (Mbembe, 2001). For instance, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998 uses race and gender as the main determinants to access certain equity opportunities and was promulgated to promote equal employment opportunities (Leonard, 1995; Greef and Nel, 2003). According to Greef and Nel (2003), “the Act is instrumental in breaking down the employment discrimination the country
experienced in the past and in gaining the international community’s acceptance of what an equal society stands for in the world of work” (p. 29). In its preamble, this law clearly explains that AA represents a conscious effort to correct the racial and gender imbalances in South African society in a principled and effective way.

In post-conflict events, reconciliatory efforts are often made to build a society that can participate in reconstruction and development programs cooperatively. Understandably, some program initiatives may prove to be difficult but the desire for democracy and respect of basic human rights should be a common goal for all. That was the conciliatory spirit that Nelson Mandela promoted and encouraged all South Africans to pursue. The present study looks at some of the changes that impacted turnover in the information and communication technology sector in South Africa during the transition. Blacks had virtually no ICT work experience. Their educational preparation was inferior and had not adequately prepared them for the toughest jobs in the market. But in 1994, Blacks were forced by political changes to join the mainstream labor market. Affirmative action was introduced. Its critics pointed to a number of failures such as poor service delivery, corruption, and ‘gravy-train’ (a crop of people interested in getting rich), poor work ethic and inability to pick through complex challenges and sheer laziness. The most important external labor market turnover factors revolve around affirmative action, and the execution of AA has influenced the changing profiles of the South African ICT workforce.

Research Journey

Between 2005 and 2006, there was a momentous event in South Africa (SA) when Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) lost valuable
employees and projected a negative public image. Professionals left the communications regulatory authority in droves. Dubbed the Mass Exodus of senior officers at ICASA, the industry was shocked by reports within the telecom and broadcasting regulatory authority that senior managers have resigned within weeks of each other (Dawes, 2006). ICASA had seen an increase in turnover prior to this, attracting attention from media and politicians. For instance, the media reported that the incoming ICASA chairperson suspended a total of at least 12 staff members on his first day in his new position (Monterio, 2005; Schmidt, 2006). A year after the suspensions, the Mail and Guardian online also reported on the ICASA mass exodus and noted a spate of resignations in the year 2006, with a total of 14 senior officials leaving (Gedye, 2006). Out of the 14 resignations, 10 were women, along with three Black men and one White male. As would be expected, the losses negatively affected the organization’s bottom line through lack of return on recruitment and loss of intellectual capacity.

I was intrigued by turnover and the mass exodus of ICT professionals who decided to abandon their employers at the same time when South Africa was in the process of transition and liberalizing the ICT sector. The story of the mass exodus of Blacks and women in particular intrigued me because I had left two senior management positions I had held within the SA communications sector, and most of my women friends had also left their positions in different ICT industries. The ongoing corporate flight among ICT professionals increasingly hampered progress toward transformation in South Africa. The high turnover rate of these valued professional workers posed a challenge to ICT regulatory agencies and affected the communications sector in general. What was intriguing was the notion that people made risky decisions to resign even
before they had acquired new jobs. They were confident that somewhere employers would hire them. SA was becoming a technological hub within the African continent. Yet neither job security nor job stability, the key retention devices in the new South Africa, seemed to deter job seeking. These incidents made me reflect on my own departures from employment and question the choices I made. It was that reflection and the influence of media reports on turnover incidents that led to this research project.

Personally I was drawn to this topic in 1994. I was affected by voluntary turnover, and many of my friends and family members were affected by layoffs and company retrenchments. I had just completed my Masters degree in Vermont in the United States when I was employed as the director of an organization in South Africa. I was enthusiastic and excited about the job but soon felt powerless when operational decisions had to be ratified by the Board of Trustees (BOT) before they could be implemented. SA was in the process of drafting Employment Equity laws and there was no doubt that they would soon become legislated policies in South Africa as the country was transitioning from repressive regime to a democratic society. I also discovered that I was earning 50% less than the salary of my predecessor, a White male. I began to question the logic of having the title of director with no authority to make decisions independently. Surrounded by a number of biases in the workplace, I was instantly overcome by a sense of “tokenism”, exclusion, and isolation. Kanter (1978) defines a token as a member of a subgroup that comprised less than 15% of the whole group in a workplace and experiences heightened attention, feel isolated from informal, social and professional networks and encapsulated in a stereotyped role. I was unhappy with the treatment I was subjected to and resigned. I knew I would easily get a job elsewhere for various reasons:
(1) my academic credentials, (2) extensive experience in the industry, and (3) because I was a Black woman.

Within a period of eight years, I had changed jobs three times within the ICT industries, especially broadcasting. In a recent study, Thomas (2002) has highlighted that while many Black managers may leave companies for higher salaries and related perks, not fitting into historically established corporate cultures seems also to have a bearing on what has become known derogatorily as “job hopping” (p. 240). Job hopping is defined as rapid employee mobility of skilled workers among firms (Fallick, Fleischman, & Rebitzer, 2006). Far from unique, my experiences were similar to others. I learned from my female friends who were in management positions in South Africa that all they wanted was to get job experience and then move on to other jobs within the sector. This implied that the intentions to leave one’s job were not necessarily influenced by job dissatisfaction. There must be other factors within the marketplace that influence the professionals’ decision to quit their jobs. Therefore, I wanted to investigate the formation of turnover intentions and understand the perspectives of various people within the South African ICT labor market.

Prior to 1994, Black people in South Africa were unprotected by laws, and the country’s legal codes categorized human beings as African, Colored, Indian, and White. The population group referred to as Blacks in this study comprised the indigenous Black Africans, Coloreds (mixed race), and Asians. These racial groups suffered discrimination under apartheid governments (Thomas, 2002). All the non-Whites were denied jobs and educational opportunities because of their race (Mnganga, 2003; Kongolo & Bojuwoye, 2006). Racism was so ingrained in education during the apartheid era that schooling was
segregated along racial lines, primarily to reinforce the privilege of the minority White group at the expense of the majority Black groups (Dovey & Mason, 1984, cited by Kongolo & Bojuwoye, 2006). Access to the acquisition of employability skills by Blacks was therefore denied because of poor education. The Blacks endured lower educational levels, high unemployment, and low-paying jobs.

Along with the idea that the workforce is key to a transformed SA prosperity, high technology jobs are regarded as the wave of the future and require a more highly skilled labor force. This conviction was based on the concerns over high illiteracy, shortage of skilled workforce, and a deficiency of science and technology graduates among designated groups. Studies found that women’s enrollment in science and technology was lower, and women were still not taking ICT courses (James, et al, 2006). All these factors affected the employability of the historically disadvantaged groups. Thomas (2002) listed the following negative attitudes prevalent in South African (SA) work environments where there was a “lack of trust and communication between individuals and groups, poor teamwork, apparent absence of employee commitment and motivation to organizational goal, high staff turnover, especially amongst those from designated groups, industrial conflict and low levels of productivity, profitability, quality and customer service” (p. 240). According to Kongolo & Bojuwoye (2006):

Whereas in the United States, AA [affirmative action] was meant to ensure that Blacks and other minority groups enjoyed the same benefits and opportunities as the majority White Americans, AA in South Africa has been primarily adopted to ensure that the majority Black population (over 80%) enjoys the same benefits and opportunities as the minority Whites (p.361).
Recent statistics at the time of fieldwork indicated that the country’s population stood at some 47.9 million, and the Africans were the majority at just over 38 million. According to Kongolo and Bojuwoye (2006), the composition of the South African population “is such that 77 percent is indigenous African (with 52 per cent women), 11 per cent White, 9 per cent Colored, and 3 percent Indian and Asian” (p.362). Although Whites represented a smaller portion of South Africa’s population than Blacks, their representation in the SA population was declining with subsequent emigration to the West (Smith & Speight, 2007). All these factors had implications in the employment scenario as shall be seen in this study. According to the Business Times (1997), “a survey conducted by International Survey Research amongst approximately 23, 000 South African employees, found that negative attitudes [by all groups] have increased sharply since 1994” (Thomas, 2002). This suggests that true transformation could only prevail when all SA citizens participated equally and without any prejudice in the labor force.

When hiring people, applicants are screened based on their education, work experience, and skills that they bring into the new job. If others are not allowed to participate in meaningful education, they will not have proper career preparation. Because employment practices were based on physical, educational, and cultural attributes of that favored types of workers, other workers and job applicants remained at a disadvantage in spite of their abilities and qualifications. Women, the disabled and Black people were not employed throughout the workplace in equal proportions to their numbers in South African society. This may point toward unequal access and barriers to opportunities for members of these groups. Even if they were employed, professionals
from the designated groups did not seem to stay long in their jobs, whether they left voluntarily or because of layoffs.

Background and Purpose of the Study

Information and communication technology (ICT) have emerged as a major driver of employment in the developed world, and they are increasingly seen as an important pillar for economic growth in South Africa (James, Smith, Roodt, Primo, & Evans, 2006). In 1995, South Africa was the 20th largest country market for ICT products and services, reflecting the national importance of this industry (Smith & Speight, 2006). Because of the perceived importance of and the role played by the ICT in the SA labor market, the ICT sector has been identified as one of the nation’s crucial sectors by the South African government (Smith & Speight, 2006). The ICTs are vital to SA for two prime reasons: (1) the creation of employment opportunities for South Africans and (2) the attraction of foreign investment to the country.

According to James et al. (2006), the impact of technology in employment is perceived as an important issue since all sectors in the economy are involved in computer and communications technology. In Wilson and Wong’s (2003) words: “South Africa is [now] the powerhouse with the densest networks of traditional and modern technologies reflecting its preponderant economic weight on the continent” (p. 160). McCormick (2003) agrees with Wilson and Wong and adds the viewpoint that ICTs enable SA to compete in a significant growing market for international trade and investment to the extent that the “ICTs have become a requirement for attracting direct foreign investment” (Wilson & Wong, p. 157). They further suggested that to meet the goals mentioned above, SA presents a well-developed ICT infrastructure which is far more advanced than
in most Sub-Saharan African countries. Given this scenario, it is clear that ICTs play an important role in the South African marketplace. However, one of the biggest challenges faced by the ICT sector is the turnover of IT personnel. The current study intended to explore the factors that related to staff turnover in the ICT sector in SA. According to P-E Corporate Services (2001), in 2001 voluntary turnover in SA among skilled staff accounted for 63%, involuntary turnover accounted for 22% and 15% accounted for other factors such as retirement, pregnancy, and death. The South African public service suffered 22% of women’s turnover according to the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA, 2003). As Ding and Lin (2006) suggested,

The issues regarding turnover intentions, career and job satisfaction have attracted much more attention in the Western world than in other societies and regions. Since non-Western values and culture are sharply different from those in the West, more research is needed to elucidate the relationships among [some] of these constructs in non-Western nations (p.403).

Inspired and convinced by these researchers’ calls, it was my view that a greater understanding of voluntary turnover process, especially in the South African context, was important. There was a consensus in the literature that SA was faced with the problem of high staff turnover, migration and “job hopping” to new organizations (Maisela, 2001; Netswera, Rankhumise, & Mavundla, 2005; Thomas, 2002), and such factors could serve to depress productivity growth in the communications industry (Smith & Speight, 2006). The ICT workers’ intentions were explored in SA for five reasons: technological infrastructure, low staff retention, legislated employment requirements, segmented workforce and ICT skills shortage. First, SA is the most developed leader in the African
continent economically and in terms of information technologies (McCormick, 2003), but there was evidence that there have been increasing rates of job mobility of executives and knowledge workers (Netswara, Rankhumise, & Mavundla, 2005; Smith & Speight, 2006). Second, for a country that had just emerged from the repressive apartheid system, the erosion of key staff brought about low labor productivity. Third, Kongolo & Bojuwoye (2006) were of the opinion that as an emerging democracy, SA has the duty to redress the inequalities created by “apartheid” (the policy of racial separation), and there are legislated employment requirements for organizations to act as catalysts for developing equity employees who were underdeveloped under the apartheid system. As South African companies became anxious to meet the requirements of the Employment Equity Act (EEA), talented Black people were being actively approached and attracted by recruiters, and retention had been expressed as the greatest concern. It was my understanding that poaching meant a predatory hiring practice which was intended to attract and take away someone who was already employed from his / her company. Qualified and skilled ICT professionals are specifically treasured because they are to some extent in short supply. Fourth, the South African workforce was segmented into four ways: Africans, Indians, Coloreds, and Whites. This was the historical legacy of apartheid, one that presented a unique labor market. As the labor market has changed, the attrition of key staff was viewed as a strong basis of the war for talent. Studying the labor relations of these four groups provided an insight on how these segmented groups interact.

In the South African context, White often referred to individuals whose ancestry was exclusively European. Indians have South Asian ancestry and were brought from
India by the British, and Blacks referred to indigenous Africans “while Colored was often explained as being mixed descent, it included people of Khoisan, Malays [immigrants from Southeast Asia who were brought by the Dutch and settled in Cape Town], Griquas and Chinese origin” (DOH, p.2) or anyone whose ancestries came from multiple races. Although defining race was usually controversial, race in SA remains deeply ingrained in society. Today, the Black category includes Africans, Coloreds and Indians. According to Afolayan (2002), SA’s racial classifications came about

In 1950, the [South African] government passed the Population Registration Act, which sought to classify everyone living in South Africa according to his or her race based on physical appearance, general acceptance, and social recognition. This law created considerable hardships, especially for those of mixed race [coloreds], and most especially in a society in which generations of White masters and rulers had sired numerous children by Black and Asian women, their slaves and servants (p.437).

To minimize the loopholes and subjectivity of the tests such as the physical appearance and the pencil test that were used to determine individuals’ racial categories, laws such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act were passed to forbid marriages between people of different races and to prohibit all sexual relation between Whites and non-Whites.

Previous research indicated differential impact of affirmative action (AA) in the United States among African Americans, Asian Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics, and Native Americans, but we did not yet know what the effects of a similar differential impact would be on voluntary turnover in SA, which was faced with the challenge of
dealing effectively with human resources (HR) issues, such as skills shortage, emigration, and brain-drain (Smith & Speight, 2007), which the country had not formerly had to deal with.

Maisela (2001) found out that many SA companies were involved in bidding wars in order to attract and retain Black professional talent. I was not aware of any study that existed in South Africa on turnover in ICT industry sectors and its segmented labor markets and would be worthwhile to learn about this in South Africa. The purpose of this study was achieved through two processes. The first was to examine the intentions of and actual turnover among ICT professionals. Second, two voluntary turnover models (rational and instinctual) in the context of ICT workers were reviewed and analyzed to examine their applicability in the South African context.

Actual Turnover

Although voluntary turnover had been researched in many fields and models of turnover were developed to understand the issues that were associated with it, turnover in IT continued to reach “epidemic proportions [and] it was expected that forty percent of information technology [IT] staff members currently employed [in the U.S.] planned on switching jobs within the next twelve months” (Rouse, 2001, p.281). To reduce that alarmingly high rate of turnover, organizations were under enormous pressure to retain their qualified ICT employees because voluntary turnover is costly and has substantial financial implications for organizations. For instance, in an attempt to entice and retain their IT professionals, companies “are offering this group some of the most aggressive salary increases ever seen” (Rouse, 2001, p. 281). However, despite the large financial compensations, many IT professionals continued to flee their jobs.
Several years ago, Locke (1976) argued that “many items influence[d] the degree of job satisfaction, including the job itself, management beliefs, future opportunity, work environment, pay, benefits, rewards and co-worker relationships” (cited by Rouse, 2001, p. 282). Moreover, researchers had argued that the notion of a permanent job or long-term commitment to an organization in the ICT sector was no longer expected by either party (Lacity, Iyer, & Rudramuniyaiah, 2008) and that the psychological contract between employer and employee was changing fundamentally. Moore and Burke (2002) suggested that there was consensus among researchers that turnover research had tended to focus solely on individual level variables and, consequently, had produced a narrow view of the turnover picture. Ang and Slaughter (2004) agreed with Moore and Burke’s view but went beyond that opinion. They added that there were in fact, inconsistencies in literature and that there were incoherent findings in research among those who studied organizational influences on turnover. In addition, there was still disagreement about why ICT professionals left their jobs.

Because of the limitations of the basic rational model of turnover, Lee, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill (1999) have been arguing for several years that “it was time to develop an alternative theory about how and why people leave organizations” (p. 450). They reached the conclusion that “the prevailing theory and research on turnover have focused on quitting induced by lower levels of satisfaction, with the intention to leave viewed as quitting’s immediate antecedent” (p. 450). In this study, Steers and Mowday’s (1981) linear progression model of turnover symbolized the focal point of the rational model. According to Rouse (2001), the theory of linear progression posited that “a number of intermediate steps exist between the experience of job dissatisfaction and the actual act of
voluntary turnover. It assumed that a rational actor (employee) follows a sequential process when deciding to terminate employment with a particular organization” (p. 282). Contrary to the suggested step-by-step process of turnover, other studies have shown that information systems (IS) employees appeared not to follow the three steps proposed in the rational model of turnover (Mourmant & Gallivan, 2007).

To try and accommodate the emerging constructs in voluntary turnover research, Mourmant and Gallivan (2007) suggested that “in the past decade, a new model for conceptualizing job turnover has been introduced into the management literature and tested on various employee groups” (p.135). Identified as the “unfolding model of job turnover,” this process model portrayed a set of likely developmental paths by which employees decide to leave their jobs. In a quest to fill such gaps, researchers have a continuing interest to understand the predictors of turnover, and several studies have been undertaken to explain the core determinants of turnover. The unfolding model of job turnover was a fundamental departure from traditional models, not only because it served as a process that suggested that turnover was not automatically caused by job dissatisfaction. Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model of voluntary turnover (also referred to as instinctual model by Rouse (2001) was analyzed to determine whether it was applicable in describing the turnover process as it related to IT professionals. This model is non-linear and posits that “although individuals experience unique circumstances when they leave organizations, they appear to follow one of four psychological and behavioral paths when quitting” (Rouse, 2001, p. 451).

There was evidence in the literature that turnover issues were directly related to internal and external labor market factors. The internal labor market includes factors over
which the organizations have some control. Some of the antecedent factors over which organizations have control are shock events, organizational systems (Moore & Burke, 2002), pay, change processes, lack of development opportunities and the job itself (Lee, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999); external labor market factors included the demand and supply gap (Moore & Burke, 2002) of ICT professionals and available alternatives (Lacity, et al., 2008; Lee, et al. 1999; Rouse, 2001).

Lacity, et al., (2008) suggested that “within the information systems (IS) literature, the basic model of turnover intentions show that job satisfaction and organizational commitment directly affect turnover intentions among U.S. IS professionals” (p. 5). Basic IT models developed in the United States cannot always function appropriately in other cultures. In the justification of their study to test the turnover model for IT professionals in India, Lacity, et al. (2008) suggested that one contribution academics can make is to develop and test a model of turnover that is applicable to other countries’ IS contexts. In doing so, I hoped to contribute not only to the emerging literature on the instinctual model of job turnover, but also to strengthen research on turnover and segmented labor factors, which seemed to be inactive in SA, regarding the importance of ICTs and the increasing difficulty of retaining highly talented people.

Problems and Research Questions

As noted above, it was clear that SA companies were faced with four major impediments: high turnover rates, shortage of skills, EEA requirements and emigration. This research was of scholarly importance and my objective was to advance the body of knowledge and understanding about turnover in SA as well as to examine the role of
other internal and external labor market factors on the formation of turnover intentions in ICTs. This dissertation provides a unique South African context with unique cultural factors. The approach for this dissertation differs from prior research in that it did not focus on either the individual’s intent to leave or the actual turnover. Instead, it focused on both the individual’s intent to leave and the actual turnover. The study addressed the following questions:

RQ1: How do the SA ICT personnel’s social networks influence others in workgroups to terminate their employment?

RQ2: What impact do organizational reward systems have in South African ICTs on job satisfaction?

RQ3: What effects do the South African ICT employees believe affirmative action (AA) have on staff turnover?

RQ4: How do the South African ICT staff believe a demand and supply gap affect voluntary staff turnover?

RQ5: What turnover model best characterizes the South African ICT sector?

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is composed of six chapters. In Chapter 1, I introduced the background and purpose of the study. I presented a brief analysis of literature on the theories of actual turnover, intention to leave and affirmative action. Finally, I presented the problems and research questions for the present study.

Chapter 2 presents literature review on the current turnover rates in the other parts of the world, the concepts of turnover, internal and external labor market job turnover factors, social networks and turnover culture, job satisfaction and organizational reward
systems, affirmative action and organizational commitment, and the demand and supply gap.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological viewpoints on qualitative interviewing. The use of in-depth interviews, documents and publications, and interview guide are discussed. This chapter includes how the informants and research sites were selected. It includes the step taken to analyze the data collected from fieldwork.

Chapter 4 focuses on the fieldwork report. It presents information on how the internal labor market issues affect turnover. Details on social networks, organizational reward systems and job dissatisfaction are provided.

Chapter 5 also focuses on fieldwork report and presents information on how the external labor market considerations such as affirmative action and competition influence turnover.

Chapter 6 presents the discussion and conclusions based on the findings of significance to the staff turnover in the ICT sector. The chapter incorporates research question 5: what turnover model best characterizes the South African ICT sector? It presents a graphical representation of the pertinent factors that arose from this study. The chapter also includes the limitations of the study, the methodological blind spots and recommendations on how to retain ICT staff, theoretical contribution and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on turnover place employees’ intentions to leave the organization within labor markets which serve as constructs in this study. The literature was analyzed in four central topic areas. The first topic was the background on current turnover rate in the United States which provides information on different demographic groupings of job leavers in information technology (IT) and information systems (IS) industries. Turnover is the central focus of this research, and labor markets issues that influence turnover. In the second topic, the labor markets were divided into internal labor markets (ILMs) and external labor markets (ELMs). It was important, therefore, to look at how each of the two distinct labor markets affected the turnover decisions of the workforce. That was done by looking at the definition of the ELMs. Then, the review examined the various ILM job turnover factors such as social networks, and organizational rewards systems with the emphasis placed on job dissatisfaction. The third topic was the analysis of ELMs such as affirmative action and the demand and supply gap, with their influence on turnover. The final section looked at the turnover models that draw attention to different paths that individuals take when leaving their jobs.

Current Turnover Rates in the US

The ability of organizations to retain their IT staff has been a critical factor in the effort to achieve strategic business goals. In the United States, the average annual turnover rate for IT departments in companies is between 25% (Lu, 1999) and 40% for business managers and management information systems (MIS) professionals (Igbaria, 1992). In 2002, turnover rates in IT ranged between 25% and 35% (Moore & Burke, 2002). These figures are still disturbingly high even though there seems to have been
some decrease from a decade ago. Consistent with these prior research studies, Scroggins (2008) indicates that approximately 76% of those currently employed are either somewhat likely or very likely to begin a job search as they perceive an improvement in the economy and job market. This suggests little commitment on the part of many employees and further suggests that few experience meaningful and engaging work that serves to create a desire to remain a member of their current organization (Scroggins, 2008). Lacity, et al., (2008) are of the opinion that “although researchers want to predict turnover behavior, in reality, it is often difficult to empirically examine the behavior. Instead, researchers more typically survey current employees and ask them their turnover intentions” (p. 226). Although the job turnover topic has received sustained attention among IS personnel researchers (Mourmant & Gallivan, 2007), there is still disagreement about why ICT professionals leave their jobs. Several theoretical models have been used to explain turnover, but there is still disagreement on what actually constitutes the most common decision paths followed by IS employees.

IS scholars have examined the effects of discrepancies between individual needs and what the organization supplies as determinants of turnover intention (Ang & Slaughter, 2004; Jiang & Klein, 2002, cited by Agarwal, Ferratt & De, 2007). From this psychological perspective, the desire to leave the organization is a result of individual factors such as employee demography (Ang & Slaughter, 2004), job dissatisfaction, or lack of organizational commitment (Lacity, et al., 2008). According to these researchers, “empirical research supports that job satisfaction, alternatives and investment are antecedents to organizational commitment” (Lacity, et al., 2008, p. 229). However, there are some inconsistencies in the literature related to organizational commitment. Recent
studies indicate that permanent jobs within the ICT industries are a thing of the past. Individuals and organizations do not expect to be with each other for a long time. Availability of better options outside one’s organization may lead to voluntary turnover. Organizational options refer to “the employee’s perceived availability of equal or better jobs in other organizations” (Lacity, et al., 2008, p. 228). Other researchers suggest that organizational investment is likely to help retain one’s employees.

There is some debate within the organizational behavior literature as to what organizational investment means. Cole and Brunch (2006) view it as the contributions that the company makes to develop its employees, such as training programs that may make the employees feel obligated to the organization and thus increase their commitment to it (cited by Lacity, et al., 2008). In contrast, Lacity, et al., (2008) describe organizational investment as the “non-portable resources invested in or by an employee, [which] includes acquisition of non-portable skills, non-transferable retirement programs, and length of service” (p. 228). Based on some of the disagreement and inconsistencies in the literature, there is skepticism about whether turnover intentions are good predictors of actual turnover. On the one hand, Ang and Slaughter (2004) maintain that although most research provided valuable insights into why IT professionals intend to leave their jobs, it does not explain actual turnover patterns (p. 12), and other studies have concluded that intent to leave does not always predict actual turnover behavior (Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999; and Johnston et al., 1993, cited by Ang & Slaughter, 2004). On the other hand, Igbaria and Greenhaus’ (1992) study suggests that conceptual and empirical models of turnover provide strong support for the propositions that behavioral intentions constitute the most immediate determinant of actual behavior (p. 36). However, Lacity, et al,
(2008) disagree and say that “although researchers want to ideally predict turnover behavior, in reality, it is often difficult to empirically examine the behavior. Instead, researchers more typically survey current employees and ask them their turnover intentions” (p. 226). Thus, it is important to investigate both the turnover intentions and actual turnover. Turnover may be internal or external, voluntary or involuntary. Internal turnover involves employees leaving their current jobs to assume new positions with the same organization. External turnover involves employees leaving the organization, either for reasons of their own choice or for reasons not of their own choice (Lacity, et al., 2008). Internal turnover is planned by the organization, and therefore seen as less problematic than external turnover. Turnover intention has been defined as the conscious and deliberate willingness to leave the organization and has been described as the last in a sequence of withdrawal cognitions that also includes thinking of quitting and searching for alternative employment (Tett & Meyer, 1993, cited by Scroggins 2008, p. 62). Turnover intentions are under more individual control and can provide results more quickly; they are less difficult to predict than actual turnover (Scroggins 2008, p. 36). However, actual turnover can also shed some light on why people left their jobs. For this reason, both turnover intentions and actual turnover will be used in this study. Other studies suggest that the turnover culture within different labor markets may cause individuals quit their jobs. In the following section labor market issues are examined at two important levels: organizational (internal labor markets) and industry (external labor markets).
Labor Markets Factors

Ang and Slaughter (2004) define the internal labor market (ILM) issues as those that relate to who gets employed, promoted, what rewards are available for which employees, or even who gets fired or stays with the company. In a sense, ILMs refer to human resource (HR) rules and practices that organizations establish to govern their workers. In accordance with Bryars and Rue (2000), ILMs are intentional and designed to enhance the position of the employing organization through strategic hiring and promotion criteria, job ladders, wage systems, and training procedures. Ang and Slaughter (2004) added that ILM job turnover factors are the consequence of matters that arose within the employing organizations.

Research findings on organizational behavior suggest that actual turnover is strongly influenced by ILM attributes such as wage levels, promotability, and skills demand (Ang and Slaughter 2004; Hom & Kinicki, 2001). On the other hand, ELM attributes such as mobility and availability of jobs can influence impatient young ICT professionals to develop the desire to leave their employers (Van As, 2001). This therefore, means that the external labor market issues occur outside the organization. According to Ang and Slaughter (2004), ELM factors can be unpredictable, idiosyncratic, or outside of organizational control even though organizations are affected by what is going on. Byars and Rue (2000) remind us that organizations have at their disposal a wide range of external sources for recruiting human resources. Such external recruiting sources are growing rapidly, and there is a large demand for technical or skilled employees. Moreover, these authors suggest that it is often “cheaper and easier to hire technical, skilled people from outside rather than training and developing them internally.”
and this is especially true when the organization has an immediate need for this kind of
talent” (p. 154).

With the rapidly changing environment and technological innovations, research has found that companies are constantly in search of people with specific skills to help employers meet their organizational goals and to be in compliance with affirmative action laws. For example, different industry sectors may require professionals with different skills related to the employer’s line of work. In other words, in the job market that requires specialization and multiskilling, employers no longer rely on their HR departments alone to advertise positions, screen applicants, and select individuals for the job. The recruitment process has become a multifaceted exercise that includes social networks to identify the best talent pool. However, it is highly likely that such efforts can influence the actual turnover patterns (Maisela, 2001).

Social Networks and Turnover Culture

Most of the previous research on social networks is largely restricted to the developed countries such as in the U.S. and British studies, and most of them focus on how families help their relatives and friends who have immigrated to these countries to find jobs. As research expands into numerous arenas and applications, the operationalization of the term social networks also becomes diverse and used in some other disciplines. In the field of HR, the term is linked to social relations and implies that the best way to get a job is getting connected to others. Social networks are described by Allen (2000) as the “set of personal contacts through which [an] individual maintains his social identity and receives emotional support, material aid and services, information and new social contacts. In practice, a person’s social network generally consists of his or her
family members, friends and acquaintances” (p. 488). This definition is indicative of the three kinds of support systems that the social networks can provide: First, emotional support; second, material support; and, third, services support (which will include providing information to job seekers). Only a few studies have been done on the developing countries about the effects of social networks on voluntary turnover, and the present research was different in that it analyzed the impact of the South African ICT workers’ social networks’ (without migration) influence on others to terminate their jobs.

In a review of the literature, there appeared varied forms of networks that impact turnover. For instance, networks facilitated both migration flows and business activities. It became clear that networks are utilized in diverse ways such as social, organizational/industry and market-bound activities (Assaad, 1997). The social networks include ethnic and gender groups, family and friends and professional affiliations. The industry or organizational networks would include working in projects outside one’s organizations and industry conferences. With these varied forms of networks in mind, their functions also varied (Assaad, 1997; Allen, 2000). For example, on the one hand, networks were utilized in disciplines focusing on the social aspects such as those related to ethnic, family and friends (Devine, & Elliot, (1995); Dasgupta, McGhee, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2000). On the other hand, networks were used in looking at connections related to job markets or industry associations. The literature that related to ethnic and other social networks were utilized for gaining information and recruiting workers (Blau, 1990; Dasgupta, McGhee, Greenwald, & Banaji, (2000). Therefore, turnover must be understood in the context of changing economic opportunity structures as well as within each country’s unique political and economic situation. Against this backdrop, it is likely
that a number of turnover factors exist for ICT personnel in South Africa and that related networks are involved in these processes. Thus turnover needs to be viewed from the perspective of the opportunities and constraints of the ICT markets. For instance, there is a need to consider the turnover culture of the ICT staff from diverse industries of the communications sector.

Besides theorizing about the turnover process, it is pertinent to understand the contexts in which high turnover occurs. The notion of turnover culture indicates that turnover patterns are not independently distributed in organizations but are influenced by informal communication relationships (Moore & Burke, 2002, p. 74), which may happen inside and outside the current organization (through workgroups and formal outside organizations). As a result, Moore and Burke (2002) suggest, turnover in IT should be looked at from the cultural levels of operation. These authors borrowed the concept of turnover culture from the management literature, which asserts that turnover is something that is learned and shared within a particular group of people who have a common belief system. According to these researchers, a high turnover culture reflects the acceptance of turnover as part of working norms. By implication, “an employee who works within a high turnover culture is likely to believe that turnover is appropriate and perhaps even accepted” (Moore and Burke, 2002, p.74). For instance, there is consensus in the literature that turnover in IT has come to be so accepted that quitting a job in the technology profession has become an annual event, as the average job tenure in IT is about twelve months (Rouse, 2001). It is also through social networks in workgroups that people can take others with them when they leave (Moore & Burke, 2002). These researchers caution that such shared practices challenge those organizations that strive to
retain valued IT personnel since the high turnover culture promotes high turnover behavior.

From the perspective of the management literature, three important levels of turnover operations have been identified at industry, organizational, and workgroup levels. Important to such groups are communication patterns and information flows that develop and may influence people’s decision to leave their jobs (Moore & Burke, 2002). These authors describe how the social contagion of changing jobs to overcome workplace dissatisfaction can affect even the most loyal and productive IT employees. From their explanation of the turnover culture concept, “turnover happens in a similar fashion as it does in organizational cultures in that it can be picked up in stories, customs, information flows, and structures. Such artifacts are interpreted by and influence organizational members” (Moore & Burke, 2002, p. 74). For instance, when these perceptions are shared, they may breed similarities, and, as a result, individuals become more closely attached to groups and units and are likely to be compliant with established turnover norms. By investigating the role of external environmental influences on employee perceptions and attitudes, Moore and Burke (2002) concluded that employees learn prevailing attitudes and values about turnover norms by observing others in their work environment. Evidently, it makes more sense that the whole culture of turnover should not be ignored but rather be looked into. In the ICT field, social learning theories may help to explain how individuals learn from imitating others’ behavior. This leads to another point that is highly likely to influence actual turnover.
Job Satisfaction and Organizational Reward Systems

The hiring and remuneration policies are part of the ILMs and have been used as incentives by organizations to discourage employees from leaving their firms (Byars & Rue, 2000). Although job satisfaction has been found as the main and stable antecedent of turnover in most studies (Lacity, et al., 2007), others suggest that an offshoot of the soaring demands for IT professionals has been high turnover (Rouse, 2001; Moore & Burke, 2002) as well as extraordinary demand for information technology professionals. From the analysis of job satisfaction literature and how it relates to turnover, there is a broad mosaic of influences of turnover, and researchers have come up with long lists of what individuals consider important in their ICT jobs. These include rewards (Niederman & Sumner (2004), competent leadership (Lu, 1999), challenges (Burnes, 2006), new skills in technologies (Callas, 1998), and requirements of cultural or value alignment (Lacity, et al., 2008). These researchers observed that as each employee has a unique background, motivation, and set of objectives, the degree to which each of these issues impacts the intention to stay or quit would vary accordingly. Given this scenario, it is clear that individuals’ decision to quit can be affected by multiple factors. Although it is impractical to meet every need of all the employees in the workplace, Jiang and Klein (2002) suggest that it would be helpful for researchers to examine ways to satisfy the specific wants of IS personnel (p.269).

Ang and Slaughter (2004) suggest that among the organizations’ human resource (HR) strategies, reward systems impact on IT turnover and the expected tenure of the workers in an organization. There is a perception that IT professionals, especially recent graduates (Niederman & Sumner, 2004) and women and high skilled black professionals
(Maisela, 2001; Thomas, 2001; Bussin, 2002) are not being fairly compensated for the level of performance that they are producing (Niederman & Sumner, 2004). Rouse (2001) is of the view that “even with large pay increases, many members of the IT field are unsatisfied with respect to compensation. The entry level people, those 25 years old and under, are especially dissatisfied. Forty percent of this group are unhappy with their current salary, and an even fifty percent are dissatisfied with their bonuses” (p. 281). However, researchers agree that even though monetary compensation is identified as the primary motivating factor with IT professionals (Moore & Burke, 2002), “there must be some other explanation other than compensation for voluntary turnover” (Rouse, 2001, p.285). Factors that determine this group's job dissatisfaction and organizational commitment continue to be studied, and the researcher is not aware of “any study that has provided an indication of how many desires need to be satisfied for an employee to stay in a job because people’s needs are likely to vary and no one claims that all the dimensions of turnover have been identified” (Jiang & Klein, 2002, p. 269).

Although there are several studies of turnover in developed countries, there has been one published research on turnover involving information systems professionals (IS) in South Africa. Smith and Speight (2006) discovered SA has experienced a tremendous turnover rate. While the study revealed interesting findings about the turnover factors among IS personnel in SA, the focus was on the impact of six career factors “career satisfaction, job satisfaction, career wants, perceived career haves [benefits], turnover intentions, and organizational commitment” (p.123) that “could be significantly related to work-related outcome variables such as satisfaction and commitment” (p. 123). The
study only reviewed individual motivation of factors and did not consider how labor markets influence turnover decisions.

Affirmative Action and Organizational Commitment

The increasing diversity of the workforce presents myriad challenges to SA organizations (Thomas, 2002; Kongolo & Bojuwoye, 2006). There is some debate among organizational behavior scholars about whether employment equity policies (also known as affirmative action, AA) are the determinants of high turnover. According to Crosby, Iyer and Clayton (2003), affirmative action refers to “voluntary and mandatory efforts undertaken by … governments and private employers…to combat discrimination and to promote equal opportunity in …employment for all. The goal of AA is to eliminate discrimination against women and ethnic minorities and to redress the effects of past discrimination” (p. 94). In the context of EEA, external turnover may be exacerbated in the marketplace.

Various researchers agree that as the labor market changes, open competition for other companies’ key staff, formerly an unusual practice in business, is today an accepted fact, and strategic poaching of key employees has become common practice (Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Blau, 1990; Ross, Polsky, & Sochalsky, 2005). Desperate to meet AA requirements, attracting and retaining women and Black professionals is a critical feature of the knowledge economy, and those in demand are regularly head-hunted by recruitment consultants. For instance, according to McCue (2005), in India where poaching and outsourcing are frequently practiced, “in 2004, the top Indian suppliers tried to enforce a non-poaching agreement, but this proved ineffectual” (McCue, 2005, cited by Lacity, et al., 2008, p. 227). Although it was not explicitly explained, it was my
understanding that staff poaching means a predatory hiring practice which is intended to attract and take away someone who is already employed from his / her company. On the other hand, there is consensus in the literature that hiring decisions made so as to reach AA employee targets have resulted in the declining morale of White employees, and this in turn leads to a decrease in loyalty and influences their decision to quit their jobs (Thomas, 2002; Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). In SA, AA policy is derived from the EEA of 1998 and is an employment legislation that contains a number of provisions providing for affirmative action and protection against, amongst other things, unfair discrimination and sexual harassment. The Act applies to all employers (public and private sectors) and uses gender neutral language (ILO, 2004).

While AA policies promise fair treatment for all, it is inappropriate to assume that all employees share the same perceptions. Employees are affected by AA policies in various ways, and such policies can be a factor in staff turnover (Thomas, 2002). Apparently, skewed perceptions about the EEA measures can affect retention of staff in three broad ways: (1) strategic poaching of key employees by competitors, (2) hiring decisions that are questionable to others and (3) change of the psychological contract between employer and employee. According to Armstrong and Murlis (1998), psychological contract refers to the “expectations held by the individual employee that specify what the individual and the organization expect to give and receive from one another in the course of their working relationship” (p.22). Psychological contracts are “unwritten work agreements…” (Turnley and Feldman, 1999, p. 895) and also “consist of the beliefs employees hold regarding the terms of the informal exchange agreement between themselves and their organizations” (Turnley and Feldman, 1999, p. 897).
Although researchers may want to understand turnover intentions within the context of EEA, Thomas’s (2002) view is that AA measures have not been regarded as strategic business issues by the SA private sector. Obviously, such an oversight signals a lack of commitment from corporations to the transformation process. Apparently, in both the United States and SA, the AA groups regard such corrective efforts as discriminatory and researchers suggest that sustaining organizational commitment among employees, particularly women and minorities, has become a major challenge for companies. To that extent, “it has been suggested that one of the reasons for the recent exodus of women and minorities from large corporations and the subsequent proliferation of women- and minority-owned businesses is these groups’ perceptions of organizational discrimination” (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson (2001, p.57).

Further, it appears that affirmative action perpetuates labor force segmentation. Many theories try to explain the racial, gender, and ethnic segregation common in our labor force. A categorization of issues raised in the literature on segmented labor theory is in four-fold: (1) job ghettoization, (2) marginal work force, (3) surplus labor force and (4) gender and racial segregated labor market which led to policy related arguments (Howard, 1995; Cain, 1976; Wilkinson, 1981). Racial and gender segregation in the workforce was studied by James, Smith, Roodt, Primo and Evans (2006) who found the South African ICT labor market segregated by race, gender, age and socio-economic status. These researchers found that women were subordinated into administrative roles in the ICT sector. The position of women in the corporate structure put them in secondary markets that consist of low paying jobs with few possibilities for advancement (James, et al., 2006, Akooje, Arends and Roodt, 2007).
These researchers acknowledged that the effects of socialization with regards to gender cannot be excluded because it also had a large impact on labor market segmentation. Segmented labor market theory investigates the organizational structural relationship between the selection, access and participation of employees for available jobs (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). For instance, according to Manyi (2008), the Job Reservation Act (JRA) of 1954 in South Africa used race as a basis for the labor segregation which ensured that White people were guaranteed jobs regardless of capability or merit. This policy excluded non-Whites (Africans, Coloreds and Asians) from many jobs and training programs while it protected the Whites from labor market competition from other races. It also outlawed the presence of Black managers and relegated them to job descriptions such as assistant officers. In view of that, in the late 1980s, only 17% of technicians, 3% of architects and 0.1 per cent of engineers were Black (Vally and Khouri-Dhager, 1998).

This study follows recent research which states that the psychological contract between employer and employee has changed fundamentally (Lee, 2001), and a long-term commitment to an organization is no longer expected by either party (Thomas, 2002). Other management scholars argue that relationships between employers and employees were shifting and there was a reflection of impatience particularly among young professionals (Drucker 1994; Van As, 2001). Clearly, turnover has been studied and a broad range of perspectives points to a multiplicity of factors. Given the opinions above, there seems to be a need to establish what the drivers are that lead to ICT workers’ decisions to terminate their employment with an organization. There is also a need to determine how the EEA affects the turnover of designated groups in the ICT in SA or if
there is a need for the use of different retention mechanisms for different demographic
groups in SA.

Demand and Supply Gap

There are external labor market factors that can highly influence individuals to
leave their jobs. Actual turnover is influenced by both the internal labor market
(structural factors within a company), and external labor market attributes, such as
mobility and availability of jobs (Moore & Burke, 2002; Smith & Speight, 2007). IT
professionals work in projects and are assigned projects outside their organization.

Relationship with the external environment can lead people to more interesting job
engagements, or they may even get poached. Economic theorists such as Howson (2004)
explained the economic basis of the demand and supply principle in simple but practical
ways. The concept describes the effects of price and quantity in the marketplace.

Accordingly, it suggests that in a competitive job market, compensation would function
to attract the number of employees demanded by the employers and the number of
potential employees supplied by the labor market (Howson, 2004). She emphasized that
demand determines the number of available jobs; and supply determines the number of
skilled workers available for employment in a particular area. With the ever-changing
technologies that require new knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA), IT expertise is
marketable because of the shortage of experienced MIS employees (Igbaria & Greenhaus,
1992). As one would expect, if more favorable alternatives exist, intent to leave leads to
actual turnover (Rouse, 2001, p.285). Large IT suppliers, such as Infosys, are continually
trying to meet the demand/supply gap by recruiting IS professionals from other countries
(Lacity, et al., 2007; Smith & Speight, 2007). As a result, experienced IS workers move
from one organization to another within a short period of time (Rouse, 2001, Moore & Burke, 2002).

The demand for skilled IT professionals remains strong and is projected to increase in the future (Ang & Slaughter, 2004) because there is a dearth of IT skills needed to respond to rapidly changing technological and environmental circumstances where IT professionals have to keep up with the speed of rapidly changing technologies. A number of ICT researchers have suggested that an offshoot of the soaring demands for IT professionals has been high turnover as well (Rouse, 2001; Moore & Burke, 2002), as a result of extraordinary demand for information technology professionals. According to Ang and Slaughter (2004), the need to address the demand and supply gap suggests that technically oriented IT jobs will generate higher turnover rates than managerially oriented IT jobs (p.14). This implies a specific skills shortage in a particular IT area and suggests that the turnover rates among technically oriented people will continue to rise.

There is consensus in the literature that because of the short supply of IT professionals, IT managers are still struggling to find the right people to keep the technology infrastructure moving forward, and that imbalances in the supply and demand for IT professionals contribute to the length of the backlog for IT services, high turnover rates for IT professionals and the IT skills shortage (Ang & Slaughter, 2004).

Increasing reliance on IT increases the vulnerability of the organization to a scarce supply of IT professionals or to short-staying IT professionals when the organization requires firm-specific competencies, thereby amplifying business risk (Agarwal, et al., 2007). This offers a new perspective that takes into account external factors that are often available to the IT professionals, and this is an extension of the
constructs of turnover especially in the ICT field. Thus, the issue of job dissatisfaction would be a weak determinant of voluntary turnover because IT specialists are frequently in demand and do not necessarily leave their jobs because they are dissatisfied with them (Rouse, 2001). For example, ICT analysts view this kind of turnover as an inevitable consequence of the tremendous demand for technology skills and “careerists regard their current employment situation as merely a stepping stone to better opportunities” (Agarwal, et al., 2007, p.12). Given these characteristics of the IT labor market, organizations are challenged to develop effective recruitment and retention strategies for their IT professionals. Agarwal, et al., (2007) suggest that it is crucial that future research theorizes about and tests the effects of such factors as demand and supply on IT professionals’ ideal employers. The section that follows discusses the turnover models that have been developed by academics to explain turnover for IT professionals.

Turnover Models

Rouse (2001) made important progress towards understanding turnover intentions of IS professionals in the United States. Rouse suggests that rational models of voluntary turnover that followed a linear progression theorize that the experience of job dissatisfaction directly determined employee turnover decisions but are no longer realistic today, especially in the ICT industries where turnover is a norm. The theory of linear progression posits that a number of intermediate steps exist between the experience of job dissatisfaction and the actual act of voluntary turnover. It assumes that a rational actor (employee) follows a sequential process when deciding to terminate employment with a particular organization (Rouse, 2001, p. 282, see Figure 1 below). The works of Mobley, and Steers, and Mowday are categorized by Rouse (2001) as exemplifying this school of
thought. Rational models assume that employees rationally follow a linear progression towards turnover. The process starts with the workers experiencing job dissatisfaction.

Figure 1. Steers and Mowday’s model of voluntary turnover (Rouse, 2001, p.284).

Although he acknowledges the contributions that the rational models have made in other fields outside ICTs, Rouse (2001) recommends the instinctual model of voluntary turnover for the IT profession. This model is the replication of Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model of turnover “which adopts a more naturalistic approach to making turnover decisions” (Joseph, Ng, Koh & Ang, 2007, p.549). The original unfolding model had five theoretical decision paths that people take when quitting, (shocks, engaged scripts, image violation, job satisfaction, and searching for alternatives). Specifically, Lee and Mitchell propose:
The process of turnover is often triggered by a shock, an event that jars employees toward deliberate judgments about their jobs. The shock is then interpreted and integrated into the person’s system of beliefs and images. When a shock triggers the enactment of a preexisting plan of action, the person quits without considering personal attachment to the organization or job alternatives. Alternatively, if a shock does not trigger a preexisting script, the person undergoes additional cognitive deliberations, such as evaluations of job satisfaction and job alternatives. Thus, a major contribution of the unfolding model is the incorporation of an “impulsive” route to quitting, in addition to the rational decision-making process proposed in traditional turnover models (Joseph, Ng, Koh & Ang, 2007, p.549).

There are other researchers who critique this model and suggest that “although the unfolding model introduces a new set of jargon to turnover research, “the key point…is that Lee and Mitchell hypothesize a total of five theoretical decision paths, although there are a dozen other, non-theoretical paths not considered by Lee and Mitchell’s unfolding model” (Mourmant & Gallivan, 2007, p. 135). This suggests that, with regard to turnover, various workplace situations are likely to result in unique individual considerations by individuals. Niederman and Sumner ((2003) agree that the unfolding model works on the premise that

Leaving employment is more complex than originally thought. In this analysis, turnover is influenced sequentially by a variety of variables, including shocks (unexpected job-related or unrelated major life events)… [enactment] of scripts, experiencing an image violation, the experience of some level of job satisfaction,
and searching for alternatives/receiving offers… The theory does not reject job satisfaction as a critical factor but rather embeds it in a larger mosaic of influences (p. 135).

Rouse (2001) disputed arguments such as this one and followed Mitchell and Lee’s (1994) turnover model to study voluntary turnover among IS professionals in the US. His adaptation of this model only considered the first four constructs. From his adaptation, the instinctual model depicts turnover as a destination arrived at from any of the four distinct paths which reflect a large degree of instinctual involvement including non-work factors such as family commitments. This means that the employee's decision to leave and stay in a job can be sparked by either work-related or non-work factors. In addition, the model assumes that most people who leave an organization do so even though they are relatively satisfied with their jobs; leaving is not only associated with negative attitudes or the intent to search. Rouse determined that in the IS industries “many people do not engage in a job search prior to leaving” (p. 286) since there are other external labor market factors that can make individuals leave as well. From this perspective, he suggested that turnover models that assume job dissatisfaction would be inappropriate or insufficient for explaining turnover among IT professionals because unsolicited job offers are constantly bombarding members of this group.

Supportive of these arguments, Joseph, Ng, Koh & Ang (2007) are of the opinion that in fact, “recent developments in turnover theories, such as [Lee and Mitchell’s] unfolding model… have not received attention in the IT literature… [instead] the constructs which could provide unique explanation for IT turnover are mostly understudied…” (p. 555). Clearly, there is a need to extend Lee and Mitchell’s model in
various ICT contexts. Both the unfolding (Lee and Mitchell 1994) and instinctual (Rouse, 2001) theories offer alternative perspectives, suggesting that not all individuals leave because they are dissatisfied, or because they find better jobs. Rather, “turnover can occur impulsively and can be precipitated by events that are unrelated to work” (Joseph et al., p.549).

Because the Joseph et al. (2008) model was comprehensive and included turnover constructs in an organized and easy to understand fashion which using “constructs rich enough to encompass [other] factors” (Lacity et al., 2008, p.236 ), I focused on their structural model which in turn is based on March and Simon. Researchers have tested and extended various antecedents between distal and proximal constructs. According to Kanfer 1991, “distal constructs are those that exert an indirect effect on the criterion construct (i.e. turnover intention). Proximal constructs are those that exert a more direct effect on the criterion” (Joseph et al., 2008, p. 552). Similarly, I argue that issues describing individual attributes, internal and external labor markets factors can influence job dissatisfaction and perceived alternatives which in turn affect turnover intentions, job search and actual turnover.
The relationships between internal labor markets and external labor markets job turnover factors were investigated and analyzed here. The present work outlines the categories of turnover antecedents reviewed in literature on a SA ICT turnover model based on Lee and Mitchell’s process of turnover. This model presents a more realistic approach to describe turnover of ICT professionals.

This dissertation examined the South African context with its own unique cultural factors. The approach for this dissertation differs from prior research in that it did not focus on just the individual’s intent to leave or just the actual turnover. Instead, it focused on both the individual’s intent to leave and the actual turnover. The study addressed five questions and each question’ specific inquiry is provided in details below:
RQ1:  How do the SA ICT personnel’s social networks influence others in workgroups to terminate their employment?

RQ1 investigates how social networks influence others to terminate their jobs. It deals with how the social networks emerged and were utilized in job placements. It describes the extent to which networks form and successfully place their members in other ICT jobs.

RQ2:  What impact do organizational reward systems have in South African ICTs on job satisfaction?

RQ2 investigates the impact that organizational rewards have on job dissatisfaction. It investigates the turnover issues that relate to job satisfaction and the organizational reward systems which are represented in broad terms by compensation, job satisfaction and promotion. Questions raised in this section of the dissertation investigate whether ICT professionals are generally satisfied with their compensation and their current jobs: concerning one’s current job, what parts make them happy or unhappy?

RQ3:  What effects do the South African ICT employees believe affirmative action (AA) have on staff turnover?

RQ3 - What do ICT professionals think are the effects of AA on staff turnover? The question is about what people say about affirmative action. Questions raised in this section include what some of the problems or benefits of AA enforcement are and whether AA might make professionals leave their jobs?
RQ4: How do the South African ICT staff believe a demand and supply gap affects voluntary staff turnover?

RQ4 is about what people say about the shortage of human resources in ICTs and how the shortfall leads to voluntary staff turnover. Questions raised in this section include the prevalence of employment alternatives for ICT workers in the sector. How difficult or easy is it to get a job with the specific skills that professionals have? Are there equal or better jobs readily available to these professionals in other organizations? And if such jobs are, how do the professionals explain the situation and their motivation and influence to leave their current employers.

RQ5: What turnover model best characterizes the South African ICT sector?

RQ5 wraps up all the factors of turnover that came out of the research for this dissertation. Questions raised here include the evolution of the participants’ jobs in the ICT industries. Their experiences in other jobs and their departure become central to this question. They are asked some of the following questions: How difficult is it for you to leave your job? Are you actively looking for alternatives? Where do you see yourself in the near future?

These questions cover the two main areas of turnover that considerably affected the ICT professionals. The first four research questions were classified and categorized into two groupings: (1) the internal labor market (ILM) turnover factors and (2) the external labor market (ELM) turnover factors. The ILM turnover factors cover social networks, organizational rewards systems and job satisfaction as it relates to the scope of jobs and loyalty to the current employer. The ELM turnover factors suggest that
environment outside the organizations can have dynamic effects on companies. This perspective looked at labor legislation such as affirmative action and at the labor demand and supply needs. The supply and demand factors included increased competition of players and infrastructure in different industry sectors, human resources shortages, and job search techniques (traditional versus non-traditional methods of recruitment) such as a hiring practice that recycles ICT professionals. The final chapter produced a model that depicts the elements of turnover experienced by the ICT sector professionals in SA. This part attempted to unite the turnover factors found in this study in a graphic presentation. The following chapter discusses the research methodology used to conduct this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The current study examined the factors that relate to ICT staff turnover in South Africa. The study was exploratory and unique in several respects. This was different from studies done in the West because as far I could ascertain, turnover has not been done among segmented groups and this was unique to SA. Different racial groups have access to turnover and I examined actual turnover from four racial groups in SA: Africans, Asians, Coloreds, and Whites. I explored the influences of both the internal and external labor market factors on decisions of these groups to quit jobs. Using various subcultures within a single sector of the ICT sector gave me some insights on turnover culture within a sector and specific industries. Only a few empirical studies investigating turnover in South Africa have been completed. This fact accentuated the need for the current study and, therefore, this dissertation was exploratory. Babbie (2004) suggested that the purpose of exploratory research was to identify concepts or “variables that seem worth pursuing” (p. 89), when gathering data and watching for patterns to emerge (Patton, 2002). Cobb and Forbes (2002) agree that “the exploratory nature of qualitative research typically requires investigators not to prespecify a study population, lest an important person, variable, or unit of analysis be overlooked… (p.200). The research methodology employed in this dissertation was qualitative. Best and Khan (2003) stated that the qualitative approach allows for a study that is not ordinarily expressed in quantitative terms but where other means of description are emphasized. The reasons for the choice of this method are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Ontologically, I am a nominalist and I believe that my role as a researcher is to allow participants to name and label their social world. According to Burrell and Morgan
(1979), nominalism means that “the social world external to individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality” (p.4). This means that the social phenomenon investigated would be contextualized and be referred to in words, expressions, and language that participants use. I therefore chose to identify myself with the view that takes into consideration the fact that each culture has its own way of dealing with social issues that face people. Therefore, I used a method that made respondents walk me through their professional experiences in the workplace.

This chapter describes the design of this dissertation research and the processes that were followed to gather fieldwork information for the project. First, the study explains the researcher’s rationale for selecting the research approaches used. The subsequent section discusses the study design, which includes the reasons for the choice of the qualitative approach, and discusses the research instruments employed. This section includes the indepth interviewing process, document analysis, and the interview guide. Next, the chapter discusses the recruitment of participants, which includes the selection of participants and research sites; the technique used to recruit the respondents; and the profile of the participants. Finally, the chapter discusses how information from fieldwork for this research project was analyzed.

Study Assumptions

Qualitative method techniques were used in this study for three reasons. The first was the researcher’s view that participants were knowledgeable about their situations and could best describe and verbalize their experiences through conversation. As Mason (2002) put it, the researcher wanted to interact and “have an ongoing dialogue with [my] participants to talk through specific experiences in their lives” (p. 64). The research topic,
turnover, which involved questions about people’s current job satisfaction, job commitment, and turnover intentions, was an extremely sensitive topic and required face-to-face contact. This was the richest form of communication where the researcher could personally clarify the purpose of the research, ensure confidentiality and build trust with the participants during a personal interview (Lacity, Iyer, & Rudramuniyaiah, 2008).

Second, generally speaking, because the ICT professionals are busy and also “hold a significant position of status [within the South African culture]; they would be more likely to respond to a personal interview than to an anonymous survey” (Lacity et al., 2008, p. 229). It was my view that participants’ social and cultural practices affected their attitudes, motivations, and perceptions; and such practices were likely to have an impact on the respondents’ decision making as well as how they dealt with issues in their daily lives. I wanted to obtain the evidence and explanations that were relevant and contextual to the South African ICT sector. I therefore, wanted to use a method of inquiry that would allow for detailed responses from participants and allow the subjects to reflect on the complexity of the total setting rather than only certain features which have to be decided in advance (Flinch, 1988, p. 189).

Third, the researcher needed a research method that would accommodate additional constructs beyond the linear progression and instinctual turnover models (mentioned in the literature analysis of this study) if they emerged (Lacity et al., 2008). Finally, because this was an exploratory exercise, I wanted an approach that would allow me to cross-reference evidence and opinions provided by both primary and secondary sources to see where inconsistencies and discrepancies arose. Based on the assumptions,
the research questions and the advantages of qualitative interviewing, the researcher
decided to utilize the qualitative method to conduct this study.

Study Design

Patton (2002) pointed to three broad techniques that were the critical procedures
for collecting qualitative data: (1) in-depth interviewing, (2) participant observation, and
(3) documents. Best and Khan (2003) cautioned, however, that a number of other
approaches exist. According to Mason (2002), most qualitative research studies in social
sciences utilize interviews, observation, and textual analysis. Patton (2002) recommended
that if some of these methods were combined and triangulated in a study, the three
methods would provide a solid source of evidence and findings. Although the
methodological approaches chosen for this dissertation were initially in-depth
interviewing and document analysis, the researcher ended up participating in a training
workshop for two weeks with some participants. I was invited to some of their outside
broadcast productions and observed them. However, the study was conducted mainly
through the in-depth interviews. As a result, a triangulated technique was used to
described triangulation as the use of several different research methods to test the same
findings. Furthermore, he said that researchers should always keep it in mind as a
valuable research strategy. Because each research methodology has particular strengths
and weaknesses, the use of multiple techniques enhances accuracy and trustworthiness.

Following Babbie’s recommendation, the researcher wanted to use a procedure
that would allow the data to be explored from varying perspectives. Babbie (2004) wrote
that quantitative analysis is the numerical representation and manipulation of
observations for describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect. Because there was so much debate in the literature over the combined use of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in a study, and because they were based on different paradigms and perspectives about the world (Burrell & Morgan, 1985; Mason, 2002), Best and Khan (2003) clarified that the difference between the two methodologies was a matter of emphasis rather than absolutes.

Taking a cue from that, the methodological emphasis of this study was qualitative in nature, but it included some numerical and graphical representations for describing the research participants. Based on the analysis of the debate among supporters and opponents of the two methodologies, qualitative interviews had the following six advantages that related to the inquiry of this study. Lacity et al. (2008) cited several other researchers and suggested that interviews were an appropriate method when researchers

(1) Seek to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subject’s own perspectives (Kvale, 1996);

(2) Do not want to limit the study to predefined constructs or predefined categories within constructs (Glaser & Strauss, 1999);

(3) Seek answers to questions in which the subject matter is sensitive (Mahoney, 1997);

(4) Seek to answer a why or how question about contemporary events over which the researcher has little or no control (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Yin, 2003);

(5) Are dealing with high-level bureaucrats and elite members of a society and people who are vigilant about the efficient use of their time (Bernard, 2002); and,
(6) Are concerned with the quality of responses and the context of events and experiences of the informants (Mason, 2002).

The qualitative approach to the study allowed the researcher to focus on the participants’ personal perspectives in relation to and within the context of their environment and comprehension of their circumstances. Based on the assumptions for the study and the strength of Best and Khan’s (2003) view about using some statistical data in a qualitative study, the researcher included a section on the Consent form (Appendix I) used to obtain the demographic data of the respondents. This portion was important to the study for two reasons. First, the researcher wanted to investigate the age, gender, occupation, educational level, tenure, and ethnicity of the ICT professionals in the labor market in South Africa. In addition, their personal and work-related information was pertinent to the study to locate the background of the ICT workforce and attitudes toward turnover. Babbie (2004) suggested that in many cases, “most of these variables [were chosen] because they commonly affect[ed] behavior” (p.88). I wanted to compare and contrast accounts produced from the interviews to those from the texts. Triangulation blended the two separate approaches in the study and integrated them to provide a comprehensive perspective on ICT professionals’ employment and turnover.

The demographic data collected for this study do not nationally represent the ICT population; therefore, the material should not be used to generalize or be considered a representative sample. In addition, because this research involved qualitative interviewing in the South African ICT context, the findings will speak specifically to South African employees involved. The data were current, up-to-date, and appropriate for the type of research that was being conducted. Furthermore, these data were distinctive
because they gave the sense of who the informants were, their profiles, and descriptions of their jobs. Moreover, this kind of data analysis was convenient when time was limited, because analysis could start almost immediately. The results of the demographic data compiled in this study are presented in percentages, simple tables, or graphs and are accompanied by brief explanations.

Guislain, Ampah, Besancon, Niang and Serot (2005) defined ICT as an umbrella term that encompasses the range of technologies that facilitate the sharing of knowledge. These technologies include the Internet related technologies and telecommunications infrastructure. Martinez-Frais’s (2003) definition of ICT is broader and includes any technologies (anything from ‘old technologies’ such as television to ‘new technologies’ such as cellular phones), using various types of equipment and software. Professionals in this field have technology expertise and can stimulate the development of new technologies, create and shape the transmission infrastructure, and facilitate the provision of electronic media content (UNSTD, 1997). Therefore, ICT personnel in this study are defined as technical professionals working in a variety of service industries such as broadcasting, telecommunications, internet networks and satellite systems.

In-depth Interviewing

According to Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, and Newbold (1998), in-depth interviewing typically deploys a number of methods, including face-to-face talk and observation of the participants’ expression of emotions to explore their attitudes and experiences. In-depth interviewing was therefore used to explore participants’ full range of intentions of turnover. This involved a one-to-one conversational interaction with the research participants and took between one and two hours to complete. As Lofland and
Lofland (1995) maintained, “interviewing is useful to collect a wide and diverse range of information from diverse groups [and] varied experiences” (p. 16) in the four provinces of SA. The interviewing technique allowed the interviewer to enter into the world of those participants by exploring their words and actions in a narrative or descriptive way (Patton, 2001, Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Babbie (2004) observed that qualitative analysis helped to discover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. In this study, I wanted to explore the factors that led to ICT employees’ turnover in SA and to investigate their subjective views and experiences. This type of information could not be easily quantified, so the qualitative method fit my goal for the data collection process. In addition, the study replicated the qualitative method used by Lacity et al. (2007) for information systems (IS) professionals in India.

As an introduction for the interviewer, I included, on the front page of the consent form, a paragraph about who the researcher was and explained my research and then read it out loud to the respondents (Appendix 1). I also gave my OU business cards to the respondents as a form of identification. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the participants’ permission. Initially, I had intended to be the sole transcriber but eventually enlisted the help of graduate students. As Best and Khan (2003) stated, face-to-face interviews are beneficial to research because “the researcher has direct contact with and gets close to the people, situation and the phenomenon under study” (p. 242). Moreover, face-to-face interviews enabled me to comprehend the respondents’ responses more accurately since I could listen to and observe them.

The impact of their experiences was at times expressed through emotions, body language, and nonverbal indicators, such as facial expressions and the changing tone of
their voices. These important signs of emotions and feelings could easily be missed in a survey. There were those who were joyous and inspired by breaking new ground. They were excited by the impact of change in South African employment relations. There were also some painful moments where participants had to relive unpleasant experiences and treatment in their workplace. For instance, some White participants’ voices choked with agitation and annoyance when they recalled negative experiences caused by the Employment Equity act (EEA). (A list of all the acronyms used in this dissertation is attached as Appendix III). The Indian and Colored participants looked aggravated and displayed their irritation with what they felt were unfair labor practices caused by the EEA gatekeepers. For instance, one Colored participant was infuriated by the fact that “I was not White enough during apartheid and today I am not Black enough to be awarded job opportunities” (personal communication, July 28, 2008). In fact, participants from these three groups had been overlooked by the snowball sampling process from the initial contacts. Tsvetovat and Sharabati (2006) described the shortcomings of snowball sampling as leaving potential informants out of the loop if they were not highly connected. I was moved by the honesty and openness shown by the respondents volunteering to participate in the study and their frankness in answering my questions. Although I sometimes felt as if I were personally attacked because of my race, which was associated with the misdeeds of my fellow Africans (to be discussed in detail in the fieldwork report chapter), the participants were generally crisp and had their facts straight. Overall, the participants were cooperative, thoughtful, in their answers, and helpful. Even though there were some agonizing memories in some participants’ experiences, all questions were answered. The in-depth interviewing technique allowed
me to rephrase the questions that needed clarification, and this study gathered meaningful information because the environment where the interviews were conducted was nonthreatening. To complement my in-depth interviews and participant observation, qualitative research methodology allowed the use of supplementary sources.

**Document Analysis**

Several authors recommended that social scientists use multiple sources of data where possible. Babbie (2004) suggested that one must obtain data from a variety of sources representing different points of view. He recommended that researchers “examine the official documents, charters, policy statements, speeches by leaders and so on. With these sources [one] could trace changes in recruitment patterns over time” (p. 335). In addition, according to Patton (2001), “records, documents, artifacts and archives constitute a particularly rich source of information [and] organizations of all kinds produce mountains of records, both public and private that can be mined as part of fieldwork” (p. 293). In appreciation of such views, I used documents as another source for this dissertation research. Materials for this project were generated from a number of sources. The first was the South African Department of Labor (DOL), because it is responsible for receiving the employment equity (EE) reports from companies to monitor the achievement of employment prospects for women, Blacks, and disabled people. I also made use of the DOL annual reports submitted by employers involved in these programs. Next was Statistics SA which keeps statistical records including employment figures and quarterly and annual turnover rates in the ICT sector. Other sources included trade press, business publications, specialized journal articles, scholarly magazines and articles, journalistic reports and corporate documents. These provided an external view of current
practices, employment trends, and corporate policies. Moreover, such publications revealed things that had taken place before this study started and provided the researcher with information about, for example, organizational rules and regulations, which could not be observed (Patton, 2002, p. 293). This range of tools assisted the researcher to triangulate a wide range of views. As Patton (2002) recommended, the researcher was able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. Triangulation and cross-checking increased confidence in research findings and provided trustworthiness to the study (Glesne, 1999, p. 31).

Research Instruments

Interview Guide

The researcher designed and constructed an interview guide (see Appendix 1) that dealt with a number of aspects of the ICT employees’ experiences of factors that could lead to turnover. Glesne (1999) emphasized the importance of the interview guide that is “useful for giving direction to your research endeavor” (p. 24). Lofland and Lofland (1995) asserted that the “interview guide is considerably less formal or structured than the questionnaire or interview schedule used in survey research” (p.78). According to Bernard (2002), informal interviewing is conducted through conversations heard during interaction with respondents. Bernard emphasized that this kind of interviewing is conducted with a total lack of structure or control. For this study, the researcher believed that the best way to gather information from participants was to use semi-structured questions because they offered perspective and encouraged dialogue. Also, they were not restrictive but instead allowed respondents to articulate their personal experiences and the obstacles they encountered that may have pushed them to follow an alternative path.
The interview guide, therefore, was important because it guided and focused the direction of the in-depth discussion with the participants to ensure that the respondents did not deviate too much from the subject matter. Following Bernard’s (2002) suggestion, the researcher kept in mind that unstructured interviewing is characterized by minimum control over people’s responses and serves “to allow participants to freely explain their reasoning and values and to explore unchartered constructs” (cited by Lacity et al., 2008, p. 229). Although the participants were given as much time as they needed to talk about their own perceptions and experiences, the guide was still useful to remind the researcher of the points she wanted covered.

Several variables of ICT labor turnover were identified from the literature, and they formed the basis for my interview guide. Although my interview design was comprehensive to be ‘just a guide,’ I wanted the participants to freely talk about their work experiences in terms of where they have been, where they are at present, and where they wanted to be. As Patton (2002) recommended, this sort of guide provided a “framework within which the interviewer would develop questions, sequence those questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth” (p. 344). The guide captured specific topics that needed to be validated and operationalized within the South African work environment. Mason (2002) cautioned,

Although this [capturing of specific topics] does not mean that you should produce a rigid interview structure in advance, or that you must try to anticipate everything in which you are likely to be interested, it does mean that you need to be clear enough about recognizing what you might be interested in to be able to judge what to pursue in the interviews. (p. 68)
Patton (2002) suggested that “the interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (p. 343). He added that “the advantage of an interview guide is that it makes sure the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation” (p. 343), although the researchers were also advised to bear in mind that qualitative interviews are designed to have a fluid and flexible structure “to allow [research] to develop unexpected themes” (Mason, 2002, p. 63). Because the participants for this research were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule, the semi-structured questions gave the respondents an opportunity to recall their experiences, and verbalize them, avoiding the possible bias that a researcher may introduce through structured questions. The approach was flexible and allowed the interviewer to seek clarifications and follow-up on responses. The nature of my discussion with the respondents was, therefore, not formal; and after a few interview sessions, I became more confident about conducting the interviews and could easily strike up a conversation without much referral to the interview guide. The informal nature of the interactions facilitated rapport and made participants feel at ease with the interviewer and the questions.

The guide covered five areas. The first was the evolution of the participants’ jobs within the ICT sector. The evolution encompassed the ways that participants were recruited and acquired their jobs. The second area was related to turnover culture and looked at the common and acceptable reasons to quit one’s job or the perceived culture that justified movement between employers. The third angle included job satisfaction and organizational reward systems; this showed real pressures that impeded ICT
professionals’ abilities to stay with their employers. The fourth area was demand and supply, to show the job alternatives that ICT professionals had within the sector and the reaction of the communications and technology sector created by transformative change in South Africa. The final area focused on the EEA. This revealed the impact of affirmative action and the challenges created by South Africa’s labor laws toward the turnover of the country’s skilled human resources.

Recruitment of Research Participants

In order to carry out the research, the researcher first had to define the profile of the informants. Babbie (2004) described informants as individuals who are “well versed in the social phenomenon that you wish to study and who [are] willing to tell you what [they] know about it” (p. 185). The participants consisted of purposely selected workers in the ICT sector in South Africa. The opinions that were being canvassed were those of the ICT core workers and not of the end-users because the core ICT jobs are technology related and among the high-paying ones; the ICT users’ jobs involved administrative support and minor ICT activities and were categorized by low pay (Akoojee, Arends, & Roodt, 2007). The key informants were chosen because of their employment in the ICT sector. The participants’ work experience fell within a 2 and 32-year tenure span in the ICT sector. Different people who had varying experiences were selected. An assumption was made that most of them had resigned at one point in time to take another position. The researcher interviewed anyone who left an employer for an employment opportunity elsewhere. The selected respondents were those willing to cooperate with the research.
Snowball Technique

A purposive sample was selected for in-depth interviews. This study was to use participants from various media and communication industries, and the researcher was uncertain that access to the participants would be forthcoming. Babbie (2004) suggested that when entry was a challenge to the social researcher, “you would do well to locate individuals who could understand what you were looking for and help you find it” (p. 185). Snowball sampling is an approach that uses recommendations to find people who fit the skills criteria that have been identified as being helpful. The researcher needed to find ways to reach adequate respondents from each industry and required some assistance to identify and reach them within a reasonable period of time during the fieldwork. This meant that the decisions about who should be included in the research were made at least in part by personal contacts whose help was needed in gaining more contacts.

It was important that people knew each other so as to make speedy referrals, and that was useful in terms of saving time since the researcher only had eight weeks to collect data in the four regions of the country. This technique’s goal was, therefore, to make use of prevalent professional knowledge about those who have skills or information within various communication areas. Most importantly, this method allowed the researcher and her initial contacts to identify the resources within the media and communications technologies community and to select those people best suited for the research project. Also, snowball sampling was beneficial to this study for the reasons cited by Tsvetovat and Sharabati (2006): first, it quickly mapped communication in small social networks; second, it helped to determine the research participants even though they were not known beforehand by the researcher.
Taking a cue from Babbie (2004) and Tsvetovat and Sharabati (2006), that the snowball technique was a useful approach that could help one obtain timely access to relevant and suitable participants, the researcher then communicated with a few personal contacts and asked them if they knew anyone with the characteristics and skills that she was looking for: (1) individuals who were currently working in the ICT sector; (2) people who had worked in the targeted media and other communications industries for a minimum of two years; and (3) individuals who worked with any form of technology in the three targeted industries.

This approach was appropriate and practical for the selection of participants for this study because the study needed to engage participants from a number of industries within the ICT sector. It would have been harder to obtain access to some of the industries, such as the Internet, because the investigator did not know many people and it is possible that their response rate would have been low. Referrals were useful and more effective at gaining access at the higher efficiency than sending out surveys which could easily be put aside and not completed immediately.

Although the recruitment process was slow at the start of the study, I was able to obtain a high response rate. I had initially planned to interview 26 participants; the actual number obtained was 38 because there were more participants available and adding additional interviews was possible. This sampling method afforded me the opportunity to complete the interviews and obtain information. It was difficult for many interviewees to decline a request for an interview, although there were some cases in which individuals demanded questions prior to the meeting or provided wrong contact details. Participants reacted differently to my research; and their attitudes varied to a great extent. Initially,
some participants were suspicious of the research; others needed some form of clearance from their organizations (especially regulators within private companies and those who were working at the highest level of operation). For instance, participant number 7 (P7) wanted to see the questions before the interview. He explained that he had to get clearance from the organization since he could not talk about information that was strategic to the organization. He was informed that there were no predetermined questions set because the current study was not a survey.

The interview process was altered to accommodate other factors that were emerging in the field. Initially, I had not intended to ask participants about their income because people usually do not want to reveal their salaries. However, most respondents felt they were not paid according to industry standards. Many compared their own salaries with those of their friends in other companies. Therefore, I decided to ask individuals at the end of our interview about their income and fringe benefits. When I asked them to give me an idea of their income breakdown, the response was positive. Although this question is usually problematic, my respondents provided their precise income (some even shared their salary pay stubs with me). Only three placed their salaries in broad categories, and one executive said, “I get a total package of about R750,000 (USD93,750). It’s all inclusive.” Another variant to the emerging factors was to ask respondents to make recommendations to the ICT sector and South African information and communications technologies employers to create conditions that foster the retention of professionals in the workplace, but I would not follow that since it was not part of this study. Information organization within the interviews consisted of taped interviews, and
all participants agreed to that. In addition to tape-recorded interviews, field notes were taken.

Voluntary Participation

The study included men and women from a wide variety of organizational settings and roles. Babbie (2004) said that participating in research should be voluntary (p. 63) and that Lofland & Lofland (1995) added that “you want the interviewees to speak freely in their own terms about a set of concerns you bring to the interaction” (p. 85). Often, it is unusual to have people approach the researcher to talk to them unless the researcher or her contacts identify them as potential respondents. Yet some people felt compelled to speak up. Two White males eagerly decided to be interviewed for this study, but some women who were nominated seemed to be unwilling to take part. Some women participants agreed to take part in the study but I later discovered that two had misrepresented their contact details. Efforts were made to reach them but were not successful. I then concluded that those who would not participate had a lack of interest in the project. Therefore, the “silent” women were not heard. Yet, as a woman, I was troubled by what I considered a level of distrust by those women. In this case, the sample was dominated by mostly fluent and confident men.

The participants’ daily activities ranged from what seemed simple to complex responsibilities. At the lowest level of operation, professionals’ duties included, among other things, looking after all the technology and doing some form of maintenance, such as the maintenance of equipment. At the medium level, the ICT professionals were involved in network cabling and developing some software as well as overseeing that there was some form of consistent standards in various technologies that were used in the
ICT sector in South Africa. At a more complex level, the participants’ responsibilities required far more specialized training, such as designing digital-signal processing systems, doing research on new technologies, regulating the ICT sector, and ensuring that there was compliance with the required operation standards of equipment. The interviews were recorded, and each interview took about one and one half hours. Acknowledging the difficulty of writing extensive field notes during an observation, Lofland and Lofland (1995) recommended jotting down notes that would serve as a memory aid when full field notes were constructed. This strategy was also followed by the researcher in this study.

Thirty eight research participants were interviewed, all of whom had been in the ICT sector for a minimum of two years and were still working in the sector. From the beginning of the interviews, identification numbers were allocated to replace the participants’ names, and all identifying information was kept separate from the recordings. The participants’ names are referred to here as P1 to P38. Tables 1, 2 and 3 offer a snapshot of participants in this study:
### Table 1

**Race and Gender Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africans</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorcds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 3 interviews were discarded because they were unintelligible.
Table 2

*Ages, Education, Ethnicity and Gender of Research Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Attributes</th>
<th>20-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-60</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>57.14</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate in IT &amp; Media</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Diplomas</td>
<td>51.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degrees</td>
<td>17.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate / Professional Degrees</td>
<td>17.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Categories</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africans</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloreds</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Range in Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>2 – 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry / Sector</td>
<td>2 – 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*ICT Sector Studied*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Industries</th>
<th>Categories of Participants’ Job Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting</td>
<td>Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist Technical Final Controller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main control operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sound Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal &amp; Junior technicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technicians (Junior &amp; Senior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cameramen &amp; women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical Director TV News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Technical Director TV News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcast IT Systems Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision controllers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>IT specialists/Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systems Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinator quality assurance / quality control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>ISP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Web Space Developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Software Developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hardware Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architects &amp; Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Database Developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Security Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinator: Intrusion Detection Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager: Data Security Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Fixedline Operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wiremen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Installation Technicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traffic signal Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fieldwork Technicians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of them had changed employers and others had not. Those who were employed elsewhere prior to their current employment were asked to recall how they got their current jobs, their experiences in previous jobs, and the reasons why they left their previous employers. All the participants were asked to explain if they had any intentions of leaving their current employment. Patton (2002) stated: “We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories; [hence] qualitative interviewing starts with the assumption that the perspectives of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 341).

Profiles of Participants

The 38 respondents were interviewed to represent the selected technology industries. Of the 38 responses, only 35 provided usable information because my meeting with my first participant in the field was disrupted by a personal emergency while he was still showing me the surroundings of his radio station. The participant had been part of the meeting for less than 15 minutes. We had agreed to reschedule another meeting but
that did not materialize and the researcher had moved to other areas. The audio for the other two interviews was defective, unintelligible and was discarded. The youngest participant was 24 years old while the oldest was 60 years old. The average participant age was 35 years and the tenure of service was between 2 and 32 years.

Eighty percent of participants were men, and 20% were women. Of these, 77% were Blacks [43% Africans, 20% Indians, and 14% Coloreds], and 23% were White. In accordance with Best and Khan (2003), “interviewers of the same ethnic background as their subjects seem[ed] to be more successful in establishing rapport [and that] women seem[ed] to have a slight advantage over men in getting candid responses, although, depending on the topic” (p. 325). I could not confidently say that this statement was untrue in my case. Most of my participants were men. There was some reluctance for women to participate in the project. My encounter with two Black women from one TV station proved to be unsuccessful and demonstrated their unwillingness to participate in the study.

The majority of participants had educational degrees and national diplomas in IT or in electrical and mechanical engineering; 17.14% had masters’ degrees obtained from South Africa, India, the United States, and Canada; 17.14% had bachelors’ degrees (from South African and Indian universities); 11% had certificates in media training; 3.29% had Microsoft and IBM training and were still pursuing their undergraduate degrees; and the majority of participants (51.43%) interviewed for this study had the Technikon education background. The Technikons are South African technical colleges which were known as Colleges of Advanced Technical Education until 1979 (d’Almaine, Manhire, & Atteh, 1997) and were renamed the “Universities of Technology” in 2002. Universities of
Technology are well known for their career-focused, hands-on approach to education and training (Bharuthram, 2002). According to the CTP (2001), the Technikons provide vocational education in order to supply the labor market with people who have particular skills, as well as adequate technological and practical knowledge to play a leading role in the working community (cited by Bharuthram, 2002). Moreover, graduates from these institutions are of paramount importance to the ICT sector for three primary reasons:

First, at a technikon, experiential learning is a compulsory component of almost all three-year diploma programs. Second, the curricula are determined in consultation with commerce and industry, and therefore are more applied and relevant to the job market, and finally, technikon education is aimed at providing usable knowledge and practical skills (Bharuthram, 2002, p. 73).

Clearly, this interface with industry has enabled technikons in South Africa to structure courses with practical applications and to deliver graduates with knowledge that is immediately relevant in the workplace. The fact that students get their one-year internships with the actual industries also provides the work experience that the industries often require because it saves time required for retraining new entrants to the market. Although the study did not intentionally recruit participants from the technikons, the snowball technique required that people suggested other participants familiar with the research topic in question and, apparently, the Technikons’ graduates were more prevalent in the South African ICT market. Most of the participants interviewed were from the broadcasting industry, especially television and outside TV broadcast (OB). The participants’ job titles ranged from junior technicians to specialist application architects.
who could design and develop Web spaces. The specific titles for various media industries appear in Table 3.

Research Sites

The industries selected in this study consisted of three major ICT industries in South Africa. The informants for this study were recruited from the ICT sector in SA: in broadcasting, IS and telecommunications because the researcher wanted to focus on the turnover experiences of the ICT workers in many employment settings. Participants who worked in broadcasting included community, public and commercial radio and television stations. The telecommunications participants were recruited from two fixedline operators, Telkom SA and Second National Operator (SNO, also known as Neotel), three wireless providers (Cell C, MTN, and Vodacom), and the SA ICT regulator, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). The IS participants came from two of the Internet service providers (ISPs), Mweb and ITweb.

I chose to include participants based in four provinces of South Africa because the majority of the selected industries were based in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Bloemfontein. These are the financial and industrial centers of the country, and most employees lived in these cities. According to Statistics SA (1998), for instance, “Gauteng is the second most populous province after KwaZulu Natal” (p. 9); the capital, Johannesburg, is home to the third largest urban population “after Cape Town and Durban” (p.10). This project is about ICT professionals, and Akooje, Arends, and Roodt (2007) cite the Labor Force Survey data (Stats SA, 2003) and Jovanovic (2004) who indicated that
Gauteng was home to almost half (49.2 per cent) of all ICT core workers; followed by the Western Cape (21.4 per cent) and KwaZulu Natal (12.8 per cent). These three provinces combined make up more than three-quarters of all ICT workers. This provincial configuration is reflected in salary patterns, which reveal that ICT salaries were the highest in Gauteng, followed by the Western Cape. (p. 20)

In addition, these areas were selected for ease of access and to minimize expense for interviews. Figure 3 shows the map of South Africa that shows the four cities selected for this study.

![Map of South Africa showing research sites](http://www.afrilux.co.za/images/maps/south_africa_map.gif)

Figure 3. The locations of the research sites in the study.
Access to Participants

Lofland and Lofland (1995) cited Cassell (1988) who cautioned research fieldworkers about the possible difficulties of gaining access to the informants on the research sites. Lofland and Lofland maintained that “gaining entry to a setting or getting permission to do an interview is greatly expedited if you have ‘connections’ (p. 37). To overcome possible entry barriers, other researchers asserted that a sampling strategy in qualitative research can be purposeful (Best & Khan, 2003; Patton, 2001). The level of trust and confidentiality should not be underplayed here because people might have been uncomfortable talking about their intentions to a stranger. The interviews were conducted by the researcher. In an effort to solicit cooperation from the participants, it was helpful to be referred by others who knew other professionals within the ICT sector. The researcher believed that it was better to build rapport and gain the trust of participants than to try to draw out cooperation from an anonymous random sample. Because of the sensitive nature of the research topic and the high levels of trust required for participants to open themselves up to me, the sample was purposive.

Since the participants in this study were both men and women, there was a possible danger of gender identification since I, too, am a woman who has left jobs. Therefore, I had to be careful during the fieldwork to ensure that I did not attempt to interpret the situation and filled in from my personal experiences. In other words, I had to be truthful to the data and quote it exactly as presented (Patton, 2001). Although Patton suggested that during the interviews researchers have to pay attention to listen to just what is, leaving out my own thoughts, feelings, theories, and biases, and enter with the intention of understanding and accepting perceptions, rather than presenting my own
view or reactions (p.8), there were times that I could not hold my views, as it happened when I visited P38 (to be discussed later in Chapter 5) I had to keep my own perspectives to myself and took seriously the responsibility to communicate authentically the perspectives of those I encountered during my inquiry. Also, I had to recognize that I was the “other” when I interviewed male participants and continually asked for specific examples when the respondents’ experiences were not clear during the interview.

A month prior to my departure from the United States, I communicated with personal contacts in South Africa to assist me in identifying the information and technology (IT) and information and systems (IS) professionals who have worked in the ICT sector in South Africa. Most positive responses came from Cape Town where my friends arranged a lineup of interviews with various radio stations (community and commercial stations). Before I left the United States, I already knew that I was going to start in Cape Town because the technicians in stations were ready to meet with me.

Two weeks after the Cape Town interviews, I moved to Johannesburg. I had actually expected that recruitment would be easier in Johannesburg because I knew many people in the broadcasting and telecommunications industries. To my surprise, I discovered that there were a few respondents willing to participate in the study. Some followups were made with the initial contacts to establish the reasons for unresponsiveness, and it became clear to me that there was no enthusiasm from both participants and my initial contacts. Participants reacted differently to my research and, to a great extent, their attitudes varied. In the beginning of my field trips, my ethnic ties initially mattered to the recruiting agents who thought that I wanted to interview Black
people only. I was informed that some people were suspicious of me and wanted to be sent questions before they would agree to talk with me.

Best and Khan (2003) were of the opinion that “the key to effective interviewing is establishing rapport” (p. 324) and that if that kind of relationship is well established then the participants might be willing to reveal information that they would otherwise have withheld. These scholars suggest that ethnic origin and gender seem to be important in establishing positive rapport. Moreover, Best and Khan (2003) were of the opinion that “when there is an ethnic difference, a certain amount of suspicion and even resentment may be encountered” (p. 325). Others were just not willing to be interviewed because they did not know if I had been sent by their organization’s management, and building trust with these participants was not easy. Some indicated that they needed clearance from their employers before they could talk to me. Additional factors included my past employment associations, and my relationships with my recruiting contacts who were managers.

Those who associated me with my previous employer before I left South Africa wanted to ensure that I was not doing some study for the same employer. Best and Khan (2003) cited the ethical standards of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) that “researchers should not use their influence over others to compel them to participate in research” (p. 50). Although the respondents might not have been coerced as such to participate in the study, the fact that the invitations came from management might have had an undue influence on them or perhaps indicated that they would receive favorable treatment from their supervisors. In any event, I believe some might have been afraid to refuse believing that it might affect their relationship with their supervisors.
However, as soon as the researcher clarified the nature and purpose of her investigation, which was described as academic, things were cleared and we could talk to anyone who agreed to participate in the study.

Knowing that my investigation included sensitive questions regarding “people involved in activities [that were oftentimes] kept secret from their associates, [they spoke] openly only with the assurance that it [was] off the record” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.76), I had to rethink the strategy of approaching people in management as recruiting agents so that this study was not associated with them. For example, the study inquired about individuals’ intentions to leave their current employers, their commitment to the organizations, and job search activities that could jeopardize their jobs if that information got in the wrong hands. To build rapport between the potential respondents and the researcher, and to put them at ease, I preferred to be introduced to the participants by people who I had already interviewed. Guided by Babbie’s caution that “social research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study” (p. 64), the participants were assured that the information respondents gave would be kept confidential even though the field interviews were tape-recorded. However, potential risks involved in this study were anticipated prior to the fieldwork, and the researcher had taken precautionary measures to avoid harm to the participants.

All information obtained in Appendix I and interview booklets containing the investigator’s notes were kept private by the investigator. To gain their trust, the researcher, had to show the consent form that indicated that her research was purely academic so as to give participants assurance that neither the researcher’s previous
employers nor the management of their organizations had anything to do with the research investigation. In this city I reassessed my strategy and I therefore decided to start with participants from industries that were cooperative to the study.

At first, I was frustrated by the slow rate of response and had informal discussions with people who participated in a training workshop about the lack of participation by South Africans in research studies. Apparently, people were reluctant to participate because prior studies that they participated in had so far not helped to improve their situations. This view was especially prevalent among women. A woman who worked for the fixedline operator emphasized that although she was granting me the interview, she knew that nothing was going to change women’s situation in the workplace because people just want to generate paperwork and fill up their cabinets to formulate policies but that no one ever checks so see if companies implement such policies. She asked me to recommend that the government also do the monitoring and evaluation of the EEA reports that were sent to the South African DOL, because most of them do not contain truthful information. I could not promise that the government would take recommendations from me but assured her that if part of my dissertation were to be published, other scholars would benefit from this research and have access to the views of the informants.

In South Africa, people often participate in interviews if there is something to be gained. For some time I did not understand until a friend told me that participants wanted to be paid. Even if one did not provide financial means, the expectation was that there should be some form of saying “thank you” to the participants after the interview. The researcher was told that other researchers had provided some big “give-aways” to get
people to their research sites. For instance, the researcher learned that big companies have used trips to some exotic places to encourage people to participate in their research, and such rewards were expected. I was impatient with the slow pace of the fieldwork.

While I was still frustrated and disappointed by the sluggish pace of the research in the beginning, my advisor arrived in South Africa and contacted me as soon as he discovered that there were some ICT people who participated in the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) training workshop. He introduced me to the group of participants, and, based on his suggestions, got the names of technicians and IT professionals. During tea breaks and the lunch hour, participants were asked to participate in the research, and they agreed to be interviewed at the end of the day after the workshop. I asked my advisor if I could be part of the training workshop so that I could have access to the participants for the whole two-week training period. I immediately jumped at the opportunity to be introduced to the group. All the participants to the workshop agreed to be interviewed, and only four were not included because they were nationals of other countries, and one South African woman was not an ICT professional. The group was responsive and one-third of my respondents came from that group.

The Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development Training of Trainers Workshop

The greatest laboratories for this study were the AIBD Training of Trainers workshop at the Protea Hotel in Wanderers, Illovo; the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC); and e-TV. The majority of my participants came from these three sites, and interviews were conducted with participants who worked different shifts and with those who attended the training workshop for two weeks at Illovo. Other participants came sporadically from widely scattered localities such as ISPs, fixedline operators,
wireless companies, and telecom regulator. My dissertation advisor and his group of trainees who participated in his workshop provided generous assistance. Knowing the profiles of the participants the researcher was looking for, my advisor had already identified technicians within a group who worked with various technologies in broadcasting. In fact, I became part of the training workshop so that I could informally talk with the participants during tea and lunch breaks, shifting to participant observer. One-third of the participants for this study came from this group. Even after the end of the workshop, the outside broadcast technicians from this group invited me to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) where they were producing the financial market news and I was able to observe the team of setting up for production.

Despite having to catch participants who were involved with seeking some refreshments, standing or walking around with others, utilizing restroom facilities, or sitting alone, I managed to have informal conversations. I did not want to be intrusive or so insistent that every time the professionals saw me coming they would presume I wanted to talk about their jobs. I interviewed two respondents during the lunch hour and after the workshop in the evenings. This group suggested many other contacts in the sector, and I had finally found productive ways to gain entrance into the community that I was targeting. While we were still attending the workshop, a trip to tour the SABC was organized. The tour provided another opportunity for me to recruit participants. I approached those who were on duty when we were touring the SABC and obtained their contact numbers. Those who provided details were contacted and meetings for interviews were arranged. Participants were recruited from the SABC TV News, IT department, and Airtime (also known as OB).
The SABC and ETV Sites

The SABC and ETV have other operations in other regions (Cape Town, Durban, and Bloemfontein) where participants were interviewed. Management personnel of these two companies allowed me to interview their technology staff at times that were suitable for the participants and me. This was a useful way to gain entrance into the community that I was targeting, still bearing in mind the assertion by Babbie (2004) that participating in fieldwork must be voluntary and that “no one should be forced to participate” (p.63). Furthermore, Lofland and Lofland (1995)’s ethical warning that even in cases where supervisors were involved in providing access, the participants should be informed about the research so that they can make their decisions and grant access to a researcher (p.39). Participants’ permission was sought before any interview could start; they were not coerced to take part in this study.

Other Sites

While interviewing the training workshop participants, my initial contacts in other industries were beginning to flood my e-mail and cell phone with the names of people that could be interviewed. The participants were recruited from the Internet and telecommunications industries. I then realized that my contacts had not formally approached people while the interviews were conducted in Cape Town, but only set me up when I was already in Johannesburg. Because the majority of the respondents in this study were shift workers, freelancers, and those who were office bound, interviews were conducted at times that suited them. This included day and night shifts in varying work locations, such as studios, boardrooms, cafeterias, training workshops, and restaurants, crew rooms, in hotels and inside OB vans. As a result, in most cases, the interview
arrangements were often informal because it was necessary to establish rapport with the 
interviewees.

Limitations and Exclusions

This dissertation research was limited to interviews in four cities in South Africa, 
namely, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. Regrettably, time 
constraints and financial resources did not permit me to reach several people of interest in 
Bloemfontein. Many IT professionals were suggested in that city, but I had already 
exhausted my limited personal resources and had to return to the United States. 
Unfortunately I was unable to interview many White professionals in this study. Because 
I used the AIBD training workshop as a device for recruiting the participants, I was 
handicapped by the fact that only Black professionals were selected for participation. The 
AIBD training workshop had no White participants; only non-Whites were chosen and 
there was only one Black female who was very junior. Through snowball techniques, 
workshop participants recommended other Black professionals who were mostly males.

Research Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined qualitative data analysis as “working with 
data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for 
patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you 
will tell others” (cited by Hoefl, 1997). Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive 
analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data (Patton, 2002). 
Strauss and Corbin (1990) described open-coding as a process in which “analysis begins 
with identification of the themes emerging from the raw data, and the researcher must 
identify and tentatively name the conceptual categories into which the phenomena
observed will be grouped” (cited by Hoefl, 1997, p. 55). This study strived to place the raw data into logical and meaningful categories and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others. Using qualitative research helped me analyze and identify recurring themes from the transcripts and then synthesize the emerging factors on causes of turnover within the South African ICT sector.

The 35 interviews were transcribed, and participants were assigned a number based on the order in which they agreed to participate in the interviews, P1 being the first participant and P38 being the last. The demographic information collected in the beginning of the interviews was coded to identify the participants in terms of their gender, age, ethnicity, education, and occupations. For each participant, the five research questions were separately coded Research Questions (1-5), Narratives and “Notes for discussion” in a three-column table and six rows were created on the computer. Each row restated the gist of each of the five research questions namely, Job and Social Networks, Reward systems and Job Satisfaction, Demand and Supply Gap, EEA Turnover, and Turnover model; the final row was labeled Others to accommodate unexpected themes. Table 4 shows the sample of how the five research questions, and the unexpected constructs were coded from all the transcripts. All the answers to each research question were then collated together independently and the broad themes were identified and grouped together.
Table 4

Sample of the Analysis of the Five Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Notes (Discussion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: Job &amp; Social Networks</td>
<td>Family Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My wife always told me to leave the organization before I got a raise” (p.2, para.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: Reward Systems &amp; Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Salary Increase – It may keep P17 in a job for a while but still plans to move on. “If opportunities arise, I might grab them” (p.1 para. 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am never fully satisfied” (p.3, para.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s all about money and benefits that one gets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits – P17 left the previous employer because</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P17 Protea Hotel Training Room on July 30, 2008 at 5pm
**Table 4: continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3: EEA Turnover</th>
<th>Negative Feelings / Distrust</th>
<th>AA has caused more tension and distrust between various ethnic groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There are now negative feelings between groups and these negatives cause problems” (p. 3, para. 3).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4: Demand &amp; Supply Gap Turnover</th>
<th>More broadcasting players / Competitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The spectrum is growing for the people with our skills at other organizations such as the CNBC, ETV, and Telkom Media” (p. 2, para. 7).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ5 Turnover Model</th>
<th>Job Presentation (Showcasing his expertise in other organizations) “…was showing them how to use the equipment and they offered me a job in their IT department” (p. 1, para. 2).</th>
<th>Describe that the feeling that guilt plays some part when people resign esp. from small private companies which do not provide benefits like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Table 4: continued

Higher Mgt Position – P17 plans to move on to a large corporations
better management position
“I have been to several interviews. I am moving
towards middle management and I don’t mind
going towards that at this stage” (p.1. para.5).

Others

Uncertainty and Instability
“...the board of trustees where they are not settled.
It creates a lot of uncertainty and instability”
(p.1. para.3).
“We are now waiting for the board to approve
the purchase of the new system.”

Equipment / New Technologies
“We are lagging behind with equipment.”
“I feel very uncertain because sometimes
the TV server fails.”

If people are uncertain that they will
get their jobs done because of the
system, they get discouraged. People
who work as a team need to trust
each other and work openly.
ICT professionals need functional
equipment to do their jobs and get
frustrated if the equipment is not
upgraded or is old.
There were some patterns, themes and categories that emerged from information on the spreadsheet from each question. The recurring patterns resulting from participants’ narratives in each question developed and were identified. The developing patterns helped me sift through the amount of material I had to explicate broad themes associated with the five research questions.

For instance, there was a relationship that developed between the research questions during the coding, and the narratives from Research Questions 1 and 2 indicated some internal labor market (ILM) job turnover factors while Research Questions 3 and 4 showed some external labor market (ELM) job turnover influences. Research Questions 5 seemed to unify and tie in all the trends that developed from the analysis of all the questions. To make the material more manageable, the more refined themes and concepts were decided upon by the researcher. The decision was based on her selective inclusion and exclusion of information that was relevant to narrate the stories of participants and purpose of the present study. I completely agree with Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002) that in qualitative research, subjectivity cannot be entirely avoided and the researcher’s interpretation of events occurs. I categorized the concepts as either internal labor market or external labor market turnover factors according to my interpretation of the narratives. The categorization was useful because it organized the material and issues that were relevant for internal and external labor markets contributors to turnover. Finally, the spreadsheet was eventually developed to put narratives into three groupings, the ILM job turnover factors which came from Research Questions 1 and 2, ELM job turnover factors which resulted from Research Questions 3 and 4 and the turnover model aspects.
CHAPTER 4: INTERNAL LABOR MARKET JOB TURNOVER FACTORS

I was informed during the interviews in the summer of 2008 that numerous internal labor market influences drove the job mobility of information and communications technologies (ICT) workers and affected their tenure within the South African organizations. This chapter views those factors to address the research questions RQ1 and RQ2 presented in chapter 1. The purpose of chapter 4 is to present information on internal labor market (ILM) turnover issues arising from within the information and telecommunications field. Internal human resource practices relating to hiring, compensation, promotional decisions of employees, and career development procedures will be dealt with first. There are three major themes in the discussion of internal labor market influences on turnover among ICT professionals. One is the utilization of the social networks: (1) friends and family, (2) tertiary institutions and, (3) the workplace / industry. Another is job dissatisfaction which results from job scope and lack of employee loyalty. The third, and perhaps the most important factor, is what the literature usually refers to as the organizational rewards systems, information about the employees’ dissatisfaction with compensation such as remuneration, fringe benefits, and promotions.

Media Reports, the SA ICT Sector Turnover Dilemma, and SABC Legal Battles

Journalists reported in 2006 on the mass exodus of 14 ICT regulation managers who left their jobs within weeks of each other, shocking the South African (SA) communication sector (Gedye, 2006; McLeod, 2006). The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) had been through the wringer in the national press. I became interested in discovering why the ICT professionals left their jobs in droves in
South Africa and thought it would be useful to understand what the employers in the various industries in the communication sector could do to retain these valued professionals. A month prior to my departure from the United States, I communicated with personal contacts in South Africa to assist me in identifying information and technology (IT), information and systems (IS) professionals and technicians who have worked in the ICT sector in SA. Several technicians shared with me a variety of personal stories that reflected their insecurities, emotions, and intentions to leave their current employers. I could immediately relate to some of the participants’ anxieties and the effects that the tumultuous SA labor politics had on them, and the respondents provided further insights on why they left their previous jobs. Like respondents P17, P27, and P16, when I was young, I dreamed of doing something great and was taught early in life that it took the whole village to educate a child, meaning that everyone in the community could assist in bringing out the genius in the child. I did not only look up to my parents to assist me if I needed help; I knew that other members of my community could be useful as well. My neighbors could be consulted for both personal and professional advice especially for that first generation in college. Although I had close ties with my family, also the first to know my intentions about anything, I also had access to other community members who sometimes had useful information that I needed.

I followed the media reports on the legal battles between the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) board and its senior management that started in May, 2008. The CEO had suspended the news chief for allegedly leaking confidential documents to print media, but the suspension was declared invalid and irregular by the SABC board and the labor courts. The South African Press Association (SAPA) reported
that the CEO’s action prompted his own suspension by the board of the SABC. The 
CEO’s decision to suspend the news chief came just a day before his own suspension. In 
May, 2008, the newspaper reported that

In papers submitted to the court on Thursday, SABC chairperson Khanyi 
Mkhonza said: The applicant (Mpofu, the CEO) in clear defiance of the (SABC) 
board decided without any power or authority to do so, to suspend (news chief) 
Snuki Zikalala. The applicant's conduct in suspending Zikalala, in the manner that 
he did, is yet a further example of what appears to be a pattern of behavior by him 
that discloses complete lack of accountability to and disregard for the board. 

Among the concerns of the board were issues related to, among other things, the 
late submission of the budget for the 2008-2009 financial years. It appears that 
when the budget was finally presented, it contained errors and some of the figures 
were inaccurate and conflicting with other figures in the same document (News 
24, May 15, 2008).

To add to the internal problems faced by the public broadcaster, there were even 
higher expectations for the SABC. South Africa would host the World Cup in 2010, and 
soccer lovers expected to see proper broadcasts of the events. Thus “another concern [for 
the SABC board] was the alleged failure (by the CEO and his team) to manage and 
present a clear technology road map ahead of the 2010 Soccer World Cup.” The ICT 
community at large was worried about whether the “SABC would deliver on its 2010 
responsibility, perform its role in digital migration and ensure its image did not suffer 
further damage” (News 24, May 15, 2008). Before the aforementioned suspensions, 
journalistic reports had earlier indicated that the board was already upset that the
corporation lost the broadcasting rights with the International Cricket Council (ICC) “because the CEO did not follow instructions to have the necessary contract with the ICC concluded and delivered within the set time frame” (News 24, May 7, 2008). Mpofu had challenged his suspension, which he considered unlawful, with the Johannesburg High Court.

When I arrived in South Africa in June 2008, the atmosphere was still edgy because of the court events between the SABC and its CEO. When I interviewed the SABC technicians and IT professionals, many could not hide their frustrations about the unauthorized budgets which paralyzed the efforts of those who wanted to do their work. They were not properly informed about what was going on but read about their employer in the newspapers. When I spoke with some of the SABC employees, P19 remarked that

We talk about general things, including work and what goes on in our organizations; for example, what is going on with the SABC now, the board, the CEO and the court cases, the SABC’s financial problems on an inflated management structure created by this CEO. Look at all the litany of allegations from MWASA [the media workers’ association of South Africa] against certain executive managers and board members” (personal communication, July 31, 2008).

Financial mismanagement was reported by media workers’ union representatives and some employees became worried about the security of their jobs and the bad public image that surrounded the corporation. When senior management was entangled in legal battles, other employees could not perform their jobs because budgets to purchase new equipment they needed had not been approved.
These events set the stage for my entrance to the broadcaster after six years’ absence from South Africa. The employees of the SABC, which was once the biggest employer in broadcasting, had become the laughingstock, described by media reports as run by individuals who were “inefficient, political subservient appointments;” furthermore, the News24, asserted that “this nonsense of appointing people solely on their credentials as ANC 'cadres' must end; [it is] a case of the chickens coming home to roost" (May 2008). The Broadcast, Electronic Media and Allied Workers’ Union (BEMAWU), the Communications Workers’ Union and the Media workers Association (CWMWA), and the Media Workers’ Association of SA (MWASA) employees already had their own conflicts with the SABC, particularly around compensation disputes which put the groups at odds over many other things. That sort of atmosphere had an important impact on how people viewed their jobs and affected whether they wanted to leave or stay with the corporation. I was told, however, that leaving one’s job involved a host of factors and did not depend entirely on the employed ICT professionals alone. It included the employee’s varied social networks from family, peers, and friends. I shall start by presenting some social networks that influenced the SA ICT employees to get new placements in jobs, and leaving their previous employers.

Social Networks

Informants indicated that, to some degree, people use social networks of friends, peers, and family to get career and employment information. Family and close friends provided strong ties and played vital roles in deciding whether to accept or leave the job. A family affiliation came first because it was the first involuntary social network that one is born into, and these members are socially and economically expected to help each
other. The family facilitated the individual’s ability to gain entrance into jobs. Family ties, I came to realize, are strong, respected, and could influence individuals to leave their jobs. I have watched families help each other through struggles. Early on in my field research, I began my first interviews at Bush Radio in Cape Town. I met with P2, a morning drive anchor and technician at Bush Radio. He had worked for Bush Radio for 10 years and left to go to his hometown on the East Coast after his mother died. Being the eldest son, he had to take care of the family matters and had hoped to secure a job in one of the radio stations on the East Coast. During my visit to the station, he informed me that his father was a fisherman who would go for months before they could see him:

    My mother loved and took care of us [he had two siblings]. She had been both our parents all rolled into one, until she passed away. East coast was my home.

    That’s where I belonged. I couldn’t stay in Cape Town to continue to work when my family was hard hit” (personal communication, June 26, 2008).

P2’s departure from the station was abrupt and unplanned, but he rationalized that leaving was the best thing he could do under the circumstances. After three years of absence from the station, he was located by his former employer back to Bush Radio. P2 came back to his current position as a senior technician. He had to train other junior technicians. On the one hand, P2 left his job because of his family responsibilities and perhaps his close ties with his family back in the East Coast. On the other hand, P1, P2’s employer who wanted him back would perhaps not have made the effort to locate P2 if there had been a pool of technicians he could draw from.

    However, there were some shortcomings to strong family ties. I was told that a generational conflict between parents and their offspring sometimes surfaced with
regards to retaining or leaving one’s job. For instance, when P30 wanted to leave his job at the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), his family did not support that move and wanted him to keep the job. When I visited him at Cell-C in Sandton, Johannesburg, he informed me,

*I did my duty to inform them [my parents and sister] that I wanted to leave because I had another offer, but they wanted me to stay. I stayed for three more months (with previous employer); that is what worried me, my career was just beginning and then left and came here [current employer] as a senior legal advisor.*

I asked P30 how his parents felt about his new job at Cell-C and shrugged his shoulders and said,

*Once I had reflected, I was certain in my heart and knew at the earnest probable level that I had been disloyal to my own beliefs and what I wanted, but at the time I detached from whatever personal desires I had. I was afraid of hurting my family in order to pursue a dream but it wasn’t for too long. I guess they are happy now but it was such a struggle to convince them” (personal communication, August 05, 2008).*

Unlike most technicians (whose stories will be told later in the chapter) who were first-generation college graduates, the ICT regulator participants were highly educated and professional lawyers in the ICT field. I realized during my conversations with the participants that family and close friends were a major influence for ICT professionals in deciding whether to accept or leave the job. I was curious to find why the professionals
who were adults still had to negotiate with their parents about job changes. For a few of them, the family actually facilitated the ability to gain entrance into their job.

*Family Affiliation*

My respondents told stories of what took place around family dinners where many parents were accustomed to hearing their children discuss decisions to purchase expensive property and other fixed assets, or, as was the case with P27, his decision to quit his job. One evening at his home, P27 told his parents that he quit his job. What stunned P27’s parents was his resignation even after he had earlier received rapid promotions from his employer.

“What do you mean?” his parents enquired.

“It means that I am leaving my job; I served a one-month required notice,” P27 said to the shocked parents.

According to P27, his parents were surprised because “I worked there for about eight months or one year, and then I was promoted to be a final control producer. I worked there for three years and after three years, I felt that I needed growth in my career” (personal communication, August 07, 2008). He already had another job elsewhere. In essence, P27’s parents did not agree with their son’s fundamental premise of quitting a job without considering the loyalty of the employer who promoted their son. When I listened to P27’s story in an empty studio in my first interview with him at the SABC during his one-hour break, I realized that not all social influences were supportive. Once P27 disagreed with his parents on staying longer in a job, they lost any chance of convincing him to act otherwise. Some participants claimed that parents’ attitudes towards employers sometimes involved the notion of a life time job with stability, and
parents wanted stability in the job for their children. However, young professionals were
taking responsibility for their own careers. When the ICT professionals wanted to leave
their jobs, their parents encouraged them to stay. Participants in this study agreed that
their parents wanted them to keep their jobs. P27 noted,

Parents would always influence their children to stay in a job, especially when
they still see you going to work every morning. That’s what they said when I left
my FCC [Final Control Center] job; they still believe in loyalty. They would say
to you but you’re playing with your job. [They feel that] if you’re working for this
company you should be there for the rest of your life or working for a pension
(personal communication, August 7, 2008).

It became clear to me that such pressures did not influence many ICT workers in
this study. When I was about to leave the Neotel offices in Woodmead where I was
interviewing respondent P13 one morning, he admitted that he took his parents’ advice
and worked for a telecom company for 22 years because his parents “wanted me to stay
because they felt that, you know, why are you leaving when you have been there for so
long; just stay, it’s a very good company. [He shrugged his shoulders and explained that],
it took only one family meeting to reach a decision. My wife and parents all
[unanimously] agreed that I should stay and I did” (personal communication, July 28,
2008). Although P13 followed their suggestion at the time, his attitude has changed and
he now disapproves of their advice and feels that “at the end of the day, you, you do
what’s good for you” (personal communication, July 28, 2008). Some interviewees
stayed for additional months but they ultimately left for other jobs because, according to
P27, “there are other opportunities [out there and] I still want to experiment in life”
(personal communication, August 7, 2008). With these conflicts of opinions in mind, it is significant to realize that the relationship between employers and employees has shifted from strong long-term ties in the ICT sector to one of short and to mid-term increased mobility and detachment of ICT professionals. This has occurred in spite of generational pressure within ICT workers’ social networks.

I found that most Black participants in this study were the first in their family to become college graduates. The widespread generational conflict partly explains why a greater majority of participants’ families did not help a great deal. Even when the family members tried to intervene, their suggestions were rejected because the older generation was unfamiliar with the ICT labor market. In some respects, parents were considered uninformed and not knowledgeable about the work sector. P27 and P16 rejected their parents’ suggestion of keeping jobs that made them unhappy because their parents were illiterate and did not understand their dissatisfaction in the workplace. P27 explained that his parents did not understand what was important to him: “I would really define their problem or their influence as being illiterate because both of them are illiterate so they still believe in giving loyalty” (personal communication, August 7, 2008). As expected from professionals who believed that they were better informed about what was going on in the labor market, younger Black professionals asserted they knew better than their parents what the job market needed and that parents were not likely to be helpful in decisions regarding things they were not familiar with.

Room number 13 was one of the training rooms at the Protea Hotel in Wanderers, the northern suburb of Johannesburg. The day I came to the training center, I arrived early in the afternoon, anxious to meet the group that was being trained by my advisor. I
asked the receptionist to direct me to the SABC / The Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) training. At the lunch break with my advisor, I was able to see some of the workshop participants. In the training room for the afternoon session, a room with tables set in an arc shape with seats around them and a chalkboard at the front, I sat next to my OU colleague and assistant facilitator of the workshop. I counted 13 participants from that group. I thought that if I could get all of them, I would have achieved one-third of the interviews I needed for my project, all in one place. I was introduced to the group and they were informed that I was there for my dissertation research; I was interested in employment trends and use of various technologies and would like to talk to some of them. My advisor, Dr McDaniel had already given me the names of three participants who were technicians. After the class, I approached two of them to see if I could talk to them the following day after class. P16 chose to do so after lunch, and P18 said he would be going home to Soweto and agreed to reschedule for some other time during the two weeks of training. Most interviews were conducted in the training room.

The room had just been reorganized for the following day’s workshop. Other participants had gone back to their rooms, and P17 and I agreed to meet for an interview after the workshop. We both had afternoon tea after the day’s participation in the APIBD training workshop. P17 agreed that we should conduct our interview in the training room that we had been using. So, we waited outside the training room and read the newspaper. Looking at the headlines of The Star, and the Sowetan newspapers, I saw “SABC CEO in Court”, and read that the SABC Chief Dali Mpofu's suspension was "legally incorrect" and Mpofu’s application was dismissed. I told P17 I was happy the workshop was
conducted far away from the unions, independent television producers’ association, and the SABC politics in Aucklandpark. For SABC was a tense place during that period and TV producers claimed the company owed them about R60 million (USD $7.5 million). I had witnessed crowds of protesters who marched to the SABC building and carried placards stating “RIP local stories” and “stop pulling our strings”. Employees were apprehensive about what would happen to them and the corporation at large. The newspaper articles that pronounced the financial distress to the corporation confirmed employees’ worst worries about compensation. I confided in P17 that I was disappointed my advisor came to SA when the corporation was embroiled in a tug of war. I asked P17 about how he felt about the SABC saga. P17 shook his head sadly and said that “it is very depressing that we have to hear things like this from the newspapers,” and shared his frustration that they [his IT department] could not even get the purchase of the new equipment authorized because of the ongoing court case between the SABC’s board and the CEO. I had already spent a week in a workshop with this group and we could openly talk about issues of mutual interest.

I asked P17 to tell me what he had been doing and if he had left his job before. He nodded his head, cleared his voice and pushed his chair to face my direction. He informed me about his previous job.

I had worked for a small company that was privately owned. I started there in 1993 as a fieldwork technician. I had just bought a car and a house. The company was supplying the SABC with equipment; I was showing them [the SABC] how to use the equipment. We [his wife and child] were staying with my parents on the north side and we moved closer to the SABC to keep the travel costs down for my
company was not paying for the wear and tear of my car. My wife told me to look for another job that had benefits [housing and car allowance] (personal communication, July 30, 2008).

I had hardly finished asking a question about whether his wife was happy with his current job when P17 interrupted and added, “I have worked for the SABC for 13 years. I don’t make the big money like I would have liked to but it is better than what I got in my previous job and before I got a raise my wife always told me to leave the organization.” P17 looked at me with a little smile showed on his face. We had been in a workshop for one week and P17 told me that he missed his family (personal communication, July 30, 2008).

This salary incentive kept P17 with the company for a little while because he was already looking for other alternatives in senior management. However, I realized from my conversation with P17 that the ICT workers’ spouses play a significant role in employment decisions, especially if the spouses were personally affected by such decisions. In another similar incident, respondent P33 had a wife and a child while he was still in college. As expected from the Colored community, P33 had family responsibilities for his wife and young child. I caught up with P33 at the SABC when he was getting ready to go to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) and I asked if he ever left his job. He was pulling cable near one of the outside broadcasting vans. He responded with a loud “no” and looked at me with surprise. “I have a permanent job here” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). Later in our conversation, he reminded me that I should have known that it was expected of him as a man to take care of his immediate family and he could not just leave his permanent job.
In my interview with P33, I concluded that in situations like his, where the family responsibilities arose all of a sudden, families are grief stricken over the pain of their male offspring being unemployed. They wanted to be supportive and assist as much as they could. P33 told me: “My father was a technician at the Henley Studios of the SABC and he saw an advertisement for interns and brought it home for me to apply. I filled in the forms and I got this job as a technician.” P33 acquired his first job because of his father’s assistance and has been working for the SABC since then. He was adamant he was looking for his own life right there at the SABC: “I don’t ever want to leave. I have a wife and a son to support. I also want to buy a house for them because we’re still staying with my parents” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). It may be important for employers to understand the pressures that male professionals, who are considered the primary earners, are under, and they can easily be swayed by their families to quit their jobs or look for other jobs. They face strong economic pressures not helped by their present salaries. The lifestyle of the ICT professionals is high and lavish by South African standards and to maintain that lifestyle requires a consistent flow of cash which could prove difficult for some.

On the other hand, it was not uncommon for family members to go out of their way to ensure that a relative gets a position. For P10, who was working as an engineer in Zimbabwe, his cousin found him a better paying job at one of the television stations in South Africa. P10 explained that “my cousin went to Zim [Zimbabwe] to bring me to South Africa [and] everything was already organized” (personal communication, July 25, 2008). This is unusual, however, as previous studies suggest that the family tended to be
the primary source of material support, which typically involves more tangible benefits, such as cars, a place to live, or loans (Allen, 2001).

Finally, I met a female technician, P22, who worked at the SABC offices in Aucklandpark. A 32-year-old technician in outside broadcasting (OB) at the SABC, she was a talented young woman with an amazing range of interests such as playing tennis, love of literature, cooking, and continuous study. She also took care of her two year old daughter. If there was anyone who wanted to leave her job desperately, it was P22; however, she resisted quitting because she had discovered that she was expecting another child to be born in January 2009. Her husband had been relocated to Cape Town. He had been away for almost eight months, and P22 was left in Johannesburg with her daughter. She asked her employer to transfer her to their Cape Town offices but her request was denied. P22 said,

I am always very hesitant to see husbands, children and wives living apart. I believe they should be together whenever possible, with the exception of unusual circumstances. I am considering leaving this job if I can be separated from family for so long. I have been going for interviews” (P22, personal communication, August 5, 2008).

From this conversation, I discovered that the spouse’s relocation to another city might lead to termination of one’s job or the intention to look for alternatives elsewhere. Several studies in the West have long recognized this outcome, especially in families where the relocating spouse’s prospects were more attractive than the other spouse’s situation. Similar to P2, it appeared that P22 would leave her job on the basis of someone
else. We do not know if either of them would have left their jobs if they had not encountered a crisis in their careers.

*College Affiliations*

I primarily observed from the majority of informants that beyond the rather narrow networks of intimate family, there were those influences that arose from contacts made through the institutions where the workers trained and from the even wider ties established during their workplace life. I gathered that many of the professionals who were employed in the sector got their first jobs through internships facilitated by their colleges. In fact, it resonated in the majority of participants in this study. Had networks such as colleges focused on preparing students on course work only, where could first-generation college students (like most of my respondents) have turned for advice? I thought of a practical dilemma faced by first-generation college students like P27 and P16 who could not get informed career advice from their uneducated parents. I posed a question about what the potential ICT workers would do after completing their work if the colleges had not had partnerships with the employers. They had completed the first stage of their careers and needed to go out in the workplace for the first time in their lives, but their parents could not help them. Would they have made decisions like P27, who ignored his parents and left his employer, or P13, who listened to them and stayed in a job for 21 years? I was informed by respondents that an elaborate system was established to place capable students from technical training institutions with the ICT sector that would give them opportunities to practice what they learned in college.

Almost all the young technicians interviewed in this study were placed by their educational institutions in their first jobs. Experiential learning program personnel were
knowledgeable about putting technicians in companies that provided the graduates with appropriate experience in their areas of focus. I found that college affiliation enhanced and particularly expanded the ICT workers’ employment opportunities. P21, a technician at the SABC, explained, “I have been working for the SABC for the past 16 years and I have not left since then. I got a bursary when I was in the army to study and I was placed [by the college] here at the SABC and that’s how I got the job here” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). P24 was another technician who was a freelancer at the SABC and a technician vision controller, who “came here [his current job] in January 2004 as part of my internship. I was studying towards a technical degree and I started in OB [outside broadcasting] which I enjoyed” (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

Among these interns was P4, a poster boy for a series of connections, from college internship to a permanent job in radio. A former student at Technikon Natal in Durban, P4 was placed in an internship at the radio station, and he relished life as a news editor in broadcasting. He remembered that

As a student, I [was placed and] worked for a radio station in Durban, Capital 604. For two years I did my penance, um as a student. That then got me a weeklong gap at Talk Radio 702. They [needed] an intern to fill in for a week. That turned into four months, that turned into a one-year contract, turned into full-time employment, and I guess I spent seven years there, in the end” (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

I observed that although the opportunities presented by internships did not in any way contribute to job turnover (because students were still in school), their social networks grew at this stage. Once they were in the job market, they utilized their
connections to get information about other jobs or formed partnerships that required a variety of technical skills in sound, vision, and production to work on short-term projects to complement each other’s expertise.

Apart from the colleges’ placements, I found that an overwhelming majority of the participants got their jobs through personal contacts developed in college, and ICT workers saw networking to be extremely important in finding a job. Affiliations that developed during college years had resulted in contacts that ICT professionals utilized to get information about IT jobs in the labor market. When I spoke with P16 and P34 separately, both suggested that they knew most of their helpful contacts from the technical colleges they attended. When I asked P34 about how his affiliation with his college assisted him in getting access to jobs, he said that in their social gatherings “we discuss work-related stuff and just anything that we can talk about, mostly work. A lot of times we share and advise one another” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). This statement is indicative of the importance of being affiliated with a group that is strategically positioned in the sector. It seemed credible that close personal friendships developed during tertiary education years had an impact on ICT workers’ future employment decisions by helping graduates to identify job opportunities. Finally, I discovered during my interview with P28 at the SABC that ICT professionals intentionally expanded their tertiary networks for future mutual benefit, and as many of the participants left their families to attend college, their circle of friends expanded in these institutions. Part of P28’s advice was that

You have to be loyal and keep them [social friends] very close [because] I may know how to do vision mixing but not as good as my friend so I need to keep him
close because he can help and it’s easy to make business with, as our friendship is very professional” (personal communication, August 07, 2008).

Moreover, many ICT professionals agreed that maintaining contacts with college friends was useful for obtaining current information, exerting influence, and putting in a word for others.

Most participants in this study knew classmates who moved from college to other broadcasting companies, such as ETV and MNET. P34’s college friends who worked for MNET informed him of positions available in their workplace. For example, when I visited P34 at his work he informed me that “I know they [friends from MNET] are currently looking for people at the moment. They know which companies are looking for people” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that some ICT professionals talked about available job opportunities in the marketplace, alerting those who might be looking for work. Such help from college friends was likely to reinforce the desire for ICT professionals to leave their jobs, and in many cases they did leave. Even though P34 had intentions to leave OB, he preferred to move to other departments within the SABC so that he would not forfeit his benefits (housing and pension) with his present employer.

Supporting P34’s situation, a friend who got P5 a job at the SABC was his colleague from Witwatersrand (Wits) University. Apparently, putting in a word for someone was another positive way of helping colleagues who were looking for jobs. In many cases, if job recommendations came from people who knew the competencies of the person, they were likely to influence the recruiting personnel. When P5 told a friend that his contract where he was working was lapsing, his friend said “I will set you up here
at [the] SABC. So, that’s how I got into SABC. I worked there as a freelancer …but [later] I requested to get a permanent job” (personal communication, July 17, 2008). This acquaintance was, therefore, successful in helping his friend. During my second trip to ETV station in Hydepark, P11 informed me that his friend got him a job at ETV and P11 left his previous employers.

Industry Affiliation

Despite the usefulness of family and college friends, participants informed me that networks developed within the workplace and industry were helpful. The informants described that after networks were developed in training institutions and later in internships, which led to the workplace, the size of the networks significantly increased. Respondents claimed that the social networks that started in college expanded through internships and experiential learning opportunities that placed interns in industry projects and assignments. Most interesting was the discovery that many SA ICT organizations involved their employees in the recruitment process; usually, these recruitment systems were informal and operated by a word-of-mouth.

I discovered during the interviews that industry affiliations had a strong influence on turnover, and people who had jobs were helpful in placing others. When the size of the network increased, it was typically with people who might have some influence on hiring and promotion decisions. For instance, the majority of participants, including respondent P4, suggested that professional groups encountered on the job were important contacts. The evening I interviewed P4 at the ETV station in Johannesburg, he was eloquent and articulate in his views. He said, “I just find I network more through the practical execution of my job, and in this industry you befriend people out on the field” (personal
communication, July 17, 2008) presumably, the people who might assist one if one wanted to leave. For instance, when P4 left his job at Radio 702 to join ETV, his ex-colleagues from Radio 702 recruited him to come and work with them at the new TV station. He remembered,

A vast amount of my colleagues, were here [referring to his current employment] already. So I knew people in this business, [through] the connections that I'd made, many years ago, and, you know, basically [they said] there was a gap, we know you, we know what you're capable of, and so we'd like to employ you (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

Consistent with this account, P23 agreed that getting a job in the broadcasting industry was about whom you knew and that loyalty to the networks “is important for helping each other” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). As P4 pointed out, keeping a close relationship with the networks was important because they were valuable resources for information on what opportunities were available in the various industries. It happened to P14 when she left her previous job at Vodacom SA to work with P7 at Neotel. I realized from my conversation with P14 and P4 on separate occasions that when some of the friends left their jobs, they were likely to be followed by others. The co-workers imitated their peers’ actions. P14 told me that she was poached by P7 from Vodacom SA to help him set up a regulatory division at the new telecom operator. This happened because P7 knew her from South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) and ICASA. P7 approached his friend and employed her in their current employers’ legal department. I realized that such approaches could lead to mass departures as P4 recalled a similar situation in his employment. P4 reminded me that
mass exoduses were not new within the South African environment. He and his friends had done the same things in 1994. P4 said that after the first two employees left their jobs at Radio 702,

The station did not know what to expect. There was [stammering / choking], there was quite an exodus from 702 at that time. Quite a lot of us left and then I felt that [stammering], you know, there was just a tipping point of, of, of, of the of the magic people, who just decided well, we're going to go and work elsewhere, new opportunities opened up, and because those opportunities opened up, they left. We just felt we were being poorly led (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

I was reminded by the incidents above that we lived in an immense network of family, friends, coworkers, and the extremely complex associations that make up our society. We are dependent on each other, and offspring are reliant on their parents for advice and wisdom. Students were also relying on their college communities to place them in internships appropriate for their professional development. It was difficult to locate any truly solitary employment endeavor in the South African ICT labor market.

Job Satisfaction

The most memorable moment for me was meeting P36 at the SABC. P36 was a senior technologist who worked for the corporation for more than 32 years and had a deeper knowledge about how the broadcaster worked. In my earlier trips to the SABC, I had met P36. That was my lucky day when P36 volunteered to talk to me. He had walked into the crew room where I was interviewing P20. Jokingly he apologized for disrupting our meeting and out of curiosity asked what the interview was about. I had been coming to his department for several days, and I didn’t take him seriously when he asked what
the interview was about. Still, I explained to him what it was about and he asked: “So when will I be interviewed?” I couldn’t believe what I had heard; does he really mean it? I thought to myself. “Tomorrow afternoon,” I said. I’ll come and set up the time with you after this meeting” (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

When I visited with P36 at SABC Airtime on my next trip he was thoughtful and alert. He had been a successful senior technologist of OB and then spent his time assisting the department to train and develop young technicians who worked for outside broadcasting. Although he had not personally left his job during the 32 years that he worked at the SABC, he gave me the clearest view of how a large broadcaster like the SABC dealt with the difficult problems of turnover. It turned out to be one of the most informative sessions I spent with a respondent. Contrary to my first opinions, P36 gave me the best information on how ILMs were intentional in his organization. I had no idea that companies could intentionally design policies and procedures to protect certain positions, thus determining who could leave or stay with the company. P36 obviously had an insight about who was likely to leave or stay with the corporation, and he explained this carefully and deliberately, providing detailed information to me on a wide range of matters.
P36 told me on the day of the interview that technicians within the SABC could be categorized into three groups: (1) management, which involved a high level of responsibility especially for professionals and other workers; (2) specialists / senior technicians, which was the intermediate / middle level; and (3) junior technicians / IT administrators, made up of those in the lowest level of operation. Titles and roles, such as IT managers, technical director, network managers, and managers, data security standards, and senior technologists were highly managerially oriented; and their responsibilities required them to manage others and help them achieve the ICT goals of their organizations. The educational requirements for these individuals were significantly higher than those of the senior and junior technicians. On the usual trips to interview the participants in Johannesburg, I got a sense of how satisfaction with the activities in the
workplace could lead to stability in the labor market. I learned from many participants that dissatisfaction had the opposite effect in pressure for job turnover.

*Job Scope*

P36 explained the aspects of job dissatisfaction which resulted from job scope and lack of employee loyalty. Job scope referred to the variety of tasks performed by the employee. I spoke with ICT workers who were happy and unhappy about some aspects of their jobs. Respondents in management attributed greater satisfaction with their jobs to the wider scope of their responsibilities. Less satisfaction is obviously a factor in job turnover.

Respondent P8.1 is an IT manager, and his responsibilities included looking after the entire infrastructure of a television network in three provinces. Through my observation of P8.1’s interaction with the Johannesburg IT staff, I realized that he pulled cables and joked with them. On the afternoon that I came to interview him at the ETV offices in Hydepark, P8.1 had flown from his Cape Town office. When I arrived at the station, he was lying on his back under a long table showing two junior technicians how to connect wires in the IT room and to do patching. Since he lived in Cape Town, he had been able to delegate some of his responsibilities to his deputy P8.2, so that P8.1 himself could focus on other important issues relevant to the station. He told me,

I am currently the head of IT for ETV. It basically entails looking after all the technology necessary for the business for both ETV and eSAT [satellite service], which is a 24-hour news operation that we have. It’s normally basic IT operations and I started getting involved in the broadcasting technology, which is quite exciting. So currently, I’ve moved myself out of the ETV operations and I’m
involved in the DTT [digital terrestrial television] format for South Africa. P8.2 [signaling to another person in the room] is my deputy, so he’s kind of taken over my operational role in the business, not only in Jo’burg but in Cape Town as well because I look after the entire infrastructure in Jo’burg, Cape Town, and Durban (personal communication, July 23, 2008).

I observed during the interviews that P8.1’s ability to delegate some responsibilities to his deputy both increased P8.2’s job scope in management and increased P8.1’s job satisfaction. P8.2 had become more mobile and P8.1 had become more stable.

On the other end of the responsibility spectrum were the junior technicians at the lowest level of operations. P36 informed me that if these junior employees’ workload entailed doing too little or primarily routine jobs, they became bored and developed low job morale. It became evident from my discussion with some participants that this sector’s internal labor market situation contributed to job turnover. Prior to becoming a deputy IT manager at ETV, P8.2 left his previous employers, including ETV where he was a junior technician, because he was bored by what he called his “dead-end job” (personal communication, July 22, 2008). The technology that he had been using for more than two years was no longer interesting to him. To my surprise, P8.1, his supervisor, then had done what was unimaginable to me. He had discharged P8.2 from his job and then assisted him in getting a job in another company with the promise to rehire him later. P8.1, who encouraged P8.2 to leave his job at one point, said: “I got him a job. He was bored and there was nothing exciting happening in Jo’burg. The Jo’burg operation was a lot smaller then. I said [to P8.2] take this opportunity. Go. I’ll call you
when I need you” (personal communication, July 23, 2008). This is a convergence of workplace networking and job dissatisfaction.

I have seen how devastating the lack of interesting work can be. Boredom and tedium soon set in. It became clear from the interviews with technicians that doing the same job or repeatedly using the same technology was less than satisfactory. For example, P27 was a production assistant for TV news. He left his technician job because he was bored after three years of the same routine. His unexciting job led to his decision to leave his previous department and move to another. Describing how he felt about his routine job, he said,

I worked there [at the television final control center] for 3 years and after 3 years, I felt that I needed growth in my career; it’s a kind of dead-end career where you’re going to work [do the same routine] for 5 to 10 years. I decided to apply to news, knowing that with news there’s bigger scope of growth (personal communication, August 07, 2008).

I found the recurring theme of dead-end jobs disturbing and wanted to know what else could be done to break the tedium of the job that was constantly discussed by some technicians. In my subsequent interviews I probed participants who brought up the issue of boredom to explain what they thought could make their jobs more enjoyable. All the participants indicated that their jobs were appealing and made them happy. However, I came to realize that there were two scenarios of workloads that affect job turnover: underload and overload. It became clear that except for senior ICT managers, many intermediate and junior technicians’ jobs required either too much to perform (overload), which resulted in burnout, or doing too little (underload), which resulted in boredom.
According to P34’s description, overload related to a workload that resulted from doing too many things with unrealistic time frames established to complete a job, while underload loosely referred to workload that resulted from doing too little or primarily routine things in a job, which may lead to boredom and low motivation levels (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

When I interviewed P18, he seemed overwhelmed by his job activities. P18 was a technician at the SABC OB and had to travel to various places. Although his job scope was high, he said that a lot of work was expected to be done:

I am expected to manage a crew; to do all the technical work, everything. So you end up being loaded with more work; you have to work hard. That’s hard work you know; you work long hours; you work weekends, you work Sundays, public holidays; I mean you get really to work. I don’t like the long hours (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

It sounded overwhelming and I sat back and stared at P18 who was pouring out the frustrations of the scope of his job. He explained that even when he was not on duty, “You get called extra shifts outside your normal time even during the weekends; you are occasionally called to work if there are productions that need to be done outside Johannesburg” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). He added that these activities would wear out anybody if they were done over the extended periods of time. I found the issues of burnout and boredom to be true for the majority of participants across the ICT sector. The same anxieties were echoed by ICT professionals in other industries. I was informed that performing many job tasks was due in part to the shortage of qualified ICT workers (which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter), and
boredom experienced by P27 and P8.2 could be explained by the employers’ reluctance to increase their job scopes, which would have financial implications. As observed in P18’s narrative, the expectation was that if one’s job responsibilities increased to include weekends, public holidays, and extra shifts, individuals might be exhausted and dissatisfied with extra tasks. On the other hand, the narrow job scope of junior technicians at the SABC became boring after much repetition and was viewed by P34 as “being channeled to one industry. Our tasks in OB vans evolve around three areas: production, sound and vision controls. You get tired of doing the same thing after a while” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). The technology that he had been using for more than two years in TV outside broadcasts was no longer interesting to him. Even when the job scope was increased for junior technicians at Airtime, it was usually for logistical purposes where “we have to be drivers, be technicians at the same time, do vision control, look after the whole crew, patch,” according to P34 (personal communication, August 5, 2008). These operations provided limited engagement, soon becoming tedious; and professionals did not see them as adding any value to jobs.

Figures 5 and 6 are two of the SABC TV OB vans that technicians had to drive if they were not working in any of the three areas inside the vans. Figures 7, 8 and 9 show the production, sound and vision areas inside the OB vans.
Figure 5. External area of the SABC’s OB digital satellite vehicle. Picture from the researcher’s file.

Figure 6. A long vehicle divided into three areas: production, vision and sound machines. Picture from the researcher’s file.
Figure 7. Inside OB vans (production Area). Picture from the author’s files.

Figure 8. Sound Area, equipped with motion cameras. Picture from the author’s files.
Loyalty and Organizational Commitment

I was informed by some participants that job dissatisfaction could also result simply from a lack of employee loyalty. I also observed that among the participants in this study, self-interest was the priority for ICT professionals. Many ICT workers felt no responsibility for loyalty to their employers. When I met P9 at the shopping mall in Cresta, in the North of Johannesburg, I asked if he came from Multichoice (a satellite company). We were two strangers meeting for the first time, and a mutual friend had suggested that I interview him. Early in our meeting, he said, “Let’s get started because I have another meeting in Cape Town later this afternoon.” At one point during the interview, he described what had happened to him, and I learned that P9 had left his
employers three times. I wanted him to explain why it seemed so easy for him to leave his jobs and I asked about his commitment to his employers. He confided that, “I’ve had some trouble, you know, with the so-called commitment or loyalty with the employers. Why should it be one-sided? I wish you could ask employers the same question and tell me how they responded.” He added: “I can only be as loyal as they are to me” (personal communication, July 22, 2008). Previously, P9 was affected by company lay-offs. Apparently, his loyalty with the employers had shifted significantly, and some level of distrust had developed. He was of the opinion that it was better to be loyal to friends than to a company because “this company can close tomorrow [or] I can be fired, and it is very important to have that relationship with others outside the organization” (personal communication, July 24, 2008). P9’s sentiments concerning loyalty were shared by other participants in this study.

The majority of the respondents said that they had a duty to self and then friends and peers. The organizations in which they were working come last. For instance, at Protea hotel, P19 strongly expressed that

It is crucial that you are loyal to yourself. I just look at what is best for me and then I can consider [the employer after]. I have debts to pay and it is important to keep one’s options open” (personal communication, July 31, 2008).

It became clear that the internal factor of self-interest and peer loyalty trumped the internal factor of employee loyalty to the detriment of turnover. As P9 indicated, he could only be as loyal to his employers as they were to him. I was told that commitment by employers to employees was equally as important.
I learned from my interaction with the respondents that, in fact, loyalty worked in both directions. Employers’ lack of commitment to invest in the young IT professionals’ training and development was taken as a sign that they preferred to recruit external professionals with specific skills. P9 suggested during the interview that “companies need to demonstrate that there is a growth path for staff, educationally and professionally” (personal communication, July 24, 2008). It became clear that if the administrative rules for training and development were blurred for some of these professionals, it sparked their intentions to leave and added to the turnover problem. So to expand their horizons in technological knowhow, these employees would prefer to leave when they believed they had acquired enough skills in an area. Consistent with this view, P24 agreed that “multitasking helps you to know more” (personal communication, August, 5, 2008). On the other hand, paying less attention to the job responsibilities of employees was also regarded as employers’ disloyalty. A female legal advisor at Neotel [the new fixed line operator] P14 felt that senior management usually ignored her advice. If the same advice was offered by male colleagues, management listened to them instead of P14. She was frustrated and said she believed that when organizations made fewer commitments to or investments in workers, this slight was seen as disloyalty to those workers; some employers’ lack of commitment to the workers led to a lack of commitment to the organization. For instance, P14 indicated that because of the lack of respect she got from her employers, she had no loyalty whatsoever to the organization; her loyalty was for P7, who was her friend who gave her her current job (personal communication, July 28, 2008).
I understood P14’s experience better than she might have assumed. Almost 10 years ago, I had received the same treatment and a clear vision began to take shape in my head. Amazingly, the more I listened to P14, the more my deepest intuitions were confirmed about loyalty. How does a female employee who worked in a male-dominated sector become loyal to the culture that isolated her? A number of years ago, I encountered studies on loyalty in organizational behavior and management. We were taught that it was important to be loyal to the employer. On the occasions I had been together with ICT professionals, we had discussed loyalty, its conception, and whether it was still relevant today. Most technicians had thought carefully, and their beliefs had shifted significantly. Some agreed that loyalty was something that could diminish, if not properly maintained. They suggested that there might have been some loyalty between employers and employees, but P21 observed that in his 16 years’ tenure with the OB, things have changed. He said,

I don’t think there’s loyalty in a job anymore; SABC has changed my mind about that [and in any case] I always feel that when the job is not enjoyable anymore, you don’t have to be loyal to the company” (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

Although P14’s scenario could be read as another convergence of the following two factors: job satisfaction and loyalty, after P36’s lengthy explanation of how both employers and employees utilized the internal policies to control and gauge mobility, respectively, I gathered from many respondents that loyalty worked in both directions. Faced with the dilemma of what made sound business sense, employers wanted return on investment (ROI) and were hesitant to invest in people who could leave them anytime
after they acquired new skills. Employees also were observant about whether the employer had good intentions to staff development; and if there was a sense of perceived disloyalty, then employees could choose to leave.

However, it was my understanding from the interviews that the short-term nature of the technicians’ jobs also instilled a lack of commitment to the employer. P24 was adamant that “since I am not permanently employed, I am free to leave any time. If somebody from outside gives me an offer, I will grab it” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). It was clear from these narratives that a lack of loyalty to the organization leads to an intention to leave. In this cycle of effects, if the professionals perceived that employers’ commitment to the employees was not strong, that they did not want to invest in them through training and development, the ICT workers’ loyalty waned, and consequently, they felt fewer obligations to their employers. I need to remind readers, though, that research conducted here showed that training and development themselves were major factors in turnover. Although loyalty to the organization has been studied and encouraged by management practitioners for decades, it was clearly unsupported, and ICT workers were motivated to be loyal to peers and to themselves. Some of them said they have been overlooked for promotions and training, and they did not trust employers’ intentions about their career progress anymore. They therefore chose to look for employment alternatives elsewhere.

Turnover Culture

I was told by some participants that the new political landscape in SA might be contributing to high job turnover rates. Politicians are powerful and most often very convincing. Similar to the operations of the labor unions, politicians would claim that
they represented the interests of constituencies that they served, and their followers usually bought into their ideas. Many young technicians have been influenced by politicians’ utterances that leaving a job was normal; there’s nothing wrong with leaving, all workers could pick and choose what works for them. During the interviews with some of the respondents who constantly left their jobs, I was persuaded that South African politics have perpetuated the normalcy of turnover among young people. Despite the shortage of ICT workers, many young professionals assumed that turnover was inevitable and normal. When I met with P24 at the SABC, he told me that “leaving jobs is an accepted practice in South Africa. Even Danisa Baloyi, a South African politician, has also said that if there are opportunities, young people must seize those opportunities” (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

When young technicians heard such utterances from politicians, they were inspired to practice what they heard from their political leaders. I observed that the despair of the young people came from the fundamental notion of politicians’ influence and the young professionals’ reflection of impatience attitude with employers. It was clear from P24’s earlier narrative on the short-term nature of IT jobs that quitting one’s job if there were other opportunities elsewhere was an endorsement to change employers, thus justifying the normalcy of quitting. Such a climate of normalization of turnover that had become part of the ICT culture lessened the value of commitment from both the employers and the employees.  

Organizational Rewards Systems

Given the influence of networking and job satisfaction, the remaining internal labor market job turnover factor, the organizational rewards systems, was by far the most
important. Organizational rewards were exceptionally important to ICT employees. Any
deficiency, perceived or actual, of the expected compensation made them contemplate
leaving their employers. The internal labor market job turnover focus was on three
organizational inducements: fringe benefits, career opportunities through promotions,
and remuneration.

Fringe Benefits

I discovered during the interviews that in most South African organizations,
fringe benefits were related to the nature of one’s job and seniority. Benefits such as
retirement annuities (RA) or pensions were legally required. The opportunity to
participate in a pension plan was a valued reward among senior technicians and IT
managers in South Africa. Although fringe benefits were seen almost exclusively in
terms of seniority and what was required legally, junior technicians wanted similar
benefits as well. For instance, within the SABC, the standard benefits for all technicians
included pensions, medical aid, housing allowances, educational benefits, and paid travel
when on job assignments. Benefits increase with seniority to include company cell
phones and car allowances. However, almost all the junior technicians at the SABC
wanted to get company cell phones and car allowances because their counterparts in other
organizations had these benefits. For instance, this was P19’s sentiment about benefits: “I
am currently looking for other jobs in IT management positions because other people get
[company] cell phones and car allowances; I do not” (personal communication, July 31,
2008). Similarly, P17 left his previous employer because there were no car benefits
especially car allowance” (personal communication, July 30, 2008); yet he had to visit
company clients in his car. Although some companies would provide petrol cards to their
fieldwork technicians who own cars, professionals still felt that employers needed to help with their car payments, because technically, they shouldn’t be using their own cars to perform the requirements of the job. These were illustrations, of course, of professionals who had intentions to leave or who had left their employers because they wanted more benefits.

Through my interviews with many professionals, I was told that the South African telecom companies offered a unique and innovative rewards system to their ICT managers. Participants to this study at these organizations were all in senior positions and qualified for employee stock ownership plans. Those companies that did not have these reward systems in place were highly likely to lose their senior managers. When I arrived in Midrand at the Vodacom offices during my first trip to interview P25, things did not go well. I learned when I entered the gates that the respondent had cancelled the interview. “Family emergency,” said the security man at the gate. I was disappointed but proceeded to Hydepark to interview ETV technicians who were on duty. When I visited P25 for the second time at the Vodacom offices, he invited me to take the chair across from his desk. In 2002, P25 was glad to work for a wireless company that everyone longed to work for. Vodacom SA, a huge wireless company in South Africa, had created a stock ownership program whose goal was to provide a certain percentage of employee ownership. The company offered discounted stock options and allowed employees to buy shares after a three-year tenure with the company. For instance, P25 was the Executive Head: Special Regulation at Vodacom SA and reported high levels of satisfaction with this kind of benefit. According to him, “each year permanent employees get phantom shares which can be cashed after three years, to create ownership and recognize loyalty”
(personal communication, August 7, 2008). The ICT regulators in private companies who did not receive this benefit intended to leave their employers. P7, a senior manager in Regulatory Affairs at the Second National Operator (SNO), was concerned that

There’s not an employee share ownership scheme [program] just yet, but if one day it comes, and if I am still around, maybe I’ll participate in that because I think it is critical as a means of incentivizing employees and retention (personal communication, July 22, 2008).

Benefits range widely, but the perception of how generous those benefits are greatly influences for job turnover. In fact, I was informed by participants with long industry tenure that employers’ contribution towards benefits, such as pensions, actually helped to retain senior ICT personnel.

Older employees (especially those at the managerial level) were much more concerned with their pension benefits than young technicians such as P27 who argued that he still wanted to experiment with life. When I went to interview P26 at the SABC, she was frail, gray, but commanded a lot of respect from young technicians who worked with her. I had already interviewed two other respondents who described her as a mentor, coach, and a mother figure who had the patience to train young people. She was a 59-year-old director in the news department who had worked for her current employer for 17 years. She said the following about how she left her previous employer:

I was working for Market Research Africa when I got my first position at the SABC. In July 1, 1981, I started with the SABC when they were going to launch TV. SABC then took me for training at TTC [TV Training Center, the internal training center of the SABC]. I was later promoted to the production director
within one-and-half years and worked for the SABC magazines and Women’s Program until 1986. SABC was the best place I had ever worked for. The best department was News Line. I love the work I am doing. I will be 60 years in September [2008] and I’ll be a pensioner that is fulfilled. I am not looking for any alternative because at my age there is no company that can employ me. I stayed at the SABC for loyalty to the corporation (personal communication, August 7, 2008).

Similarly, P21 was a senior technician and was satisfied with the package that he got from the SABC. He said,

I have been working for the SABC for the past 16 years and I haven’t left ever since. I’ve been here since I started. I stayed because I love broadcasting. The SABC has always been a nice company to work for. I don’t want to complicate my life. I like most of my job. It’s good to get something right. You don’t get bored doing the same thing. I like going to locations and doing repairs onsite and working on production especially sport and I’m quite satisfied with the compensation. I get pension. I don’t want to leave because I have a pension contribution of 16 years since I started working for the SABC. When you work you start looking for retirement, pension and if you hop, you end up losing your pension and you do not have enough [when you retire] (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

Clearly, senior professionals were fulfilled in what they were doing. They were passionate about their jobs and there was no doubt that they had some loyalty to their employer of almost two decades.
On the other hand, on a different trip to Neotel offices, young professionals who work at Neotel with P13 dismissed the idea of staying in one company for more than two years. He remarked that the young professionals “are much savvier than older people in terms of seeking opportunities, taking risks, or believing in themselves. What I have learnt from them is that one should take a chance [and] take a plunge” (personal communication, July 28, 2008). I understood from my conversation with participants that pension as a part of the organizational rewards systems affected turnover in different sectors of the labor market differently and at different age levels.

*Maintaining High Lifestyles of ICT Workers*

When I visited several participants, I discovered that benefits matter greatly to ICT professionals. To live well and successfully meant a lavish lifestyle. A life of luxury was not just a dream; people talked about fancy cars, owning expensive and big homes, and having extra money to spend to show their improved status of life. Living as P23 did in a beautiful home in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, she had to have a reliable and large income. Quite a number of the respondents had the joy of owning magnificent cars and up-market homes.

On the evening of July 25, 2008, P11 and his colleagues at ETV sat in the IT room. It was a cold night in Johannesburg. Outside, the noise of moving cars on the William Nicole freeway drifted through the slightly open windows. The room was unusually still, and everyone was glued to the computer. I stopped outside for a while to catch my breath and observe the crew. I knocked on the door and asked to see P11 and P10. Most of the technicians in the room were young, ranging in age from 20 to 30 years, and four older people stood by. My heart was racing because I did not know either of the
two respondents I was interviewing that night. P11 took me to a quiet guest room and asked if I would like to have tea. Before we started the interview, I showed P11 a visitor’s parking disk I was given at the entrance to the TV station. I had parked next to the three cars that had the “for sale signs.” P11 assured me that I was safe because most employees had left and that one of the ‘for sale’ cars was his. P11 was a junior technician at ETV and he told me that he “would love a better allowance package so that I can keep my car, but I am selling my baby [referring to his car]; [I am] very very sad.” He said he could not keep up with the payments on the car. He left his other job at CEM Maintenance because “my car allowance wasn’t even enough to help [with] my car’s payment. One good thing, though; they did give you unlimited petrol card; as long as you don’t use more than R450.00 [USD $45] at a time” (personal communication, July 25, 2008). Similarly, P23, an assistant director in the newsroom at the SABC, said that she left her editorial job for a technical one because

I wanted to maintain my lifestyle. I’m driving a car that costs me about R4 000 [$400] a month. I just recently bought a house. My son goes to a private school. He has learning problems. So he goes to a special school. So, that is the reason I came to the technical. I get about, get R23, 000; after the deductions I get about R19, 000, compared to editorial [where] I got about R12 000 a month. You can see the vast difference (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

From my interactions with these respondents I realized that the lifestyle of some technicians was high by SA standards. Keeping up with that lifestyle had been difficult to maintain for some, and they were continually looking for ICT employers whose benefits would include expensive cars.
Nature of a Job and Benefits

Professionals sometimes had to make decisions based on the benefits that came with employment packages, and this spurred them to act on their ambitions. I spoke with several professionals and found that in most ICT companies in South Africa, the company’s contribution to benefits, such as retirement annuities, car, and housing allowances, medical aid and employee stock ownership plans, were based on seniority; junior technicians did not qualify for some of them. Thus, they became impatient and hostile if the employers took too long to qualify ICT professionals for some of these benefits. In the end, benefits provided affected the technicians’ behavior toward the employing organization. As P36 and other technicians in management indicated, if the perceptions or preferences of the professionals being rewarded were not understood, employers were highly likely to lose these individuals within a short period of time.

Promotions

My experience in the South African job market helped me see the reality of who I was. When I was offered a directorship position at one stage in my career, it was the most exciting time in my profession. I was filled with joy, and excitement and liked every moment of that title for the first six months. Everything was a new experience and it was challenging. But, my spirit dampened when I discovered that I was not allowed to make decisions. I suddenly saw unequal treatment. I experienced quite a few depressing moments. The company I was working for had given me an executive title but prevented me from making some operational decisions. I was underpaid and received only one-half of what my predecessor was paid. I was soon overcome by anger and feelings of betrayal by the board. I decided to leave as soon as I got another job. Rather than feel sorry for
myself and focus on what I had lost, I chose a different path. At my urging, the chair of the board called a meeting where I told them I wanted to leave because I was unhappy. I spoke for a few minutes about what I discovered in the executive (Exco) meeting minutes and financial books. The meeting became a bruising session of questions and answers. My message to the board was simple; if I was the director and performed what I was contracted to do, I needed to be compensated fairly for my services or else I was going to leave. As it appeared in my case, the board and I viewed promotion differently. A promotion, it may have meant legitimate earnings for me, but for some board members, it meant giving me a senior position without making decisions.

I could relate to some participants during the interviews when I discovered that promotion has different meanings to different SA ICT professionals. As an internal type of labor market job turnover influence, promotion and titles act in at least four ways: conferring high status, recognizing the mastery of certain technologies and expertise and specialization that came with the titles, allowing access to benefits that were only given to senior personnel, and management acknowledging that employees have not been forgotten. Therefore, there might exist various unfulfilled and unaccompanied desires that might lead to decisions to leave if these were not satisfied. It became apparent in this study that many professionals were frustrated by a lack of planned career advancement, especially if technicians put in a lot of effort to excel in a job. If such efforts were not appreciated, the technicians often decided to leave and added to the labor market job turnover.
Promotions as Indication of Higher Status

During the time I spent in South Africa for the interviews, I found that, generally, some workers wanted promotion as an indication of higher status and more autonomy in the job. Many technicians I spoke with expressed career satisfaction as a feeling of fulfillment and accomplishment. For example, many professionals’ ambition was to acquire positions that indicated higher status such as in middle and senior management. Almost all intermediate-level technicians at the SABC were positioning themselves for senior management positions. When I interviewed P16 at the Protea Hotel, he was a specialist technician who preferred internal mobility within the SABC. When I asked him where he saw himself in five years’ time, he said that he did not want to leave his employer of eight years that had contributed to his pension. Instead of changing employers, he saw himself “[still] in the newsroom [but] playing a different role [in five years’ time]. I am looking for opportunities within broadcasting; I want to position myself in management” (personal communication, July 29, 2008). While I was still attending the same workshop at Wanderers, in another interview session, P17, a technician who had worked for the SABC for 13 years said, “I am moving towards middle management and I don’t mind going towards that at this stage; I believe there is going to be great opportunities especially with the digital equipment” (personal communication, July 30, 2008). Similarly, in addition, her ambition to become the director in the newsroom in Studio 11, P23, said,

I am known by management as a hard worker. I would like to be in a position where there are more responsibilities, like the director or I could get responsibility
such as managing OB; directing Ops [operations]; that is what I would like to do (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

It was important that these technicians chose to focus their energies on being promoted to management positions which indicate higher status than they held at the time. It was implied in their narratives that their job scope would increase and include managing and directing others. As discussed earlier in this chapter, an increased and reasonable scope of job responsibility satisfied some managers, thus reducing the intentions to leave. In contrast to the ambitions mentioned above, the South African ICT regulatory compliance division tended to hire personnel at the highest level from outside firms. The educational levels and roles of these participants were high, and P38 said that “basically the kinds of people who get into the ICT regulation are often lawyers and they’ve been trained, in the area of the law” (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

When I visited P29 and P30 at Cell-C, a wireless company that is based in Sandton, I was told that most of them had been brought in from private practice as commercial, corporate, and intellectual property lawyers. For example, P30 was an attorney and worked for the BCCSA until he joined the wireless company’s regulatory division (personal communication, August 8, 2008). P9 was an engineer who “started at Sentech [a signal distributor for the SA broadcasting sector] to allocate transmitter coordinates. In 2004 I moved to ICASA and was responsible for regulating spectrum” (personal communication, July 24, 2008). Seemingly, these jobs required individuals with higher levels of education and the highest inference of merit in the industry. P30 informed me that because there were only a few individuals with the regulatory skills, the sector
usually “recycles” the available experts, thus causing them to frequently change jobs for senior positions.

Almost all the ICT regulators who participated in this study left ICASA even though the regulator still needed their skills. Respondent P29 had two masters’ degrees in intellectual property and corporate law and was appointed as a policy advisor to one of the ICASA counselors. She left her job when she did not feel secure after the employer raised a discussion around the role of the advisors. She said that

The minute people [at ICASA, previous employer] started raising the question about do we need these positions [of legal advisors], then naturally, people started feeling vulnerable and wondered do I [still] have job security? (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

She opted to resign and became a senior officer of Cell-C, her current employer.

The environment of insecurity and uncertainty at ICASA prompted people to look for other job alternatives. As P29 told me, most of these professionals had other skills in other areas beyond ICT regulation and could go elsewhere since their education could help them determine their value to the labor market.

I also observed that at the middle management level, ICT professionals were ambitious to attain higher levels of IT management and to have positions that offered more responsibilities as well as some adventure and chance for exploration. Professionals at this level looked for jobs inside and outside their organizations. P5’s story offered a greater examination of his search for a management position when his previous employer couldn’t offer him one. P5 left his previous employer of more than 10
years to become Head of the Camera Division in another TV station because of his aspirations, to be in management:

In terms of camera, the growth pattern is very limited; from a cameraman, then you become a manager but it takes a long time [before one gets promoted]. I wanted to run this place; I wanted to be on the business side of TV (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

If it took a long time to be promoted, professionals left for organizations that recognized their ambitions; it was important that employers became aware of employee’s promotional ambitions and decide how they could meet them if they wanted to retain them.

*Titles as an Indication of Mastery of Certain Technologies*

While I recognized that some people wanted promotions that indicated their level of education and long experience in the sector, I realized that others wanted the titles that indicated their mastery of certain technologies and the recognition of expertise that comes with the titles. P19, a specialist final controller at the FCC, was offered a senior position after he left his other job in Durban. He was saddened by the fact that even after he made such a crucial effort to master various broadcast technologies and was expected to train other technicians, he was not rewarded to his satisfaction. He enrolled for further training specific to broadcast engineering. He said,

I wanted to learn more and started reading on my own for years. I worked for the SABC for 13 years, from radio to TV. I worked with other international broadcasters like the BBC. I also did OB stuff; I was part of the process that approved the IBM to provide training to upgrade the technologies and systems in
my department and we have a new automation system (NAS); I was involved in testing and implementing and training others on NAS. I also represent[ed] the FCC in all meetings concerning not only the technical matters but also the general operations [but] after my efforts to get recognition by studying and learning everything, I still did not get promotions. I thought it [promotion] was taking too long. Then I was identified and my title changed to a Specialist Technical Final Control [and was unhappy for] not getting recognized for input. [In fact], I have changed titles about three times in this organization (personal communication, July 31, 2008).

P19 still felt that his rewards did not match his specialist title. Enthusiastic about working hard, he emphasized his efforts to enroll in training and development, his experience working with local and international broadcasters, and his mastery of the technology. However, the title changes further fed his frustrations about his employer’s lack of recognition. The interviews indicated that the internal factor of promotion satisfied a significant need for enhancing self-esteem and was a valuable incentive and brake on labor market job turnover. If organizations failed to realize and acknowledge efforts that technicians made to develop themselves, employers were likely to lose such employees.

Recognitions from Management

Most notable about South African ICT technicians’ description of compensation was how many of them repeatedly wanted recognition and simple appreciation for what they did for the companies they worked for. According to the interviews and some observations, junior technicians felt frustrated when supervisors were silent about the
work done by technicians. Promotion was a form of recognition. P24 left previous employers when he came to feel that there was no appreciation of his work in the form of promotion. He said “I wanted to grow but there was no appreciation” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). In the same context, throughout my conversation with P35 at the SABC, he could not mask that he felt hurt, isolated and angry with senior management at his workplace. During our discussions he told me,

I find that having the management in a big corporation is hard to get anything done or be noticed because I have been working here for almost four years and there is no advancement. We always seem to be separated from the rest of the SABC and we get forgotten about; yet we are up at the helm and obviously we’ve chosen to tell them it’s nice to act or appear that some people prefer up there (pointing at the tall buildings of the SABC) not a workshop. At the same time, it’s a lot of work expected to be done and especially if you are not moving in the ladder then we feel the motivation lost. If you do well for so many years and get nowhere you will lose your motivation (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

There was something in P35’s story which I could relate to. Although P35’s craving for promotion and his outbursts about recognition, anger and hostility dominated his narrative, that is how a person who felt forgotten would react. He was hurting and definitely not enjoying what he perceived as unfair treatment in his job. My view of life is that people should be treated fairly. I understood that it was fair treatment (and not feeling isolated or separated from the rest of the company) that P35 was longing for. Similar to my views about concise and clear employment policies, P35 relied on
communicative employment policies that clarified who gets what, when and how. Fairness could mean that policies and decisions are properly explained to people, rather than just sidelined. That openness to staff goes a long way and can win loyalty. P36’s views that ‘policies are intentionally designed’ to keep or chase away some people kept returning to me. P35 might have to stay in this position for the next 10 years (like P19’s colleagues) if he did not make swift decisions. P34 agreed that without any consideration for promotions, technicians found that “you are stuck on one place if you are a technician” (personal communication, August 12, 2008), implying that their chances for career advancement at OB were limited.

I realized that the attitude of people in management affects workers and makes them wish to leave their jobs. Many technicians that I spoke with claimed that their senior managers did not know what the employees’ jobs entailed. For the most part, respondents who mentioned the recognition from management as a factor that could make them leave cited poor relationships between managers and other employees. They repeatedly mentioned senior managers’ absence of interpersonal skills. When I met with P27 at his job, he informed me that he believed that recognition from management included talking to employees about simple things like family, entertainment, or what they wanted to participate in as well as promotion. He remarked,

The other thing [that supervisor should do] is to acknowledge that people are important. I have known of situations where you work for a department and the manager makes time just to have a chat with you, not anything that is work-related. Just to know more about you [such as asking one] how’s life at home? If they have kids, how are they doing, if you enjoy sport; all those things. They can
be very important and they make you feel like you’re being appreciated. But if you work in an environment where you just come as a stranger, do what you are supposed to do, go home, come back, get your salary, I mean it’s not taking us anywhere. Bottom line is important but we are human as well (personal communication, August 7, 2008).

Interviews revealed that SA ICT technicians appeared to be anxious about promotions if the following two factors occurred: uncertainty and duration. Uncertainty about promotion was significant because if employees did not have information about when they would move up, they were likely to look elsewhere for other senior positions. Duration refers to the time it took before one could get promoted. The longer it took these individuals to be recognized by management, the harder it became for them. I discovered that these two key factors determined whether promotions were feasible for young junior technicians. According to explanations from participants, it was my understanding that uncertainty related to a lack of clarity about what would happen to the technicians. For example, junior technicians who were ambitious and adventurous were much more likely to leave if they did not know for certain that they would be promoted. Looking at a talented and articulate respondent like P27, who left his job because he wasn’t certain whether he would ever be promoted by his employer, I wondered how his employers could not recognize the intelligence that I instantly saw in P27. When I met with him at his job, P27 was a final control producer at the FCC where his main responsibility was to oversee the entire transmission of SABC 2 programs for three years during his work shift,

After three years, I felt that I needed growth in my career. When I looked into my career path, I felt like working as FCC was exciting, but it’s a kind of dead-end
career where you are going to work for 5 to 10 years as a producer, so I decided to apply to news, knowing that with news there’s a bigger scope of growth [than at the FCC]. I joined the SABC News International and my immediate supervisor [at the FCC] felt like I was sort of back-stabbing them and stuff like that [when I left] because they made me believe that they had so many things, they had plans around me but the thing is I also needed growth, so I had to be bad to other people in order to progress in life (personal communication, August 7, 2008).

It wasn’t until I had met a few of the respondents that I realized that most often, it was the fear of not knowing whether one would ever be promoted, even if one spent a long time with the same employer, that caused the professionals anguish. The anxiety was greater than with a certainty, even if the known result were perceived as a negative one. For example, P5 was the senior cameraman at the SABC News International. When his employer discovered that he was leaving to join the new TV station for a higher position, P5 said,

They told me that Peter Matlhare [the then CEO of the SABC] did not want me to leave. Only then did they want us to talk about my future but it was too late. They told me you won’t last for a year and things like that. I said, I will cross that bridge when I get there. I am young and I know what I am doing. And I told them, I could remember telling him, you know what, even if it’s [the new TV station] going to close down in 6 months at least I will hold my head high to say that I tried. So, that’s how I ended up here (personal communication, July 17, 2008).
The internal influence on labor market turnover of uncertainty about promotion was significant as well because if employees did not have information about when they could move up, they were likely to look elsewhere for other senior positions. What all this suggested to me was the need to understand what promotion means to individual workers, since the concept means different things to different people. Precise understanding of applying it to specific interests of workers may reduce the actual turnover.

If employers took a long time before one could get promoted, then it could result in dissatisfaction and lead to intentions to leave. The longer it takes these individuals to be recognized by management, the harder it becomes for them. Being given routine technical responsibilities that last only two years while they were still learning to master the job might be mildly distressing, but, on the other hand, as their skills developed, doing the same job for periods lasting up to four years might be agonizing. As shown in the narratives above, most technicians could tolerate short periods of uncertainty in a job; however, if the wait came before they could achieve what was important to them, they would look for other career options that were more promising to them. The duration and uncertainty factors were demonstrated by P19’s impatience with his previous employer in Durban.

P19 left his job in KZN because people who had worked for the same employer for more than 10 years had remained in their same positions. P19 did not want to wait that long before he could be promoted, so he moved to a much larger city to explore other avenues. When asked why he left his previous job in Durban, he responded, “There were colleagues [of mine] who had worked for more than 10 years in Durban before they could
be promoted and I thought it was taking too long; so that’s is why I left for
Johannesburg” (personal communication, July 31, 2008). This delay was a push factor on
labor market turnover. Through their candid arguments, the respondents had
demonstrated their unmet desires that led to their intentions to leave. But it became clear
that fringe benefits and promotions alone fell short to retain professionals. I was not
surprised that money would be one of the most significant drivers of turnover for ICT
professionals.

Remuneration

Money was by far the most important internal labor market job turnover factor
with regards to organizational rewards systems, and even with regards to the social
networks or job dissatisfaction. The day I visited P23 and conducted three other
interviews at the SABC, all participants were articulate, very bright, and had a good grasp
of finance. Pay was usually the first, and typically, the primary reward that most
respondents considered and placed the highest value on. P23, an assistant director of TV
news at the SABC, left her technical job at the bank for more money. During my
conversation with P23 in the visitors’ lounge, the respondent told that “money is one
thing that motivates me. I left [the previous employer] because there was little money; I
wanted to maintain my lifestyle [after her divorce]” (personal communication, August 5,
2008). I found that most professionals, in particular, were interested in the actual rands
they make in exchange for their work. There was no doubt that monetary benefits were
important to the ICT workers, and internal constraints on payments such as salaries scales
were highly considered. Almost all the participants in this study were dissatisfied with
their salaries, and for some technicians, money served as motivation and triggered an
intention to leave. A further example was from P17 whose salary was increased when he wanted to leave but even after he got salary increment from his employer, he said, “I am never always fully satisfied” (personal communication, July 30, 2008). The now overused phrase, “show me the money,” applies to South African information and communication professionals.

_Salary Conflict between Freelancers and Fulltime Employees_

On that same trip, when I left the SABC, I had spoken to full-time employees and freelancers. It had been revealed to me that dissatisfaction with money was related to two factors: (1) varying compensation scales within the organization, and (2) mismatch of salary and performance or job title. The answers struck me like a thunderbolt. I remembered the resentment of P35, a 25-year-old permanent employee in Airtime against freelancers. Free agents were paid much more than the permanent staff, a situation which had created some resentment between the two groups. This meant that technicians’ salaries were not an issue of contention with the employer alone but among employees as well. He was frustrated and couldn’t hide his upset. He explained,

The [compensation] scales are all wrong [between permanent and freelance technicians]. People come in below [in the organizational hierarchy] you with no experience yet they are earning the same if not more than people who have been here for 5, 10, to 15 years. There’s a lot of friction between the two groups because permanent people say that we look after their tracks; we do all these things: we make sure to check everything and freelancers just come; don’t do things yet they are paid much more than we get as permanent staff. Freelancers
just come in to get salaries. I think that’s where the friction starts (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

I felt a sudden desire to ask P35 why he was angry with the freelancers and not the employer, but I waited for him to tell his story. On the afternoon of the same day, I walked to the next building to meet with P24. During our discussion, I immediately detected his resentment of full-time employees. He also indicated to me that part of his job that made him unhappy was dealing with some permanent employees. I was so curious to ask him about what sounded to me like the sour relationships between freelancers and others. I mentioned to him that I sensed tension and lack of team spirit in their relationship. However, freelancers such as Respondent P24 were not intimidated by views such as P35’s and admitted the following:

As freelancers we are always looking for money. Since I am not permanently employed, I am free to leave any time. If someone from outside gives me a better offer, I will grab it. One thing they know of a freelancer is that he can work anywhere; we are not here to stay. They [permanent staff] think we make more money because of what they know goes to the bank but they forget that freelancers don’t have medical aids and other benefits that permanent people get, but the fact that they see certain amount of money going into your account, it’s a problem. That’s the nature of how things work around here and it creates tension and at some point you cannot get around it and have a good relationship with your supervisor [permanent employees put in charge] while being a freelancer (personal communication, August 5, 2008).
That was precisely the major problem these two groups had: openness about compensation led to resentment. And remember what P23 told us about her motivation for money: By her thinking, she had reasoned with her employers so carefully about becoming a free agent instead of a full-time employee. It all made perfect sense for someone who wanted to see a big balance in her bank account. I recognized her persuasiveness in Studio 5 during our conversations. P23 was employed on a contract basis at the SABC News editorial desk. When she heard that the employers wanted to give permanent work, she decided to be a free agent. She stated,

I now work here as a freelancer because they were trying to make us full-time. We make more money as freelancers than those who are employed fulltime. Everyone wants to be a freelancer because it means more money coming to you. We are freelancers, so, the more jobs you get the more jealous people get. So, hm, [there was a little hitch in P23’s voice], people step on one another (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

Freelancers made up an element of the turnover issue that benefited both themselves and the employers who needed temporary workers. They were seen as interlopers by some regular employees who were more likely to move because of perceived pay inequities. It was important to be aware of the problems of compensation that can be exacerbated by knowledge of what the co-workers were earning and lead to dissatisfaction if earnings were perceived lower relative to the other co-workers.

I looked back to P35’s earlier interview as he described the remuneration issues at his employers. The scene was one of the most startling, I’d ever imagined. There was P35, nose quivering, tears close to running down his face, wondering if his services to the
organization were worthy of the sacrifice he was making. He was plagued by the questions that overwhelm most of us: “Am I worth what I am getting here? Does my salary match my performance or even the job title?” He said, “Sometimes I wonder even if saving this corporation is worth it” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). In relation to performance, many believed that professionals should be paid more for what they did. Technicians felt that the employers expanded their job responsibilities without matching the new performance with a raised income. There was a general feeling among junior technicians that the supervisors passed their job responsibilities to younger professionals without any salary increment. Others questioned the logic of working too hard for the ICT companies that did not compensate them well. There was consensus that the job responsibilities did not match the compensation these professionals earn. For instance, P35 had worked for one employer for about four years and was usually asked to supervise others (the OB crew) on location but was not compensated for those extra responsibilities. He said that he was discouraged and sometimes asked himself the following:

Why am I putting so much into the company if I am getting back peanuts? It’s hard to be noticed because I have been working for almost four years and I am on the salary I came in on; there is no advancement. I am on a training technician salary but I am expected to manage a crew to do all the technical work, everything, but I am still on a training technician’s salary which is about 8.5 thousand [rand] take home, I mean it’s a lower rate. That’s why I considered just getting my experience here and then moving on to another company (personal communication, August 12, 2008).
P34, another technician who worked closely with P35, agreed:

We work a lot here; I have done a lot here like organizing everything a senior person would do. Most of my duties are a senior person’s duties because I do everything but we don’t get compensated as much. Moneywise, this is not the happiest place to work. They are not paying us well (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

The salary was a frequent point of contention and a primary push factor among the respondents in the course of their decisions to change jobs and became part of the internal labor market turnover. Overtime was another pay issue. There was a moment of rebellion for unpaid overtime, and ICT professionals had final objections to that as well. I spoke with many OB technicians who were dissatisfied with their salaries and felt they had to work overtime to make up for what was perceived as insufficient base salaries. P31 said, “I try to make up with the overtime that we get here” (personal communication, August 11, 2008). His colleagues, including P35 asserted: “I need overtime to pay my bills. If I don’t have overtime, I can’t pay my bills” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). Those technicians whose overtime was earned stayed longer with their employers, and those who did not have that option looked for alternatives such as changing jobs. Nevertheless, paying for overtime varied from organization to organization. P11, who did not get any overtime at ETV, was aggravated and said, “I would just like to be compensated for the overtime we work a lot of times here” (personal communication, July 25, 2008). It was clear that dissatisfaction resulting from the employer’s failure to meet employees’ pay expectations could cause turnover.
Summary

Many internal labor market influences arose within the work place. These motivated ICT workers to either remain in their jobs or move to other employment. Chapter 4 considered research questions RQ1 and RQ2 presented in Chapter 1. RQ1 related to: how do the social networks of South African ICT personnel influence others in work groups to terminate their employment? RQ2 was what impact do organizational reward systems have in South African ICTs on job satisfaction? It became clear from the conversations with the participants that social networks have a great impact on job turnover of ICT staff.

The primary themes in the area of the utilization of the social networks were friends and family, tertiary institutions and the workplace. Among the three factors of social networks that were influential to voluntary job turnover in the ICT sector in South Africa, professionals utilized various networks accessible to them. First, family and friends played a critical role in encouraging people to stay or leave their jobs. Family crisis and responsibilities were most often abrupt and unplanned, and that forced some ICT professionals to leave their jobs to attend to their family responsibilities. Pressure from spouses also contributed to the departure of the professionals to look for alternative jobs. However, older generations encouraged their children to keep and stay in their jobs although with less success in most cases. Consequently, parents’ influence did not have greater impact on retention because of conflicting values and beliefs among parents and their children about the realities of the job markets. Instead, tertiary affiliations were more helpful than family in job placements among ICT professionals in South Africa. Through internships, the technical colleges supplied employers with graduates who had
necessary expertise for entry-level jobs and that assisted many first-generation college graduates who would have otherwise found it difficult to get to the job market on their own. That entrance to the workplace gave young ICT professionals opportunities to practice what they learned in college and also increased their industry networking. For instance, affiliations that developed during college years resulted in contacts that ICT professionals utilized to get information about IT jobs in the labor market. Third, industry affiliations had the strongest influence on turnover, especially people who had jobs were more helpful in placing others, particularly if the recommenders have some influence on hiring and promotion decisions.

It was discovered in this study that job turnover could also be exacerbated by human resource issues of hiring, career development procedures, promotional decisions of employees, and compensation. It emerged that job dissatisfaction resulted from job scope and lack of employee loyalty, and the most important factor, what the literature usually refers to as the organizational rewards systems, information about the employees’ dissatisfaction with compensation such as promotions, fringe benefits, and remuneration.

I found that jobs in the ICT sector could be categorized into three levels: management, intermediate and junior levels. Each level had a job scope within which employees could perform their tasks. The job responsibilities required at each level varied according to one’s expertise, educational qualifications and job experience. However, I discovered that there were two scenarios of workload that affected turnover: underload and overload. It became evident that except for the senior ICT managers, many intermediate and junior technicians’ jobs required either too much to perform, which resulted in burnout, or doing too little, which resulted in boredom. For instance,
respondents in management attributed greater satisfaction with their jobs to the wider scope of their responsibilities, while intermediate level employees’ responsibilities were at times too demanding and tiring. Junior employees’ workload entailed doing too little or primarily routine jobs which were unexciting. Boring jobs led to dullness and tedium that made them develop low job morale. As a result, less satisfaction was obviously a factor in job turnover.

It also became clear that dissatisfaction resulted from a lack of employee loyalty. Self-interest was the priority for ICT professionals and they felt no responsibility for loyalty to their employers. This was a huge contributory factor that normalized turnover and turned it into a culture that was acceptable in the sector. Employees associated commitment as a two-way process, where employers’ commitment was assessed on the ILMs that the company offered. This was the finding of the present study that employees’ psychological contract with the employers had significantly shifted, and some level of distrust had developed. With the high rates of lay-offs and restructuring by most IT companies, employees seemed to have more duty to self and then friends and peers than employers. Employers’ lack of commitment to invest in staff’s training and development was taken as a sign that they preferred to hire from outside the organization and that sparked the employees’ intentions to leave and added to the turnover problem.

Finally, organizational rewards systems were by far the most important to the ICT employees. Any deficiency, perceived or actual, of the expected compensation made them contemplate leaving their jobs. The focus was on three organizational incentives: fringe benefits, career opportunities through promotions and remuneration. Fringe benefits in most IT companies were based on seniority and younger ICT professionals
were continually looking for ICT employers whose benefits would include cars, cell phones and stock ownership plans. They also wanted to be compensated for the seniority of their positions and mastery of certain technologies. It became clear that professionals made decisions based on the benefits that came with employment packages, and this spurred them to act on their ambitions.

Remuneration was deemed the most important of many internal labor market factors in South Africa’s ICT job turnover situation. Most professionals were interested in the actual rands they make in exchange for their work. The internal constraints on payments such as salary scales were highly considered, and most professionals were dissatisfied with their salaries. As a result, those who got lower salaries were in constant fights with the freelancers who were perceived to be doing less work yet making more money. Openness about compensation led to resentment.

This chapter covered the effects of social networks and compensation of ICT workers in job turnover. The primary internal labor market job factors that influenced turnover are discussed. These included family, tertiary and industry affiliations. Moreover, job dissatisfaction which resulted from job scope, disloyalty by both employers and employees, turnover culture and other forms of compensation such as fringe benefits, promotions and remuneration encouraged job turnover in the ICT sector.
CHAPTER 5: EXTERNAL LABOR MARKET JOB TURNOVER FACTORS

Affirmative Action

When I left South Africa in 2002, developments were underway to include previously disadvantaged groups in the labor market. I was curious about learning about the changing work environment from friends and ex-colleagues and interested to know about their employment opportunities in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector. Thabo Mbeki, the president of South Africa at the time, was regarded as the mastermind behind Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), a government policy that promotes new opportunities for Black people to assume new positions in various industries and take on control on economic activities in all the sectors. He was also a strong supporter for women’s employment in various sectors, including the ICT. When the South African economy was affected by poor general delivery of services and lack of meritorious employment of Blacks and women, the failures of Affirmative Action (AA) were blamed on the Mbeki administration and the African National Congress (ANC). South Africa’s handling of AA which required that Blacks, women, and disabled people were given preference in employment infuriated various racial and gender groups, who claimed that AA was flawed and implemented irresponsibly. People were anxious about jobs that were given to people and to designated groups even when they did not have the relevant skills and experience.

Of major concern was the continuing emigration of skilled White professionals to the West. An extraordinarily large number of the White ICT professionals who were in South Africa (SA) intended to leave. Media reports claimed that the ANC government
was giving jobs to unskilled and unqualified friends, and some of the participants in this
study told me that

comrades [one associated with the ruling party, the ANC and the liberation
struggle] who knew nothing about information and communications technologies
were offered positions which placed them in strategic positions to control
resources such as tenders and pass them on to friends and families (P17, personal
communication, August 7, 2008).

This led to further corruption and misallocation of resources on, for example,
consultants, because some senior officials did not know how to carry out their jobs.
Although the sector still had some skilled and qualified professionals, they were sidelined
by BEE and/or AA.

When I returned to South Africa in 2008, I observed more anger and resentment
among the White males and even some Black professionals. The Colored and Asian
males were, at best, excluded from the promotions. I found this to be true with some
young White males, but I wasn’t surprised because they were not a designated group.
There were also media reports from the *Mail & Guardian Online about the* Employment
Equity commissioner Jimmy Manyi that South African companies managed by White
males preferred to employ White women, rather than Blacks, in middle management
(SAPA, October 25, 2008). Manyi said that “being Black is not good enough. There is a
serious problem with White gatekeepers at companies who do not see the merit in Blacks.
People only see merit in people who look like them” (Manyi, October 1, 2007). If these
companies wanted to hire Blacks at all, Black males were given preference over Black
females. Although this segmentation of gender and race reflected the inclination of
people to associate with those most like themselves, this practice was highly divisive and marginalized some groups. This situation has had a major impact on how professionals viewed AA in the ICT sector in South Africa.

This chapter addresses RQs 3 and 4, whose overarching theme relates to the external labor market (ELM) considerations that affect the labor workforce. As stated earlier, ELMs are the labor situations that take place in the general operating environment outside the employing organization but likely to affect operations of the companies in the area. First, this chapter provides a brief history of AA in South Africa and address how AA alters the movement of people from job to job. It also discusses the changing profiles of the ICT workers through gender and racial distributions and the possible benefits and detriments of AA. Second, the chapter reports on the new recruitment forces that operate in hiring practices and third, reports on how neo-liberal economic reform policies in the South African ICT sector altered the mobility of workers through increased competition for professionals. Finally, the chapter outlines the technological trends and their effect on turnover in the ICT workforce.

History of Affirmative Action in SA

According to Leonard (1995), racial categories in South Africa were generated by the apartheid government. Apartheid, an Afrikaans word which loosely translates to “apartness,” was a system of racial segregation peculiar to South Africa prior to 1994 (Smith, 1990; Ramamurthi, 1995). For nearly five decades under the apartheid system, South African law divided the population into racial categories: Africans, Coloreds, Indians, and Whites. In fact, several laws that segregated people on the basis of race governed all the spheres of life. Opportunities and political and social rights were
determined by which racial group a person belonged to. According to Leonard (1995) it was viewed “unwise” to integrate “Black people” into business if they were not integrated in government (p.64). Moreover, according to Verwoerd “there is no place for the native in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor” (Kallaway, 1984, p. 92).

Prior to 1994, women of all races were also unprotected by laws and were denied jobs and educational opportunities on the basis of their gender (Kongolo and Bojuwoye, 2006). Until 1991 when the apartheid laws were repealed, the country's racial divisions were strictly enforced as part of the government's official policy of separateness. As a result, racial and gender discrimination in South Africa prior to the elections in 1994 resulted in animosity and huge disparities regarding job opportunities for historically disadvantaged persons in the labor market (Greef & Nel, 2003). Moreover, Van de Walt (1994) and De Beer (1998) suggested that the primary belief was that such workers would not be able to function independently, and, therefore, needed someone who “knew best” (Leonard, 2005, p. 64). Although the new government has taken on the responsibility for speeding up the transformation in the country, to rectify the racist imbalances and put SA on the road to global competitiveness (Leonard, 2005, p.1), these infamous laws had profound effects on labor relations in SA. Barker (1993) was of the opinion that because of the history of discrimination in South Africa, inequalities between different race groups were especially pertinent particularly between different men and women and between those with a job and those without (p. 23). As a result, the effect of statutory discrimination will still be felt for a long time, and the impact of
apartheid can still be seen in the inequalities in the distribution of skills between the White and Black population groups (Greef & Nel, 2003, p.27).

Consistent with this view, an analysis based on recent research by James, Smith, Roodt, Primo and Evans (2006) on South Africa’s ICT labor market painted an unequal and disproportionate picture regarding race and gender. These researchers found that of people who held senior management positions in ICTs, 85% were White males, 10% were White females, and 5% were African males; no African women held senior management positions. Moreover, James, et al. (2006) reported that female employment in South Africa was still low relative to the males. For example, a few Blacks were visible in management positions while White males and females held senior positions in the labor market. Explanations for these inequitable patterns had focused on differences in individual attributes, such as job skills, education and other factors among various SA ethnic groups, and on blatant discrimination by employers, as shall be seen later in this chapter. White males still dominated the ICT sector because of their long-standing experience and expertise in various technical industries, which could be the result of South African employment policies propagated by the JRA of 1954 and separate education for South Africans.

_The Changing Profiles of the ICT Workers_

When I walked into the Neotel (also known as the SNO) offices in Woodmead, Johannesburg, I observed fairer representation of the SA demographics than I would have seen a little more than a decade ago. I met P14, a 38-year-old Indian woman, who was a Regulatory Manager for the SNO. I had met P14 for a brief period the previous week when I was introduced to her by a mutual friend in the regulatory division. As P14
walked me from the reception area to her office, I commented on the noticeable diversity
(Blacks and females) of the workforce. P14’s face crumpled, and a brief, awkward
silence followed. I was surprised by P14’s reaction because in South Africa the issue of
race is discussed openly and I did not understand why P14 was quiet. Raising her
eyebrows, she informed me that she was unenthusiastic with “quota appointments which
demean women who desire to be recognized for their capability” (personal
communication, July 28, 2008). I decided I should listen more and refrain from making
unnecessary comments. I was grateful when P14 explained to me her lack of enthusiasm
about diversity in her workplace. She said:

It’s all PR [public relations]; companies would do anything to be politically
correct. We are just tokens here. We don’t make any decisions, and these people
[pointing up on the level above the regulatory department] know that government
won’t make any followup. You’re treated like steam on the mirror that gets wiped
off. . . . Nobody checks and monitors if the information reported by employers to
the Department of Labor [DOL] is current (personal communication, July 28,
2008).

When I interviewed female participants in SA, many were highly articulate and
knowledgeable about the sector. I realized that women’s educational attainment was
increasing, but although some had obtained senior positions in management in
telecommunications regulation, their contribution to the labor market was restricted and
their input was often not taken seriously. In my encounter with P14 at Neotel, she told me
that even though she was a certified lawyer and a regulator in South Africa, her
employers [Neotel management from India] did not listen to her legal advice until her
male colleague offered the same advice to the operator. She was distraught that she had to
work through her male colleague to be heard. P14 was upset and wanted to leave, but so
far she had been loyal to P7, a male colleague who recruited her to come and help him set
up the new regulatory department for the company. She felt isolated from top managers
and had to seek companionship from colleagues who were experiencing the same
problems in other departments. If management considered her simply as window
dressing, the company was likely to lose P14 soon.

I understood P14’s cynicism and skepticism about women and Blacks’
employment. We’ve all been pushed aside, I thought I could also relate to her experience
of feeling like a token but the noticeable appearance of an ethnic majority was a clear
indication that gradual change was taking hold of the marketplace. The external influence
of AA, while increasing the demand and placement of underrepresented groups and
pressuring labor turnover, has also increased racial and gender representation among ICT
workers in SA. My own observations and documented evidence about ICT workers in
South Africa helped me to recognize the gradual change of workers’ profiles in the
sector, including job movements from groups that were left out by JRA. This was
achieved partly through the implementation of affirmative action.

It has been more than a decade since the EEA was passed in South Africa.
Increasing the number of Blacks and women in the South African labor force is the
purpose of the AA. The SA ICT sector has taken steps toward that end, but I was
informed during interviews with participants that some organizations have not been as
successful as others, because each firm complied at varying rates. For instance, the South
African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Independent Communications
Authority of South Africa (ICASA) were in unique positions since they were funded by the SA government; they had to be good examples of the implementation of the government policy. As a result, they had increased representation of the groups designated in the AA legislation. I was told that both the SABC and ICASA had been aggressively recruiting Blacks and females to increase their gender and racial group numbers as a way of advancing into the available Black and female markets as well. As a result of AA, there was a growing segment in the Black middle class, known as “Black diamonds,” a marketing research term used in South Africa to define the most affluent, progressive, market-friendly segment of the Black demographic (Charles Ash, Marketweb, personal communication, April 29, 2009). The term refers to Black South Africans (not Colored or Indian) who are wealthy, salaried in “suitable” occupations, well-educated, own homes, cars and [are] acquiring household goods, aspirations, confidence in self and future, and creditworthy, . . . there are now 2.6 million Black diamonds. The Black diamond group is worth R180-billion which makes up 28% of the total South African spend” (Jones, 2007).

Racial Distribution

Based upon an analysis of reports and prior studies, South African employers seemed to have difficulty balancing the issues of diversity. Previous research showed that the sector was still dominated by White males, followed by African males (Akoojee, et al., 2007). Because Black people had not been in managerial positions before, recent studies showed some slight changes; there was no doubt that Black men and women of all races were gaining ground in middle management and perhaps technical worker
positions as well. For instance, according to the Status of the SA Labor Market Report (2003), Black women and other Black male groups only became visible in middle management where the composition was as follows: 54% White males, 18% White females, 11% African males, 8% Colored males, 5% Indian males, 3% Indian females, and 1% African females (James, et al., 2006). These statistics showed a labor force segmented by race where there was a concentration of Blacks in middle management. It appeared that among Blacks, only African males seemed to have achieved the highest prospects of employment while Coloreds and Indians had the lowest representation. Coloreds and Indian male employment in senior management did not grow as much between 1998 and 2003 as it did with African males.

While there was evidence that the number of Blacks was increasing within the sector the racial composition of Blacks was greatly disproportionate and might be unsettling regarding fair representation of other racial groups. Table 5 indicates the racial distribution of ICT core workers and end-users in 2003. The ICT core jobs are technology related and among the high-paying ones; the ICT end-users’ jobs involved administrative support and minor ICT activities and were categorized by low pay (Akoojee, Arends, & Roodt, 2007).
Table 5 shows the racial groups as a percentage of the ICT core workers and end-users in 2003. It illustrates that the core ICT workers were still predominantly White males. However, Akoojee, et al., (2007) were quick to caution that “some interesting changes in the racial composition of the ICT workforce have occurred” (p. 23) since South Africa’s overthrow of the apartheid regime in 1994. Their historical analysis of the racial representation was that:

The figures [though not shown in this study] suggested that in 1994, Whites formed more than half (57.6 per cent) of the ICT workforce, while Blacks (Africans, Coloreds and Asians) comprised 42.4 per cent. However, in 2003, less than half (43.9 per cent) of the total ICT workforce (core plus end-users) was White while more than half (56 per cent) was Black. (Akoojee et al, 2007, p.23)
Other studies showed that some ICT professionals left the country to work overseas (Smith & Speight, 2006). Although these statistics do not explain why people left their jobs, these are the employment trends perpetuated by racial, gender, and class divisions among ICT workers, and statistics provided significant information on the status of the changing demographics of the ICT workforce in South Africa. Moreover, they highlight that some racial and gender groups have made inroads in the sector, which was not possible before. It was clear that employment numbers had increased and included other South African populations in the sector and this turnover pattern could be explained by AA implementation and other external labor market factors.

*Gender Distribution*

Eighty percent of the participants in this study were male and 20% were female. Other previous studies showed that the ICT sector in general saw the proportional increase of the core ICT workers in the labor force composition (from 9% in 1994 to 16.4% (n=182 800) in 2003) (Akoojee, Arends & Roodt, 2007, p.21). Table 6 shows a significant increase of ICT workers between 1994 and 2003.
Table 6

*ICT Workforce Compared to the Total Workforce, 1994 and 2003*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total ICT Workforce</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Workforce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed plus Unemployed</td>
<td>9 640 971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT Core Workers &amp; End-Users</td>
<td>960 319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core ICT Workers</td>
<td>86879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT End-Users</td>
<td>873 440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Akoojee, Arends, & Roodt, 2007

Table 6 is indicative of the apparent change in the South African ICT labor market. Accordingly, increases occurred between 1994 and 2003 in the sector. In fact, the more recent data from ISETT SETA (2005) estimated that in 2005 there were 201, 849 core ICT workers (cited by Akoojee, et al., 2007). That was a significant increase from the 2003 figure of ICT core workers (182, 800). Unlike in most other countries, where the racial minority groups are the most victimized and vulnerable in employment, the opposite is true in South Africa. Individuals from Black groups constituted around 80% of the population of South Africa, but earlier studies showed that these groups, including women of all races, suffered a considerable labor market disadvantage compared to the White minority community (Thomas, 2002; Kongolo & Bojuwuye,
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2006). AA influenced to some extent, the employment opportunities for women and Blacks to jobs in the ICT sector.

However, Table 7 shows that men still held a stronger share of the core ICT work opportunities than women in South Africa. The analysis of the figures illustrated the gender differences with the ICT core workers and end-users. It should be noted that the current study focused on the ICT core workers and not on the end-users because the core ICT jobs were technology related. The primary question, then is, Which gender group is disproportionately represented in ICT core workers? Why is it so? Table 7 may help explain the disparity in the ICT sector in SA.

Table 7

*Gender Distribution ICT Workers, 2003*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of ICT Workers</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICT Core Workers</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT End-Users</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Akoojee, Arends, & Roodt, 2007

Thus, the employment experience of women in the ICT sector has been limited: women participated in the South African workforce at a lower rate than males, and women were heavier end-users of the ICTs than men. In 2003, 76% of those doing core ICT work were men and only 24% were women. Although the participants for the current
study were not randomly selected, and therefore the results cannot be generalized, this study found that Black men had the largest representation of all the designated groups with 77% (43% African, 14% Colored, and 20% Indian). Clearly, within the SA ICT sector there seemed to be a disproportionate concentration of Blacks and women in the workforce. For instance, data in Table 7 were divided by gender to highlight differences in males’ and females’ employment patterns. Women were underrepresented in the ICT sector, particularly in ICT core work.

The data presented in Table 7 could reflect greater gender-role stereotyping for traditional female jobs, such as administrative ICT jobs. Even though only 20% of women participated in the current study, and their selection was by no means random, their access to ICT work may have been gendered, and there was still a lack of sufficient demographic diversity in the ICT sector. From previous studies it was apparent that women have shown some slight gains in their representation in ICT jobs but still fell behind men (James, et al., 2006). The invisibility of women in core ICT work reflects the social assumptions about the “maleness” of ICT, yet it is women who make up most of the end-users of these technologies. Information from other studies illustrated also that certain population groups were overrepresented in some occupations and underrepresented in others.

New Recruitment Practices

Many South African employers have for decades been accused of using employment methods that were deliberately discriminatory against some in the labor market. The ICT sector was no exception. For instance, AA provided mobility for women and Blacks and restricted mobility for White males. There was evidence from my several
interviewees that AA altered people’s movement from job to job. It became clear that Blacks and women wanted mobility and AA influenced professionals’ ability to move. P3, a Black female regulator who had changed jobs four times during the eight years of her career, endorsed the preferential implementation of AA for gender as well as race. Asked why she changed her jobs so frequently, she responded, “I am Black; I am a woman; and I know that if I compete with men I will be a preferred candidate because I am a Black woman” (personal communication, July 22, 2008). As I was listening to P3, I detected her sense of entitlement to some jobs and her knowledge that employers had to comply with AA. By her own account, she had been successful with that approach in accessing jobs. Among the Black women, AA had begun to serve as a steppingstone to other avenues, and it enabled them to use their race and gender to an advantage in changing jobs. P38, a female executive in regulation at the wireless company suggested that most South African companies were looking for skilled women, if they could find them:

Very seldom you have women who are actually economists or engineers [and] those are skills in very short supply, in terms of women. So, the minute you get a woman engineer, trust me, she won’t last at the Regulator [ICASA]; she’ll be snapped up instantly (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

This narrative implies that women are a demographic that employers needed to transform the sector and that could lead to voluntary job turnover. Many beneficiaries were enthusiastic and stressed that AA presented equal employment opportunities for everyone, but some agreed that they were employed partly because of their race or
gender. For instance, P6 was an Indian woman who believed that AA might have played a big role in her employment at ETV and that she was hired to

Balance the place because our assignment editor is a White man. I think [I was employed in a new job because] it’s 50% my skills and 50% that I am a Black woman, because to be honest with you I didn’t have the supertechnical background in TV news [which involved including graphics in news stories since she was a print journalist] and I was petrified [to come to ETV] but I got a job. That’s why I think AA played a role [in my employment] (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

Evidently, AA has, in some ways, influenced the job changing of women such as P6 because of the required preference given to the legislated groups. In fact, I came to realize that getting employment through preferential treatment was seen as fair to the legislated groups.

Black men also wanted mobility and some had left their jobs to acquire new ones. P7 left his job three times in his ten year tenure in the telecommunications sector and acknowledged that his departure from SATRA, ICASA, Transnet, and SNO were influenced in part by AA. P7 agreed that affirmative action was necessary: “I think it has to be in place because Africans have to be able to go into the mainstream of the economy, both from an employment and ownership point of view” (personal communication, July 22, 2008). Many participants did not explicitly say that they would easily find other jobs because of AA, but they acknowledged that it was a combination of AA and their skills. However, some Black males denied that they were beneficiaries of AA. They believed that they were appointed because of their skills rather than AA. Still, at the time of this
study, the shortage in the IT sector workforce was a powerful external influence on job turnover.

Almost all the industries that were part of this study lamented the shortage of skilled technical workers in their areas of operation. P10 provided an interesting explanation for the dearth of IT skills in South Africa. He said it began with the training institutions where the enrollment for IT subjects was low and training was long. A former development software professor at the University of South Africa, he said that “there is a shortage of IT learners,” and noted that even some of those available “are not skilled enough and a person needs to be trained, trained, and trained” (personal communication, July 25, 2008). It was implied that some of the enrolled students might not even be teachable and P10’s statement indicated that the Human Resources (HR) shortage in ICT began at the colleges and not just at the industry level. It would be impossible to get qualified professionals if the training institutions did not provide enough ICT graduates. P10’s arguments were supported by P12, an ICT administrator with engineering and communications degrees from India who recommended “there should be a lot of training centers to train people. There is lack of skills in South Africa in IT. People have to be employed because of the skills they have; [and] professionals have to be skilled people” (personal communication, July 25, 2008).

P10 remarks showed that employers were wary of the skills shortage in ICTs, especially among Blacks because certain designated groups had skills relevant only for entry and intermediate-level jobs. P7 told me that even when employers hired Blacks, there was often no skills transfer (capacity building imperative from those who have the expertise to the new employees) because “there’s always a revolving door where they just
come in and go” (personal communication, July 17, 2008). He observed that since AA was implemented, cases of job hopping and a sense of entitlement among designated groups had increased:

People have walked out their jobs because the sector does not struggle to draw and attract Black talent, but it also loses them rapidly. The problem with what happens then is that if you have got a revolving door of Black talent coming in and coming out, then it does not allow opportunities for sustainable skills transfer (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

This means that although AA might have opened up opportunities for some workers, it was creating turnover problems for employers. Many women and Blacks were skeptical that their employment opportunities would have improved without it. In my interview with P29, a White woman with a string of legal degrees, she indicated that she was not sure if she would be where she was had it not been for AA, although she believed that her professional training also impacted her employment (personal communication, August 8, 2008). It was clear from some White women and Black participants that AA was necessary in the workplace and they supported it, and some Black professionals agreed that it helped provide access to jobs that they would otherwise not have had.

There were other new hiring practices that were utilized by ICT professionals to access jobs. Although it could not be ascertained that AA was a key factor in the new hiring practices, the new employment conditions permitted unconventional methods to recruit workers. This situation was worsened by competitors who were desperate to employ those Blacks who had some work experience in ICTs. Seemingly, companies simply employed some AA candidates to comply with the labor legislation. This
unfortunate situation sometimes placed people without merit in positions. I was intrigued that professionals in various racial and gender groups raised different and conflicting opinions about the implementation of AA and turnover in the workplace. Individual perceptions of fairness, I came to see, varied; and ICT professionals reacted differently to different AA practices. For instance, AA received serious opposition when it emphasized what was perceived as preferential treatment for some. Many participants agreed that the EEA was necessary, provided it was implemented fairly and not seen as a tool for reprisals. It was accepted that the workforce needed to be representative of the South African demographics. For example, P16 was an African male technician at the SABC. He was of the opinion that AA “is a great disadvantage to the company because it ends up putting people [appointees] in the wrong fields because employers just want to meet the EEA goals” (personal communication, July 29, 2008).

This view suggests that employers sometimes filled positions with people whose career training was not in line with the jobs to which they were appointed. A mismatch of skills could be catastrophic to organizations, especially if it affected the performance of others. Restated by P31, it appeared that “unqualified people were being given jobs and the White folks were disqualified under affirmative action.” He added that if incompetent and unqualified people could be employed in his outside broadcast (OB) department, “I can easily leave, especially if the guy [new appointee] is my senior and he was incompetent” (personal communication, August 11, 2008).

Sometimes companies have no options but to hire those who have some level of knowledge and make a commitment to train them in-house. Non-beneficiaries of AA were also upset that AA candidates were promoted beyond their capabilities. P20, a
White male technician at the SABC who had to train new employees at Airtime, said that “affirmative action problems can eventually make a person leave. I get annoyed teaching people how to do things and, the next thing, they get promoted and I am left behind” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). It became clear that P20’s attempt to remain helpfully engaged, training other people, in spite of the hostile atmosphere in his department, had fatigued him. What was most draining about working for his employer was the sense of a lack of fair play and apprehension it bred about his job. Like P20, P21 felt animosity toward recruits from designated groups. He punished them by not fully training them. He reported that the work environment had deteriorated to the point of distrust, and there was no team spirit among some workers. Unlike P20, P21 decided he would not leave his job at the SABC because he did not trust that any other employer in SA could take him because of AA. P9, a Black general manager at Multichoice, retaliated against the resistance of White professionals who were reluctant to train Blacks, because the Whites were certain that Blacks “are going to take your job immediately” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). He reiterated that the kind of resistance displayed by those who refused to train the AA professionals was caused by misplaced insecurity that Blacks could not be trusted to run organizations. He added:

I guess old habits die hard. There is resistance instead of seeing the potential in people; that resistance is caused by misplaced insecurity. You know, there is the old mentality that Blacks are still inferior; that Blacks cannot be trusted to run organizations. I left ICASA for the same reason . . . they kept me in one position for more than four years, even though I had the most experience because they did
not think I could run the spectrum regulation department (personal communication, July 24, 2008).

Unlike P21, P20 was not proud of this action. He explained that he was angry and wanted to do something that would make his employer pay attention to his needs. He admitted that his behavior caused him tremendous stress. Throughout the interviews, many White technicians told me that the stress of trying to appear normal under circumstance where they had nothing positive to accomplish became tiring to the point that they wanted to leave their jobs. I realized that perceived unfairness of AA recruitment could lead to destructive and dysfunctional behavior. The need for vengeance reflected the tendency of people to hurt those most different from them, and this tendency seemed common among some Blacks and Whites, where technicians who had negative attitudes about AA continued the cycle of distrust which forced others to leave.

Referrals, rehiring, word-of-mouth, and walk-ins were recruitment practices used by professionals. Some informants were aware of the innovative hiring techniques that employers used during the shortage of skilled ICT professionals. The widespread competition enabled professionals to sell their skills in ways that were previously uncommon in the South African labor market. Thus, the longtime practice of waiting to be called for interviews by employers was changing. Professionals were becoming more proactive than ever before. P10 was not surprised, however, that ICT professionals frequently left their jobs because “jobs are easily available for IT specialists in South Africa. We are close and we share information [with other professionals] about job opportunities. We refer people we know to jobs that are available within the company” (personal communication, July 225, 2008). Similarly, P11, P10’s co-worker, agreed that
referrals were a common practice and that he got his current job through the help of his friends who were employed at ETV. This trend toward referrals worked both to satisfy ICT staffing needs and to push labor turnover. Nevertheless, other job searches emanated from rising competition, and the sector saw the continuing increase in other forms of interpersonal communications in the recruitment of ICT professionals. This new understanding of the mobility of employees led to new job search methods.

P5 was one of the most interesting participants in this study. His story was fascinating, he was humorous and he was a master storyteller. As I was revisiting his tapes and transcripts, I was reminded of P24, who left his first contract job because he knew that “word gets around so fast. We saw other people who were given permanent positions even though we had been there first” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). I wondered what happened to the common practice of companies advertised the vacant positions internally for their current workforce. It appeared that even when recruiters advertised, it was simply to follow the department of labor (DOL)’s requirements that all positions should be advertised in the media and be accessible to different job seeker groups. However, the normal practice among ICT professionals was to put in a “good word” for someone. This word-of-mouth method was one way ICT recruiters got the talent they wanted. P5’s story was a typical example of how recruiters got their employees:

I had just come back from the World Cup in France in 1998 [for the SABC]. Before I left for France, ICASA was in the process of issuing licenses and ETV had won a license. I was happy at SABC and was not really interested in the new station. I didn’t even know they [new station] had advertised jobs [but] one of the
guys there [at SABC], Victor, was going for an interview. So I said to him,

“Victor, let me just go with you; I’ll wait for you in the car.” When we arrived there, Victor was going in and said, “Come, you will wait for me by the reception.” While waiting for Victor someone came and asked me, “Are you also coming for an interview?” I said, no, I did not even know that you had vacant positions, I was overseas. But then I said, maybe while waiting you could give me five minutes of your time, and he said “OK, come, come quickly.” I had to sell myself in five minutes. He did not even ask me the [usual] interview questions. I just told him this is who I am; this is what I can do, and all those kinds of things. [P5 looked at me and smiled in disbelief.] They called me and I was then given a good offer. It was three of us from the SABC that they got because we had television experience (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

In another face-to-face, word-of-mouth example, P28 was a technician who simply walked into the premises of the new station and told someone what he could do:

“There was a new channel coming up and [I knew] they needed people. I actually visited their offices searching for a job [and] so they took me” (personal communication, August 7, 2008). It seemed that due to understaffing in most ICT departments, technicians knew that their job searches would not take too long before they could be employed. But not all ICT professionals were as bold and proactive as P5 and P28 about approaching potential employers.

Although most broadcasters still focused on the business of broadcasting, they realized the importance of reaching an audience which was gradually moving to the Internet. They wanted to follow that audience. Companies needed technicians who could
master online technologies. No technician wants to be left behind in the information age. So, instead of sending their engineers for further training, employers in South Africa allowed them to resign their positions to learn about new technologies in other industries with the intent of rehiring them. We usually hear of managers who become happy if their unproductive employees leave their jobs, but to discharge a competent worker to work for competition was unheard of. I was surprised that employers could encourage that, but I was informed by P8.1 that approved the leave for P8.2 to give him an opportunity to learn about new technologies.

ETV released their news reporter to work for CNN Africa; and the Group’s News Editor wanted to bring the reporter back. P4, who is also the manager, told me the following:

There’s one particular individual, Phila Mabuza, who’s gone, she’s gone [and] she’s now, CNN Africa correspondent. For her it was the appeal of working for a big global network [like] CNN. [She is] still very loyal to this company [referring to EVT]. In fact, myself and Deborah Patter have been in discussions with her about coming back, within a three-year period, and taking a senior management position here (personal communication, July 17, 2008).

These are just a few examples of the rehiring strategy used by this company to hire experienced people who had exposure to different companies but cannot be found easily in the South African ICT labor market.

Some employers took risks discharging their workers to work for competitors with the objective of rehiring them. This rehiring pattern seemed to be more prevalent among TV stations and ICT regulators. I interviewed P8.2 and his supervisor, P8.1,
together in one of the ETV studios in Johannesburg. When asked why he left and came back to ETV, P8.2 answered:

The reason I left [in 2003], was not that I was unhappy or anything. In fact, I was very happy here. The Jo’burg operation was a lot smaller then. It’s a huge operation now and ETV was a different company then. At that point I was bored and there was nothing exciting happening in Johannesburg. I went because I wanted to get some experience. I was consulting for Transnet. I got some experience and in 2005 I came back to ETV. I learned a lot and when the time came, he [pointing to his boss at ETV] told me he wanted me back and I’ve been here since then (personal communication, July 23, 2008).

His manager P8.1 agreed and added:

I forced him to come back because I trust him. The thing is, in key operations, I would say you stick with the devil you know, especially when you need to get things done. He has been working with me for years and he’s a product of all my hard work (personal communication, July 23, 2008).

Despite the fact that employers had initiated the release of the workers with the aim of those workers learning new technologies from the competition, there was a price to be paid. Complicating the situation for employers, the technicians soon realized that they could demand higher compensation when they were rehired. In fact, the employees came back for rehire and stepped into senior positions on their own terms. The technicians’ perception of their rehire involved new negotiated packages and job scope. Technicians could accept or deny the new terms of employment, but most often they were offered higher positions.
When employees realized that employers would take them back therefore, they intentionally left their jobs (even without managements’ help) for higher compensation and then come back to their former employers to demand salaries higher than those offered by their current jobs. P34 was a junior technician at the OB and he was planning to use that similar strategy of leaving and coming back to his employer to be rehired and then demand a higher salary than he was getting. He said:

There is no career progress in here; one gets stuck in one place and if I don’t complain and fight I will still get the same salary for the next 10 years. So, I have decided to leave. It’s frustrating [but] I think maybe I should go to MNET, work there for one year, and then come back here (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

It was such elements of discontent and practical matters that technicians left, learned other technologies and then challenged their previous employers to rehire them on a much higher compensation. There was a sizable number of ICT workers in each of the main South African ICT centers of Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban, and still more were spread out around the country. Still, within their specialties and locations, subgroups external to the workplace effectively offered job information by word-of-mouth. This situation enhanced the opportunities for changing jobs and thus affected turnover.

*Drawbacks of Affirmative Action*

Affirmative action, I came to realize, is a classic example of an external labor market turnover factor. I thought that the EEA, which is the legislation behind affirmative action, would genuinely redress the inequalities of the workplace until I became aware of
the negative emotions expressed by others. I changed my views about this legislation. Although it was well intended, I found the implementation of AA to impact negatively on individuals and the ICT sector. Only a few participants supported AA and admitted that it had been beneficial to their access to jobs they would never have gotten under the JRA in the ICT sector.

For instance, AA puts a premium on hiring qualified Black people. However, hiring fully trained and skilled Black professionals cannot be achieved immediately because of the shortage of skilled professionals especially among designated groups. The Black professionals needed training. Employing some of who did not have required job competency led to severe criticism of the legislation and triggered others’ intentions to leave their jobs. This study found that AA drove hiring practices and turnover. “Abuse” was a concept that came up repeatedly in the in-depth interviews and in newspapers reports. The term was most often used without being explicitly explained. It seemed to refer to improper hiring practices that placed unqualified people in positions of power and overlooked others who were qualified for promotions. In addition, the mindset that candidates of a certain gender and race were entitled to the job, despite lack of merit, also counted as abuse. Many agreed that other factors such as skills levels and competency had to be considered. Furthermore, the misuse of AA for retaliation for the misdeeds of the past was perceived as improper.

In one television and radio corporation, P27 was upset that AA created problems that affected other employees’ performance. He emphasized that political affiliation was paralyzing the ICT sector because individuals were not appointed on merit but because of their affiliation with the ruling party. In this, P27 brought up another troubling element of
abuse, the fact that SA’s Black freedom fighters were also given jobs in payment for their loyalty to the national struggle. He argued that there was an obvious trend in South Africa to give jobs to political loyalists and the ruling party’s cadres despite the fact that they did not have the necessary broadcasting qualifications. He said:

There is a problem of abuse in the way affirmative action is implemented. The problem is you find people being given positions, say the political appointees. The ANC has been awarding posts as a reward for loyalty to its comrades. The person would be taken from wherever without any knowledge or background and be imposed upon you as a leader when this person doesn’t know anything. It drives you up the wall because you’re carrying the load of this person. People should be given positions based on their ability and knowledge. You’re the one who’s running the show, and this person gets the credit only because this person is looked at as a comrade (personal communication, August 7, 2008).

Apparently, the ANC has a policy of deploying cadres to key government positions and that has “turned into a jobs-for-pals project.” As recently as April 15, 2009, reports from the Mail & Guardian Online cited that Phosa, the ruling party’s treasurer general, agreed that AA had been badly managed, causing a brain drain from the civil service (April 15, 2009). That was how pervasive corruption was in the South African government. People struggled with feelings of disappointment and discouragement. They were disgusted by that abuse of the state resources to benefit a selected few with total disregard for the productivity needs of the ICT sector. These exploitative employment practices led professionals to look for other alternatives to get away from the situation.

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When I met P21, a 39-year-old White technician, at the SABC OB, he had plans to leave, but could not find a job within the SABC. He informed me that he was aware of many technical jobs available in the market and had tried several times to apply, but even though he had 16 years’ experience in broadcasting, he had been turned down because of the EEA. Affirmative action did not appeal to P21 because, as he pointed out, it was vengeful and inversely discriminatory. He said that AA was a tribute to the fact that “they [Blacks] now have us in the palm of their hands” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). He was disheartened and told of the difficulties he had of finding a job when he wanted to leave.

I mulled over my miserable situation at work; which was applying for [internal] jobs and [being] rejected every time I submitted my employment application because of affirmative action. You can’t move anymore. There’s a new energy to harvest [and] some people get jobs because of BEE. It should be on merit; BEE broke the spirits of so many proud White IT guys. It is difficult for a White guy to go anywhere now because they won’t even look at your CV (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

So as far as P21 was concerned, AA “is discrimination against White males.” When he spoke, he became angrier and his eyes often brimmed with tears. He said later: “Our pain brings them pleasure. I would leave this corporation tomorrow if I could find a job” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). After P21 spoke, I referred to his strong emotions. He smiled contemptuously and responded:

That’s true, but I can tell you that the SABC has changed and they are difficult to humble. My colleagues said to disregard them, but I had made efforts and it did
not help; I was fed up, so I decided not to train them so that I could do to them what might be embarrassing. I have been doing that for almost seven years.

[There was silence in a room and he looked at me and slowly said] “You now know my true feelings on the subject” (personal communication, August 05, 2008).

I understood J P21’s despair. Though he had the wish to seek a new job, he was also fearful that other ICT companies in SA affected by AA would not consider him for employment because of his race. He fully understood the implications of racial discrimination. The life he had lived had come apart. The future seemed bleak, and many White technicians thought of career success outside South Africa. As one disillusioned technician explained, “I am thinking of going to Australia or New Zealand” (personal communication, July 25, 2008). We all had our stories.

Equally distressed, P8.1 and P8.2 were Indians who were both interviewed together. Speaking for both of them, P8.1 commented that “we have a law that regulates the employment. I had a tough start to my (career) life but through my hard work have become the manager for ETV” (personal communication, July 23, 2008). P8.1, pointing at P8.2 and himself said:

We have gone through the bumps and bruises of any political change in this country and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. [Tears began to well up].

Previously, we were not White enough to be considered for employment positions [because of the JRA] and today we’re not Black enough to benefit from affirmative action and BEE (personal communication, July 23, 2008).
P8.1’s story was a difficult one; one that generated negative reactions. The memory of P8.1 and P21’s rage and reaction touched me. In my conversation with P35, he, too, was concerned that, despite the preferential treatment that AA gave to others, it was also pushing those who had skills away:

The problems are that the skills are overlooked; [and by so doing the employers] are kicking out people who have had experience of 15 to 20 years, putting in [individuals with] no experience at all. Oh no, we’ve had enough of their exposure and we’ve already lost 13 senior technicians. Everyone is [supposed to be] equal and anyone should be able to apply for those jobs (personal communication, August 12, 2008).

P35’s anger became infectious and others shared the same concern. White men preferred gender and race blind programs. Many believed that it was unfair to be penalized for political mistakes they did not make and those who found themselves trapped in jobs which were no longer satisfying considered emigration. P35 indicated that as soon as he got the necessary outside broadcast experience, he wanted to go overseas.

P31, another technician in OB, suggested that it was inadvisable to overlook skills and experience. He emphasized that “you cannot get rid of experience” because if that happens then “it will be a case of not getting the transmission if those [experienced technicians] decide to leave” (personal communication, August 11, 2008). P35 and P31 preferred AA to be implemented only in situations where there was racial and gender underrepresentation and the candidates had equal qualifications in terms of job experience and job knowledge.
Apart from the commonly mentioned physical weakness, women were taken for granted in the workplace. Many ICT sector informants suggested women needed to carry out their duties and lift heavy equipment just like men in those jobs. They were suspicious that the women were just employed to meet AA quotas. P20 was distressed about employing women as technicians in OB where the physical prowess and speed were intense. For instance, he said that women were

A much more different demographic to manage. It’s like you come from total anonymity to corporate celebrity. It’s quite a lot to digest it once. I just can’t seem to pass that one. Even though women can now become technicians; they cannot pick up stuff and men still have to carry for them” (personal communication, August 05, 2008).

Although the narrative does not explicitly say that P20 would leave his job because of women technicians who constantly needed help from men, it implies an unsympathetic and unwelcoming environment that might deter some women. Some women were stereotyped in the usual ways of those who venture into men’s territories, and that was one of the reasons P14 also wanted to leave Neotel. P14 had noted that if her employers did not want to engage her, and she had to work through her male colleagues, she would leave. Another female professional who was also a colleague of P20, worked at the SABC’s outside broadcasts; she indicated that she actually left her OB job when she became pregnant because she “did not like lifting heavy equipment and pulling cables in cold weather” in her condition (personal communication with P22 on August 05, 2008). This confirmed P20’s agitation and the common stereotypes about women in men’s territories.
The information here indicated that individuals’ reactions to the external labor market force, such as AA, posed both opportunities and impediments for ICT labor mobility and turnover. When companies liberalize and privatize, it is usually expected that some people will be laid-off. Although there was privatization in the ICT sector, other studies indicated that as companies plan exit strategies for employees, the demographics of the SA ICT labor force also change (James, et. al., 2006). I observed that the rainbow nation could be easily recognized in the corridors and studios of the old and new companies. New outlets meant new jobs; new jobs meant new demands for workers. New demands for workers opened a supply gap and pressures for job turnover.

**Neo-Liberal Economic Reform**

Privatization was one of the external labor market (ELM) forces. It appeared that experienced IT professionals could easily get jobs with new companies that entered the markets, and technicians could find out where to go by word-of-mouth or other means. Perhaps P20’s comments that, “as a technician, I am aware of available jobs for technicians in the market, I know there are jobs out there; technician jobs are many and available” (personal communication, August 5, 2008), summed up the unusual availability of these jobs in the midst of high unemployment rates in South Africa.

The mobility of technicians was assisted by the expansion of the field. Until 1996, SABC and Telekom SA were ICT monopolies in South Africa, and for a long time they were state owned. When ICASA ultimately licensed the second national telecom operator (SNO) in 2003, there was a sigh of relief that a second operator was going to enter the market. The “managed liberalization” of the SA telecommunication sector had, since 1996, brought about the partial privatization of the industry and was thus beginning to
show results. It was managed because regulators had to ensure that ownership and control of the new operator involved equity partners.

Value-added network services (VANS) markets, which consisted of, among other things, the Internet service providers (ISPs) in South Africa, had been liberalized only in 1996. However, according to Gillward and Kane (2003), the ISPs were still restricted, were required to rent facilities from Telkom SA, and were forced to pay excessive interconnection fees on the incumbent’s terms and conditions. “VANs are value added network or value added services. They include anything that is beyond what is provided that is more than plain telephone service. Usually this means data networks or data services” (Bernt, personal communication, October 5, 2009). However, liberalization was providing a new playing field for new entrants to the market. Three wireless companies, Vodacom, MTN, and Cell-C, had already connected millions of South Africans who previously could not afford the connection fees of Telkom SA. Furthermore, because the three wireless companies were aggressively competing, prices for services were driven down and this provided a new competitive landscape for telecom operators.

**New Players and Infrastructure**

ICASA provided broadcasting licenses to the new TV stations, commercial radio stations, and to hundreds of community radio stations. There were many new players on the demand side of the market, and the labor force opportunities for ICT operators grew rapidly. This was important for the creation of new jobs. Many professionals attributed their departures and intentions to leave at least in part to the labor market’s flexibility which was made possible by increasing competition. It was my understanding that flexibility referred to the freedom of the workers to move from job to job. In fact,
respondent P9 claimed that “there are a number of companies now that can go into the economy and make the free market profitable” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). This market condition has been expedited by ICT professionals to advance their job aspirations, to increase their expertise, and acquire higher status in their new jobs. P19, one of the technicians who worked for the SABC, had observed new opportunities in the broadcasting industry than there were more than a decade when he joined the industry. He said:

I worked for the SABC for 13 years, from radio to TV. I enjoy broadcasting and there were not many competitors at the time [when he joined the industry] and that is why I stayed for 13 years. It would definitely not be difficult to get a job [today] with so many competitors (personal communication, July 29, 2008).

Asked if he had any intentions of leaving his job, he remarked that when the time was ripe, he would.

His colleague, P17 also commented on new opportunities in the marketplace. Although he still worked for the SABC, he was looking into management positions. He indicated: “the spectrum [in broadcasting] is growing for the people with our skills at other organizations such as the CNBC Africa, ETV and Telkom Media” (personal communication, July 30, 2008). It was clear from interviews with other technicians as well that many ICT professionals had benefitted handsomely from the expanded competition and some had changed their jobs. As P23 explained, “when CNBC Africa was launched in 2007 in South Africa, most people left the SABC to work for CNBC” (personal communication, August 5, 2008). For a very long time in South Africa, the state-run SABC had three TV stations (SABC 1, SABC 2, and SABC 3), and these were
the only stations that employed professionals who were interested in television broadcasting. Moreover, many professionals, specifically those who worked for the public broadcaster for more than 10 years, confirmed that ICT jobs were easily available for them. P31 was a microwave technician who also focused on research and development (R&D). He agreed that “it would definitely not be difficult to leave this job [because] there are many broadcasters that can employ me anytime” (personal communication, August 11, 2008). Industrywide expansion created more openings and increases for turnovers.

Because the SABC had a monopoly for a long time, it could be expected that it would have many experienced professionals on its staff. As a result, the SABC lost employees to competitors. P27 informed me that many employees considered the SABC a school where people were trained, and once they completed their learning, they looked for jobs elsewhere. As P27 explained:

We’ve even been having this thing of saying that SABC is a college. We all come here; after you’ve done your studies you go somewhere else. People are gone already. I mean if I walk with you into MNET, you would think that I work there. About 80% of the technicians who are working in the (MNET) FCC, I know them, I have worked with them (personal communication, August 7, 2008).

It was clear from P27 and P23’s observations that the analogy to a college for the SABC was appropriate because of the mass exodus of technicians to SABC competitors. I observed that there was also some support calculating poaching of professionals by competitors. When I spoke with P34 at the SABC, he went so far as to argue that “other companies know that here we have good technicians so they all come here to poach from
the SABC” (personal communication, August 12, 2008). As a result, the SABC was experiencing an outflow and a shortage of a skilled workforce; and technicians were confident that they could get good jobs among competitors. As I was conducting the interviews, particularly at the SABC, I understood some of the serious problems that the corporation faced. How could a watchful management not recognize such calculated poaching by competitors? I would have imagined that vigilant senior management would see the turnover crisis that the organization was experiencing; I thought of the lack of accountability, the training costs they were incurring, and lack of non-compete agreements (often used by IT companies in the West). Yet a climate of personnel snatching from other employers was rife among ICT competitors.

As the head of the camera division, P5 did not see anything wrong with poaching employees. Most of his camera people came from his competitor and he knew them well. In fact, he had actually trained those camera people when he worked for his previous employer. He told me that camera people were not as good as he would have liked. He told me: “I am constantly looking for camera guys. There are lots of camera guys but not experienced ones” (personal communication, July 17, 2008). This implies that even those who were available still needed to be trained by the company to enhance their skills. However, P5 admitted that the workers often left again to work for his competitors. So the poaching cycle continued. The external pressure of shortages could influence the ILM factor of training that was offered. The skills shortage, the employee poaching, and the recycling of ICT professionals had led to other new and unusual job search techniques.

Interestingly, in Telkom SA as well, professionals who had worked for the monopoly for a long time remained in their positions because they considered their
employer superior to the alternatives and no other company could offer them the technical opportunities available at Telkom. P13, now a product manager at Neotel, said:

I mean, in my days, Telkom was the only place you could work in if you wanted to be in telecommunications. The market has opened up so much that now, you can go anywhere. It just depends on you. I have been in the industry for 22 years and I started at Telkom. I worked there for 21 years because we had an established revenue stream [and] it was a cushy job [and] you could hide behind people; there were lots of excuses you could come up with. I mean, I was in a particular portfolio for seven years, um, responsible for the whole product management, the cell [phone] side. [However], sitting at Telkom, I was getting frustrated. And I wasn’t growing. And, said, no, I’ll, move if the opportunity comes. I was approached by Neotel [and] I saw it as challenge (personal communication, July 28, 2008).

However, unlike P13 who stayed with one employer for a very long time, junior technicians often changed their jobs as soon as they got the necessary job experience, even if the new jobs were not necessarily in the industry where they started. P34 noted that although his experience was in technical broadcasting, there were opportunities for technicians with his skills at the telecom operators. He said:

The job is much channeled [but] now there are better opportunities for us to go outside. There are companies that do installations, companies like Telekom. I’ll just hand in my resignation letter and leave because I know MNET is also currently looking for people (personal communication, August 12, 2008).
When such opportunities prevail, it is likely that people will be tempted by other available options. P8.1 supported P34’s argument that IT technicians did not feel as if they were stuck in a single industry. He said:

We’re not in the media business; we’re in the IT business. So what we do here [at ETV] we can do somewhere else also. It’s just different technology. . . . The core components are the same, the infrastructure, the networking style and Microsoft, and for us in this company, its media so we know the broadcasting technologies and stuff. If we go to another company we’ll just apply our minds to the different industry and the technology, which [the training period] shouldn’t be long (personal communication, July 23, 2008).

Now that they had a variety of companies to choose from, employees were willing to explore a wider range of industry sectors. P27 admitted that he was actively looking for alternatives beyond television. He worked in television broadcasting for 10 years and had a desire to work for radio. Asked if he was looking for a job elsewhere, he responded:

Definitely, yes. The first thing [I want is to work in] is in radio, and getting jobs elsewhere is not problem as such for me because even most of my friends that I used to work with, in the FCC, SABC, most of them have gone to MNET, they’ve gone to CNBC Africa, and they’ve been trying to poach me. But the thing is I think I have enough FCC experience and I need something which is different from that. I don’t have any problem with getting an FCC job, but that’s not what I’m looking at, at the moment (personal communication, August 7, 2008).
P27’s admission indicated that conversations among friends could create desires to leave current positions, especially if someone was already unhappy about other issues in his or her job. In addition, there was always an interplay between internal and external labor market forces bearing on job turnover decisions. Changes in the sector, an external force, gave workers more choices and introduced more potential for job changing.

Technological Trends

Outside broadcasts technologies, I came to realize, is a complex maze of equipment that technicians had to sort out and assemble. During the fieldwork for this study, I was fortunate to visit the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) with the SABC OB crew. I observed them pull cables, connect wires, and position their cameras on site. The trip was like a presidential convoy motorcade where the traffic comes to a standstill to let the vans and motorbikes of the broadcaster pass. Although I used my own transport to get to the location of the JSE, I was provided with a temporary press card, which enabled me to pass through security on time.

Walking around to see what everyone was involved in, I realized how important teamwork was in setting up the equipment at the site. The workers were working side-by-side. Moreover, I observed that newer technologies were just as important to the technicians. The technicians’ daily activities involved use of technology, and they wished to migrate to digital and satellite communication. They shared their thoughts about their frustrations with equipment. Although the focus on equipment at the SABC was critical for some participants, the problems seemed to be more about delays caused by the bureaucrats in approving new equipment. Requisitions for the replacement of old equipment took a long time before they could be approved.
P21 repaired equipment and ordered parts to fix problems in equipment used in his department. He was frustrated by the bureaucracies that delayed the requisition process for purchasing the equipment his OB department needed. He said:

People at the top do not realize the needs of operations. I don’t like dealing with parts [because] ordering takes a long time before you can get them because of the bureaucracy here. They’re losing the expertise that’s ready and tested because of these frustrating delays. Technology makes life easier. For those who love adrenalin, technology gives you the competitive edge. It’s just a complete adrenalin rush (personal communication, August 5, 2008).

The issue of equipment approval had become an obstacle for the SABC technicians in TV news studios and OB. During the time when the interviews were
conducted, the SABC Board and the CEO had ongoing legal battles, and the board members could not focus on their other duties. So, at one point, P17 was frustrated:

There’s a problem with the current standing of the SABC; the board is not yet settled. It creates a lot of uncertainty and instability. We are now waiting for the board to approve the purchase of the new system because sometimes the TV server fails. We have responsibilities to the TV and radio news [but] we are lagging behind with equipment (personal communication, July 29, 2008).

P17 was by nature a gentle and kind person. I had observed his warmth at the training in Wanderers, but when he spoke about his employer’s slow speed that hampered the purchase of new equipment, I could see that he was upset. It was perhaps the uncertainty and instability, along with equipment issues, that was pushing P17 out. I then realized that new technologies introduced at least two factors that propel job turnover. A demand for trainers and users and they increased frustration.
P11 left his previous job as a small micromedium enterprise (SMME) engineer and field technician at CEM Maintenance Africa to work for the TV station as a technician. Referring to his previous and current employers, he explained:

A lot of the guys at CEM were complaining; all of them were making different plans to leave. ETV so far has been my favorite, next to the Online Casino job that I had. I like a lot of exposure to new technologies that I’ve never had before. I have grown; I have learned to use dalet software [Dalet News Suite] which
controls visuals, scripts, and rundowns, that I [was] never exposed to. Dalet allows us to play out newscasts that we produce in the newsroom within the single screen. It’s so fascinating. I like the challenging environment where you have to be tiptop with your knowledge to go over the things that could go wrong during live broadcasts (personal communication, July 25, 2008).

It became obvious to me technicians wanted to be familiar with new and different types of ICT that provided interesting challenges. As new positions were introduced, or as companies moved to the next technological level, openings occurred for trainers and other workers. For example, P10 became the systems engineer and then the IT network administrator in Zimbabwe. He said:

ETV recruited me from UNISA [the University of South Africa] and Tjika [IT Consultancy] where I taught development software. The team I work with is fantastic. We are bending and learning together. Every day is a new challenge, new people and new programs and software. We make sure the broadcasting system runs properly and have to ensure that everything runs smoothly (personal communication, July 25, 2008).

Excited that ETV had taken that leap in software development, though I did not ask how successful P10’s projects had been, it was apparent from my interviews that new ICT was not alien to SA engineers and technicians. They were even more interested in the convergence of various communications technologies. I was reminded of P7 who told me that he left his regulatory job at Transtel to work for Neotel, emphasizing that he wanted to work for a converged operator who incorporated several technologies. When I think of P7, I remember him in his spacious office, which was on the second floor of the
Neotel building in the North of Johannesburg. When I interviewed him, P7 had a dominant personality, was powerful and reflective. He spoke with authority about positioning his company to face competition in the telecom environment. Although I only had a short period of time with him, I thought he seemed to be an intelligent lawyer who was decisive and unyielding. P7, along with P14, was a senior regulator for the SNO and guarded the compliance of the new operator in the market. While the top-tier management was set to make quick decisions and judgments, P7 usually showed insight in obtaining opinions from a wide variety of his regulatory team members. From what P14 told me, he often managed to maintain and keep everybody calm during a crisis. This was the man who relayed P14’s ideas and compliance issues to top management personnel when they did not take P14’s advice seriously. It was because of P7 that P14 had decided to work for the SNO even though she felt underutilized.

P7 described a series of technological advancements that SNO was dealing with. He was excited about the technological convergence that was planned in the sector. He patiently explained difficult technical jargon that he was using in the interview. He believed in the existence of competition in the sector but he also believed that partnerships were a possibility. The following were P7’s opinions expressed during the interview:

I joined Neotel to really position myself as a converged network operator. In other words, we’re providing a fixed mobile space [but] we’re not just a fixedline operator; we’re a converged network operator. So, with the radio frequency spectrum that we have on the access side, we have an 800 MHz spectrum which allows us to play in CDMA [code division multiple access, a dominant network
standard for mobile network technologies] space, and CDMA allows us to play in the convergent environment. . . .Ah, basically within the next generation [Third-or fourth- generation cell phones also known as 3G and 4G], it essentially allows you to provide voice, data, and Internet over one network or through one pipe, as opposed to, you know, one network for voice traffic, one for data traffic, and one for Internet traffic. You can do that all through one pipe, essentially. That means with the next generation network, you can bundle the services that we provide, as opposed to being discrete services.

It was clear that P7’s departure from Transtel to Neotel was all about new technologies. I remembered that he was a participant who had to sign confidentiality forms that he would not discuss the company’s secrets with me when I interviewed him. Yet he spoke about possible efforts towards his competitors, assuring me that everything was fine and continued to explain what new technologies could do. He said:

We work with high-speed Internet; you get your video on demand types of services, your content services, and, voice will just be a commodity service, an add-on for our customers that allows us to compete in other nonconventional telecommunication types of spaces. If we want to play in the content side, or for telecoms, or ICT in general, and compete with the likes of Multichoice or the SABC, we can do that, compete with them. Or we can also do another delivery platform, for their content; we can also be partners as well (personal communication, July 22, 2008).

P7’s views reflect some of the fascination that new technology holds for many ICT workers. This interest drew them to venues where they could be trained and keeps
them there for a period of time. Evidently, this was another example of the interplay between the ILM force of interest in a job and the ELM influence of new technology. Nevertheless, the greater increase in the number of ICT professionals with aspirations to work for high-tech firms meant that the earlier projections of shortages of ICT-skilled personnel becomes even more critical to the sector.

Summary

This chapter discussed major external factors in South Africa’s labor market turnover. For decades South African employers have been accused of being deliberately discriminatory against some in the labor market. The ICT sector was no exception. AA in South Africa required employment preferences go to Blacks, women, and disabled people. Racial segmentation had consequences for job seekers and their turnover. Both employers and ICT professionals modified their techniques in light of the new external factors.

Some, both within and outside the designated racial and gender groups, claimed that AA was flawed and was being implemented irresponsibly. AA puts a premium on hiring qualified Black people. Partly because of the discrimination AA was instituted to allay, fully trained and skilled Black professionals were scarce. Naturally, employing some who did not have required job competency led to criticism of the legislation. People were anxious about jobs they believed were given to cronies or to designated groups even when they did not have the relevant skills and experience.

Even so, since the EEA was passed in South Africa more than a decade ago, a growing number of Blacks and women have benefitted from AA. While the country’s
ICT sector has complied with AA laws, some firms have not been as successful as others because each organization complied at its own rate.

Although segmentation by gender and race reflected the desire of people to associate with those most like themselves, this practice was highly divisive as it marginalized some groups. This situation has had a major impact on how ICT professionals viewed AA. On the whole, however, this study shows that getting employment through preferential treatment was seen as fair to most members of the legislated groups.

Statistics show a labor force segmented by race where there is a concentration of Blacks in middle management. It appeared that among Blacks, only African males seemed to have the most improved prospects of employment while the Coloreds and Indians had the lowest representation. Men still hold a larger share of the core ICT work opportunities than women in South Africa. Thus, the employment experience of women in the ICT sector has been limited: women participate in that South African workforce at a lower rate than men, even though women are heavier end-users of the ICTs than men.

White males still dominate the ICT sector because of their experience and expertise in various technical industries, a consequence of South African employment which results from 1954’s JRA and from separate education for non-White South Africans. Among those who were upset by what they saw as state resources being misused to benefit a selected few with disregard for the productivity of the ICT sector were those who chose to look for options in order to get away from the situation.

Some ICT professionals left the country. Others were able to exploit the environment. Employment trends, pushed by racial, gender, and class divisions among
ICT workers, highlight the changing demographics of the ICT workforce. Moreover, they show that some racial and gender groups were making new inroads, opportunities not available during apartheid. Employment numbers were bound to increase and include fresh South African populations. Turnover resulting from AA implementation and other external labor market factors was inevitable.

Privatization was another of the external labor market forces. It appeared that experienced IT professionals could easily get jobs as new companies entered the markets. Employers anticipated the skills shortage in ICT, especially among Blacks because most members of the designated groups had skills appropriate for only entry or intermediate level jobs.

While ICT professionals used new hiring techniques to access jobs, the emerging employment conditions allowed unconventional methods for both job seekers and recruiters. This situation was heightened by competitors who were eager to employ those Blacks who had some work experience in ICT. When companies simply employed some AA candidates to comply with the labor legislation, the specter of people without merit placed positions arose again.

Individual worker and employer reactions to external labor market forces such as AA contributed ICT labor mobility and turnover. Layoffs often result when companies liberalize and privatize. An unexpected result was that companies planned an exit strategy for employees. Some employers took the risky decision of discharging their workers to work for competitors, with the objective of rehiring them when those workers had acquired more experience and training.
Referrals, rehiring, word-of-mouth and walk-ins were job search practices used by ICT workers. The external factor of widespread competition enabled them to sell their skills in ways that were previously uncommon in the South African labor market. It showed that the longtime practice of waiting to be called for interviews by employers was changing. Professionals were becoming more proactive than ever before. Job hopping became more attractive. The external effect of statutory discrimination will continue to be felt for a long time and the impact of apartheid can still be seen in the inequalities in the distribution of skills in South Africa’s ICT workers. On the other hand, new external factors are being brought to bear on the nation’s inequities. Some previously excluded groups are benefitting from changes and the external factors are drawing more of them into the field.
Prior to 1994, all women and Black people in South Africa (SA) were unprotected by federal laws, and individuals were legally categorized as Black (Africans, Colored and Indians) or White. When SA gained its first democracy, the government changed repressive laws and promulgated, among other things, labor laws that would redress discrimination and include the previously disadvantaged groups in the labor market.

Drawn to this topic in 1994, I realized, because I had worked in South Africa, that especially after 1994, qualified professionals frequently changed their jobs. Leaving a job was particularly easier for women and Black professionals. I, too, was affected by the voluntary turnover trend and left my job when I became unhappy with the treatment I was subjected to in the workplace. In many ways, I could relate, as a Black woman, to the experiences of some participants in this study. However, unlike many of the participants, I left the communications sector early to pursue my studies while my friends were still caught up in the enthusiasm generated by affirmative action (AA).

Some of my friends were climbing the corporate ladder in South Africa, and many of them questioned my decision to relocate to the United States, a move which they argued was a waste of time since there were employment opportunities available at the time. Fortunately for them, with the increased number of competitors in the information and communication technology (ICT) markets, the mobility of these professionals also increased; many people became managers of corporations and small business entrepreneurs because of the impact of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and AA. BEE enabled many Black professionals to own new businesses in the sector. Liberalization of ICT companies in South Africa was undertaken to ensure that Black
people had a stake in companies that wanted to compete in the sector. Therefore, with the execution of BEE and AA, qualified women and Black professionals were given preferential treatment to acquire assets and access employment opportunities in different industry sectors. However, such opportunities led to high staff turnover, immigration, and job hopping to new organizations, leading to depressed productivity growth.

Government and businesses realized the problems they were faced with; newspapers reported on the mass exoduses of ICT professionals who moved from job to job as well as on the increasing emigration to the West. My greatest shock was when I read newspaper reports that 14 managers left the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) within weeks of each other in 2006 and when I heard about another mass exodus of White professionals at Radio 702. Almost all media in South Africa reported on job hopping. In 2007 and 2008, I interviewed research participants in the ICT sector about what influenced them to leave their jobs. As this study revealed, decisions to leave one’s job were influenced by many factors: voluntary turnover is caused by internal labor market dissatisfaction and the influences of labor market issues outside the employing organizations. As a result, employees who left their jobs did not necessarily follow one linear decision path, which, according to Mobley, Steers, and Mowday (1987) assumed that the experience of job dissatisfaction directly determined employee turnover decisions (Rouse, 2001). I discovered during the interviews that people followed different decision paths which lead to actual turnover. For instance, some participants made instant decisions to leave simply because their interpersonal networks were leaving, thus resulting in mass exoduses.
This study has shown some of the factors that related to the 63% voluntary turnover among skilled staff in the ICT sector. The purpose of this dissertation has been to investigate the reasons why ICT professionals in SA leave their jobs. The framework of this study was twofold: it looked at the internal labor market (ILM) turnover factors and the external labor market (ELM) turnover factors.

This chapter discusses the findings of the overarching themes that emerged around ILM and ELM job turnover factors. In addition, the chapter outlines the findings of specific research questions. There are particular insights provided by the experiences of the ICT workers who engaged in job hopping, and these are discussed in this chapter along with the turnover model. Finally, this chapter describes the limitations of this study, offers recommendations, and provides suggestions for future research.

*RQ1: How do the social networks of SA ICT personnel influence others in work groups to terminate their employment?*

Social Networks across the ICT sector

Previous studies have argued that turnover is something that is learned and shared within a particular group of people who have a common belief system (Moore and Burke, 2002). Moreover, others argued that turnover patterns are influenced by informal communication relationships with social networks, which may occur inside and outside the current organization. Based on these arguments, it is implied that people learn certain attitudes from others in their environment. Attitudes that have become part of our environment are normalized to the extent that individuals who are a part of that culture would not see anything erroneous about their behavior. Thus, a high-turnover culture would reflect the acceptance of turnover as part of working norms. Searching for a job is
indicative of one’s desire to leave the current employer. As I discovered in this study, social networks, such as family, friends, peers, and supervisors, were important to individuals and gave them a sense of acceptance and sense of belonging to a group. Family and close friends provided strong ties and played a vital role in fundamental decision making such as deciding to accept or leave a job; furthermore, the connections of family and friends would be used as a starting point in a search for jobs. Social networks pushed as well as deterred job mobility. Family contacts facilitated job searches so ICT professionals drew on their families’ networks to find what openings were available. This research found that three categories of social networks contributed to the rapid turnover of ICT workers. They were family, higher education affiliation, and the workplace. This study revealed that some Black ICT workers were told of jobs by their family members and friends, thus influencing them to abandon their employers. In other areas, workers left their jobs because of the pressure from their spouses or families or because of the relocation of spouses.

South African Family Structure

In South Africa, the primary social contacts are family and relatives; the family elders were seen as advisors who have wisdom, experience, and have traditionally favored stability and family reunification. Culturally, SA men are expected to take care of their immediate families, and this can lead to cultural pressures especially if the family has to relocate. Within the SA culture, there are two types of family, nuclear and extended families. The nuclear family is considered Western and was influenced by the advent of Christianity within African cultures. It is composed of a father, a mother, and their children. This family type characterizes the White SA communities, although the
nuclear family type has grown in number, especially in cities, even among Black communities. On the other hand, extended families are representative of the Black South African communities and include nuclear family members and other relatives such as parents, aunts, cousins, and uncles. According to Jithoo (1996), Nzimande (1996), and Rabbie (1996), Black families, which include African, Colored and Indian in the South African context, are traditionally extended with males regarded as the undisputed heads of the household; and it is expected that men will support their families, including their parents. Subsequently, the majority of male workers’ decisions to stay or leave a job involve other people who are likely to be affected.

Although nuclear families have been growing as a result of modernization, many researchers of various Black SA communities agree that extended families serve as a social service system that cares for and provides support to various categories of dependents (Jithoo, 1996; Nzimande, 1996; Rabbie, 1996). However, because the term “Black” encompasses several racial groups with their own unique values in SA, Viljoen (1994) clarifies that, although these communities were in some ways different, all Black families shared some characteristics such as an emphasis on the importance of children and strong family ties and the view that “support for family members comes from friends, neighbors, and even a fictitious family [that meant] the people in the immediate environment who help from time to time in order for the family members to survive” (Ross, 1995). Friends and peers also had a significant influence on the ICT workers’ decision to quit their jobs. Given this background, it is not surprising that, like all the other social formations, families contributed to the job turnover factors when they
successfully helped place the ICT family members in other jobs and when they
encouraged them to leave.

This study discovered that ICT professionals consistently drew on their families
and friends to find jobs. It appeared that family and relatives helped job seekers
particularly in two situations. The first, was when the financial pressures were intense
and ICT workers were unable to meet their financial commitments. The spouses played a
significant role in employment decisions, especially if the spouses were going to be
affected. As we saw in the cases of P17 and P33, immediate family members encouraged
their spouse and son to look for jobs so that they could fulfill their responsibilities as
fathers and heads of households. Second, a worker’s relocation to another city might lead
to termination of the spouse’s job or the intention to look for alternatives elsewhere as in
P22’s case when she wanted to leave the company.

On the other hand, there was generational pressure to stay within a secure job and
avoid the risks associated with job hopping. Most Black participants in this study were
first-generation university graduates. Their expectations were high, and they wanted to
impress their families with lifestyles that reflected their education and material wealth.
As a result, they would constantly leave their jobs for jobs that would pay them more.
The young ICT professionals frequently disagreed with their parents’ suggestions to keep
jobs for stability and out of loyalty to the employers. Some believed professionals that
their parents were ignorant about what went on in the ICT sector and so relied more on
their universities to place them in appropriate jobs. As a result, they rejected their
parents’ advice and admonitions and changed jobs.
Tertiary Institutions Participation in Job Placements

Beyond the rather narrow networks of intimate friends and family, there were those influences on job turnover that arose from contacts made through the institutions where the workers trained. Opportunities presented by internships did not technically contribute to job turnover. Students were still in school, not in the workplace. However, social networks grew during internships, and once they were no longer interns and in the job market, workers used the connections they had made in the workplace. They could obtain information about jobs other than the ones they held or they could form freelance partnerships utilizing their particular technical skills. Social networks were more likely to add to market turnover than to deter it.

University affiliation was considered one of the most important networks as were the University-and-employer partnerships that placed interns in the workplace for one year. This was crucial, especially for first-generation students who could not count on sector-specific career advice from their immediate families. This was one of the best ways for these professionals to access point-of-entry jobs in their careers. This expanded the young professionals’ family and college networks to professional affiliations in their line of work. Moreover, it also granted an opportunity to network with others for permanent job positions. In this study, I explored how such networks influenced the job turnover of the ICT workers. The field study revealed that, to a certain extent, families could influence professionals to quit their jobs. Only a few of the participants were encouraged to leave, and in a few cases they were assisted by their families to secure jobs. This could have been because not that many of the ICT jobs were previously available for some of these group members, and there were not enough skilled ICT
professionals in the sector. The participants greatly appreciated their University networks because the University counselors provided guidance and direction. The main reason Universities were included was that there was where the networks expanded through the ties with other students with similar interests and the program of study, and the University community at large. Because there were no jobs that students were attached to at this stage, University affiliation did not generate any job turnover. In fact, Universities assisted ICT students to connect with the sector.

**Professional Affiliation and Job Mobility**

Generally speaking, the industry affiliation was the main contributor to job hopping. Once people were in the job market and had closer ties with other people in the industry, they were active in frequent job searches on available vacancies. I found that if a professional was unconnected to any social group, or not yet known in the industry, he or she would have difficulty breaking in to the industry. Obviously, new entrants to the market could not find jobs as easily as workers who had been in the industry for a while and knew many people. It became clear from this study that loyalty to the networks was pertinent and that regular interactions with the group were crucial for obtaining current information. Although loyalty to the networks was paramount to the workers, the workers’ close relationship with the networks could cause difficulties for the employer; in fact I discovered that close and homogeneous groups led to mass departures of employees. When job opportunities opened, sometimes they required people with specific skills, gender, and race. Eagerness to fill positions with women and certain racial groups even after they had just left their jobs was deemed acceptable as long as the workers were employable. In some cases those preferred candidates left in droves to work for new
entrants in the ICT market. Mass exoduses of professionals were common in SA, along racial lines. At the heart of these departures, social networks, specifically, those that arose from industry affiliations, enabled people to take others with them when they left (Moore and Burke, 2002). Such shared practices promoted high turnover behaviors and challenged even those employers who wanted to retain their ICT workers. Likewise, they enjoyed the recruiters’ confidence that they would gain something from connections made outside the current employers. However, I was not surprised to learn that there was dishonesty involved in most of the recruitment undertaken by close social ties. Politicians, friends, and family members ended up employing people without merit while bypassing skilled workers. As Moore and Burke (2002) explain, the social contagion of changing jobs to overcome workplace dissatisfaction can affect even the most loyal and productive IT employees. Radio 702 participants who left the station in droves were convinced by others that “they were being poorly led” (personal communication, July 17, 2008) and many went to join Radio 702’s competitor.

This study discovered that people who were currently employed were the most helpful in placing others. I think this was because the helpers could exert some influence on hiring or promotions at their jobs by putting in a word for others.

RQ. 2: What impact do organizational reward systems have in South African ICT on job satisfaction?

The second research question has to do with the effect of organizational reward systems on South African ICT workers’ job satisfaction and thus turnover issues. Job satisfaction and organizational reward systems are constructs in almost every turnover theory. In other words, the issues discussed under this question were viewed as dominant
constructs in the voluntary turnover process. This study found that job satisfaction is influenced by the participants’ education and level of responsibility in the workplace. It became clear that satisfaction with the job duties could lead to some stability in the labor market. However, dissatisfaction led to both the intention to leave and actual job turnover.

Organizational Rewards and Job Satisfaction

The aspects of job dissatisfaction that emerged as significant in this study resulted from job scope and lack of employee loyalty. ICT workers who had opportunities for variety and control in their jobs felt the most job satisfaction and, other influences being discounted, were less likely to contribute to the industry’s turnover problems. Workers, usually junior workers, who had little control over their assignments and felt as if their work was repetitive, were the most dissatisfied and most likely to use available resources to change jobs. The main reason for this was that some aspects of the job could make ICT workers unhappy. For instance, outside broadcast (OB) technicians who rotated between three areas of production, audio and visual expressed dissatisfaction and became tired of performing the same tasks repetitively because it led to boredom.

There were three reasons for dissatisfaction with the nature of the job. The first focused on routine jobs involving a workload that required too little from technicians and showed no signs of leading to upward mobility in a job. P14 felt underutilized in the regulatory department of Neotel because of the simplicity of her job assignments. In fact, Ivacевич (1999) discovered that in the United States, “the first jobs of new employees often demand far less of them than they are able to deliver” (p. 83). That could ultimately lead to boredom or a feeling of being stifled and underutilized, forcing ICT workers to
look for alternatives. When people consider their jobs “dead-end,” it means that there is no possibility for advancement in their jobs. This weakens their interest and happiness in their daily jobs and makes them revisit their decisions to stay with their employer.

The second reason for job dissatisfaction centers on the fact that technicians want to keep up with technological trends in the sector and would leave if they felt left behind. Digital migration and rapid technological developments were the key motivations for converged communication technologies. ICT professionals wanted to be exposed to new technological developments. P7 said he moved to the new telecom operator because it was a converged network operator which was involved in a series of technological advancements. Ang and Slaughter (2004) projected that the demand for skilled IT professionals would remain strong and increase in the future because there is a dearth of ICT skills, which are needed to respond to rapidly changing technological and environment circumstances where ICT workers have to keep up with the speed of rapidly changing technologies. That was consistent with the motivations of the SA ICT workers who wanted exposure to a variety of new technologies. I would argue that ICT workers changed jobs and moved to other industries within the sector to work in the convergent communication environment which encompassed broadcasting, telecom, and the Internet.

The third reason for dissatisfaction concerned intermediate-level technicians, who were constantly overworked and soon burned out on their jobs. With so much job pressure and working long hours, most technicians felt they were losing touch with friends and family. They left home early and got back late and tired. If they had to go out of town, it was sometimes for weeks, which led to further exhaustion and health problems.
(personal communication with P31, August 11, 2008). The overload was possibly because of the shortage of skilled staff in the specific area of operation.

**Job Scope and Dissatisfaction**

The field observation for this study revealed that there was a strong desire for autonomy among the senior ICT workers. Some of them were independent and wanted to work on their own and be compensated well for their work. Several IT outsourcing scholars warned that ICT professionals like independence and autonomy in carrying out their own work (Saunders, Gebelt, & Hu [1997]; Sabherwal, [1999]; Scardino, [2001]; Scardino, 2002). Autonomy provides employees with an assurance of trust to make informed decisions on behalf of the employers and reassure the employers that if they care about their work and produce results they will be paid for their efforts. The desire of ICT professionals to be in control of their own destiny must be addressed when looking at reasons for high turnover. For instance, there were very likely ICT participants who, by and large, left their jobs because of the desire to change careers so that they could work independently in jobs that also allowed them to manage their own careers. I argue that if these professionals’ career needs were not understood by employers, the latter were likely to lose their employees to competitors.

Although most management studies suggest that the key factor to maintaining retention is to provide a challenging working environment by providing workers with added responsibility (Burnes, 2006), it became a problem if the workers were increasingly burned out from job activities. There was, of course, a difference between a work environment where workers were challenged, empowered, and never inactive and the one that stressed and fatigued them. According to Ivacenvich (1999), stress is the
experience of a situation that places special demands on the individual (p.14). In this definition, it is clear that “stress is the result of dealing with something placing ‘special’ demands on us. Special here means unusual, physically or psychologically threatening, or outside our usual set of experiences” (p.263). If additional demands made workers burn out, then that could compel them to leave, rather than stay. Burnes (2006) wrote about the need for challenging work, but Ivacenvich (1999) warned about the dangers of work stress and exhaustion leading to job burnout.

Other participants were of the opinion that their bosses must be competent and knowledgeable. This was affirmed by professionals who categorically stated that if their managers were incompetent, then they would simply resign and leave. The main reason for this was that managers should be able to understand the floor operations of the employee’s department, be conversant with the latest technologies, and understand the importance of being ahead in technological developments.

Compensation and Turnover Intentions

One of the purposes of this study was to find out how dissatisfaction with organizational reward systems impacted the turnover of ICT workers. The study found that the elements of job satisfaction that related to turnover intentions were dissatisfaction with compensation and promotional opportunities. The findings on compensation were not surprising, as it confirmed the findings of Niederman and Sumner (2004), Burnes (2006), and Callas (1998) that ICT professionals were always thinking about rewards and growth opportunities. Unlike the Indian IS professionals who “were satisfied with their salaries even though they said they could increase their base salary if they left their current organization” (Lacity et al., 2008, p.237), pay was an immense motivation for SA
ICT professionals. However, beyond remuneration, both the Indian and South African ICT professionals wanted challenging jobs in the same way as their Western counterparts wanted.

It was of interest to hear participants say that they were satisfied with their relationships with their colleagues at work, but that did not impact their choice to stay with the company. This was in contrast with the conclusions of Mitchell et al. (2001) who found that friendships at work influenced employees’ decisions to stay in a job.

The field study revealed that participants have diverse levels of satisfaction with their pay and their bosses, and I observed that these factors have some bearing on intentions to leave. Many participants indicated that money was important and motivated them. Remuneration emerged as the major element of the organizational rewards system and was, therefore, the most influential turnover factor for ICT professionals in South Africa. Across the employee spectrum, wages were the driving factor in both retention and turnover. This expected finding was consistent with the views of other empirical studies such as the finding of Rouse (2001) that ICT professionals were bombarded with money which supports the view of Smith (2000) that perception of inequalities, either internal or external, were important factors in turnover. This was especially true for women and racial minorities in the United States and for all designated groups in South Africa (Thomas, 2002). Employers have historically not been open about employees’ pay; it is often a secret between the employer and the employee. Unfortunately, when employees discover on their own that there are pay inequities for workers doing the same job, it sours the relationships, not just with the employer but with the employees as well. The salary conflict between South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) freelancers
and full-time employees was a clear indication of how relationships with co-workers could deteriorate and lead to dissatisfaction on the basis of pay.

By and large, most respondents were concerned with pay, promotions, and general benefits such as pension, car, and cell phone allowances. The most important organizational reward systems were base pay and promotion opportunities. The salary increase system, pension and housing contributions, and vehicles and stock ownership came into play as well. Being offered a job by another organization highlighted how organizational reward systems focused on both internal (pay) and external (demand and supply) labor market turnover issues. It reflected the suggestion by Rouse (2001), noted in chapter 2 of this study, that results from empirical research on money as a job turnover factor were ambiguous and contradictory. As we have seen in the present study, two aspects of compensation surfaced. When competitors offered more money to ICT professionals, they were attracted; when employees felt that their organization was internally not providing internal benefits offered in other organizations, they often left their current employers. Therefore, paying competitive and market-related rates was significant, although it did not guarantee long-term retention. We have learned that competitive compensation and salary increases kept some technicians in their jobs for a while.

Although there were many rewards systems available to the participants in this study, those that emerged as most significant, after remuneration, were fringe benefits and career opportunities. Fringe benefits in these ICT firms were largely tied to seniority. As a result, their effect on retention had the greatest influence on the longest-term employees, generally male. Non-Whites and women, the fastest growing demographic in
the workforce and the ones only recently in the workforce, were the ones most likely to ignore the pull of fringe benefits. External factors, to be discussed later, offered greater opportunities.

**Gender Influences on Turnover in the Context of South Africa**

**Pay Differential**

I found that the ICT workers who left their jobs did so for high-paying alternative employment. The male IT professionals were constantly looking for employers who paid more than their current employers. However, all the female participants except one in this study said they were satisfied with their compensation although they could do with more. P23 was the only female who said that “money motivates me” (personal communication, August 05, 2008). Because only one female mentioned any pay dissatisfaction, the question of pay differential was not pursued in this study. However, motherhood and employment were discussed in greater details than pay by a few female participants.

**Motherhood and Employment in ICTs**

Only two participants were mothers of young children in this study. P22 was a 32 year old mother who was a technician and had worked for OB core for six years. When I interviewed her at the SABC, she was expecting a second child who was due in January 2009. Coincidentally, P23 another 32 year old single mother who worked for the SABC TV News was also expecting her second child in January 2009.

P23’s view was that women who want promotions should focus on their jobs than motherhood. She was a classic example of that perspective. P23 did what most mothers would not do. She separated from her son who had special needs to be raised by the
grandparents. Her career ambition of becoming a director of the TV news department forced her to choose between motherhood and employment. According to her

My next move, [she laughs] if given an opportunity is to be a director. What I like about my job is the potential for growth. I am a divorcee and [sometimes] I have to work at night. My son is staying with my mother because he has disability and needs special care. Well here [current employer], there are night shifts and they [sometimes] call you at night (personal communication, August 05, 2009).

P23 placed more emphasis on the work. She emphasized that it was her responsibility to work hard in her job and provide financial support.

Contrary to P23’s perspective, P22’s views were different. She chose to take an administrative job when she became pregnant. Previously, she had left her OB job because:

In 2007 I got pregnant and decided not to work. I stopped working on site with the OB crew [because] I did not have weekends or holidays. [I left because] I had to take care of my child [and] I like being home early and weekends with my baby. . . .Now I can spend time with my family. If I was still in OB, I would be working (personal communication, August 05, 2008).

Both P22 and P23 were faced with difficult decisions between motherhood and employment and each made a personal choice that perhaps suited her. P22 chose family and P23 chose her job. P23 felt that if she needed the promotion she was looking for, motherhood had to be put off for a while. That was contrary to what P22 did. Interestingly, some men supported P22’s decision because employers and male ICT professionals saw motherhood as disruptive to the job.
Job Responsibilities

I discovered during the interviews that supervisors and male colleagues were not supportive of women with young children to work in technical core jobs and were seen as a liability. P20 complained that women who were employed in OB were a burden to men because “women cannot lift up stuff [heavy equipment such as cameras and cables] and men still have to carry for them” (personal communication, August 05, 2008). In fact, P24, a freelancer who was also an entrepreneur said that he “would not employ young women because their presence interrupts the job . . . . [Unlike young women] older women who do not have small children can work full time and they do their responsibilities undisrupted by calls about children” (personal communication, August 05, 2008). Explanations for this pattern of job dissatisfaction have focused on differences on gender and in other individual attributes such as age. Even if women leave their jobs, their positions were so low that P4, a 36 year old Group News Editor at ETV argued that, “we’ve seen a growing number of ICT women who leave their jobs but generally women go unrecognized and unnoticed. Men still make up the vast majority of hoppers and it becomes noticeable when they leave” (personal communication, July 17, 2008). The explanation for this could be the segmented labor market theory. Segmented labor market theory suggests that the labor market is divided into a variety of categories including age, race, gender or class. This stance assists to explain the gender differentials in pay, job responsibilities in ICT occupations in South Africa.

There are perceived divisions between men’s and women’s occupations in South Africa. Another perception is that there are intentional hierarchical jobs within organizations such as senior, middle and lower level jobs with varying responsibilities
and compensation. Moreover, the results of Akooje et al., (2007) study showed that women were concentrated in end-user ICT jobs which are primarily administrative in nature. Labor markets were intentionally created and divided into primary and secondary jobs. The fact that men were concentrated in core ICT jobs and women in end-users jobs suggests that women were given jobs with low responsibilities based on their gender and/or even age. Jobs in these hierarchies created by employers can offer varying status, unequal pay, access to promotional opportunities, or even job security.

**Organizational Commitment/Loyalty and Psychological Contract**

Technology changes rapidly and employers are subjected to additional anxieties about training people who were constantly on the lookout for what job opportunities were available elsewhere in the market. This meant employers had to carefully reassess the return on investment (ROI) on job-hopping workers. Employers have the responsibility to both their staff and the bottom-line of the business. These two responsibilities are important but have conflicting implications. On the one hand, employers were usually under enormous pressure to satisfy investors, and therefore profits were frequently elevated over the concerns of staff even though Jiang and Klein (2002) rightly suggested that it would be helpful to satisfy the specific wants of ICT personnel as well. On the other hand, the negligence concerning employees’ needs and interests was perceived as disloyal and uncaring for the workers. Western researchers such as Igbari and Greenhaus (1992) indicated that organizational commitment and job satisfaction influenced turnover intentions. Among the South African and Indian IS professionals, the notion of organizational commitment was not important, although according to another study
conducted in SA, organizational commitment mattered among White IS professionals.

South African researchers Speight and Smith (2006) found that there was a correlation between job satisfaction, career satisfaction and organizational commitment, whereby individuals experiencing job satisfaction are more likely to be committed to their organization and experience career satisfaction, although these three constructs were all found to be negatively related to turnover intention (p. 128).

Similarly, among Indian IS professionals, “organizational commitment was the one variable common in the four hypotheses that were not supported. …Many [participants] did not relate to the idea of an emotional bond with an organization” (p.233). The fact that Lacity et al. (2008) found the same results in India, and that concept was considered unimportant both India and South Africa, may be indicative of confined cultural trends. Consistent with that view, as this research indicates, the high mobility of South African ICT workers demonstrated that the psychological contract had shifted from previous times when great emphasis was placed on the importance of job security and loyalty to the company, to the current environment where greater importance is placed on employability and individuals’ skills and career goals. This was consistent with the findings of Lee (2001) that many factors including training and development of staff, and has led to the changes in the psychological contract. This researcher is of the opinion that profound changes have occurred in the level of training offered by the organization to learning opportunities that are self-managed by individual employees.

Although there were good reasons to develop human resources (HR), it was devastating to employers if the organization invested in employees who declared themselves committed to the employing organization yet had already decided to leave as soon they got the work experience. Employees’ pronouncements that “I can only be as
loyal to them (employers) as they are to me” (P9, personal communication, July 24, 2008) and “I do not want to be an old furniture” in the organization (P7, personal communication with, July 22, 2008) clearly indicated the significance of the shift in psychological contract and the absence of organizational commitment and loyalty. Other scholars agreed that professionals with scarce skills were “not necessarily disloyal to their companies. Increasingly, to achieve the greatest possible success, employees have first of all to be loyal to themselves” (Van As, 2001, p. 11). This was evident in the fieldwork reports that stressed professionals having high ambitions of employment, particularly given the importance of managerial skills that were in short supply. Black professionals, who detected a lack of trust from their White counterparts, were particularly concerned with this loyalty.

In this study I discovered that it was not true that loyalty or commitment could only exist in long-standing relationships. The expansive utilization of freelancers clearly demonstrated what was practically needed; obligation to the current job, instead of long-term loyalty, was what was realistically required, and this was common among ICT workers. Freelancers worked on specific short to-medium term projects and had to commit to the work to be delivered to the client according to the agreed terms and conditions of the contract. The ICT professionals made it very clear that they were impatient and pursued what was important to them, not the employer. I therefore found it misleading that loyalty in some studies was still equated with long-term relationships in today’s ICT work environment. Perhaps other researchers need seriously to consider the suggestions of Rouse (2001) and Jiang and Klein (2002) on labor turnover outside the contexts of developed countries. The present study revealed that loyalty to the
organization could not give guarantee that professionals wanted to stay with their employers. I could not say with confidence that organizational commitment equated with length of service with any organization.

**Comparative Studies**

I came across two other studies focusing on IS professionals in the developing countries of India and SA. These studies, including the present study, investigated varying factors that influence turnover for IS professionals. According to Lacity et al. (2008), “in India, turnover rates have been reported as high as 80% in the IT services …and the lowest rates reported on turnover in Indian software services was 30%” (p. 225). In SA, the present study reported 68% annual turnover rate while the United States reported the annual turnover rate of only 25% annually, but US turnover rate led to a number of empirical studies investigating the causes of turnover. Compared to the United States, the Indian and SA turnover rates are higher and are a major problem for the ICT employers in these countries. The major contribution that the studies of Lacity et al. (2008) and Speight and Smith (2006) was the development of turnover models that were applicable to the Indian and South African contexts, respectively. Although these models simply extended two different models that were conceptualized in the West, the new models may contribute toward understanding turnover intentions in cultures other than the United States.

Although the present study and studies by Speight and Smith (2006) and Lacity et al. (2008) considered only varying factors influencing IS personnel turnover at the individual and motivational levels, the body of the literature showed that there were multiple other factors, within both the work and external environments that have a
probable impact on such personnel turnover. Lacity et al. (2008) were interested in five constructs (turnover intentions, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational alternatives, and investment in current organization). Smith and Speight (2006) investigated the impact of six career orientations of IS professionals that “could be significantly related to work-related outcome variables such as satisfaction and commitment” (p. 123). They were career satisfaction, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, career wants, perceived career haves, and organizational commitment. All these constructs are what is referred to as internal labor market factors where the organization has some control on what is going on. Unlike these two studies, which only considered factors influencing IS professionals at the individual level, the current study was different because it investigated concepts that related to both the internal and external labor market factors. It looked at the variety of internal and external labor market turnover factors such as the social networks, job satisfaction, job scope, loyalty or organizational commitment, turnover culture, government policies, demand and supply gap, and organizational rewards systems; however, only the two studies that utilized qualitative research methodology came up with additional findings. Common among the findings of the present study and the study by Lacity et al. (2008) were the issues of compensation, company policies, perceived organizational and management support, work environment, and family pressure or lifestyle integration.

The model adapted by Lacity et al. (2008) recommended that organizational commitment, the construct that has been studied and supported “in almost 50 studies on Western IS professionals,” according to Joseph et al. (2007), be replaced with organizational satisfaction among Indian IS professionals because “Indian IS
professionals could be satisfied with the organization but did not feel emotionally attached to it” (p. 234). Among the models of turnover intentions, there is strong support that job satisfaction and organizational commitment directly affected turnover intention of United States IS professionals, according to Lacity et al. (2008). This was false in India and SA, although there was a noteworthy issue reported by Speight and Smith’s 2006 study in SA.

The SA situation presented a peculiar context because Speight and Smith recommended that organizational commitment be added to Jiang and Klein’s (1996) model if it were to be applied in SA. There were conflicting results with regard to social norms, job security, and organizational commitment in the South African situation. It is usually difficult to ignore the issues of race and gender in South Africa. This 2006 study and Speight and Smith included racial analysis. An intriguing factor was the range of racial groups that participated in the present study and that was unique to SA. The latter had participants comprised of 78.3% males and 21.7% females, and this could be a reflection that the ICT industry is still dominated by males in SA. The majority of participants were White (78.3%) with Blacks constituting only 23.2%, where 9.2% were Coloreds, 7% were Asians, 7% were Africans, and 1.6% were others. Others could have been professionals such as Chinese South Africans who were unclear at the time of this study what their new official racial categorization was, as this was only clarified in 2008. The current study was also dominated by 80% males and only 20% females and Blacks constituted 77%, of which 43% were Africans, 20% were Indians, and 14% Coloreds; only 23% were White. Another interesting factor was Speight and Smith’s recommendation that organizational commitment should be added to Jiang and Klein’s
conceptual research model from what they found in SA. This was a pertinent implication arising from that finding because that is contrary to the findings of my study which was conducted in the same industry in SA with differences only in research methodology and regarding the number of participants in various racial groups.

Although Speight and Smith’s 2006 study was quantitative and could justifiably generalize their findings, they had a very low response rate. The authors acknowledged that “this represent[ed] a rather unsatisfactory response rate of 4.8% [although] the sample was large enough for statistical analysis” (p.124). They warn, however, that “the conclusions [of their study] should be considered with caution due to the small sample leading to a possible bias” (p. 128). This implies that the evidence is not significantly conclusive and suggests that any ultimate conclusion still awaited evidence and confirmation of other studies.

Organizational commitment had been supported as a determinant of turnover in Western cultures and Speight and Smith’s 2006 study in SA. It was not supported in the present study. Two years after the SA study by Speight and Smith, the current study, which was dominated by Black ICT professionals, found that organizational commitment or loyalty was a thing of the past. Loyalty was an attribute that had a potential to grow or diminish. As one ICT professional put it “SABC has changed my mind about loyalty” (personal communication with P21 on August 5, 2008). It can be concluded that some of these differences might be cultural. In SA, several racial groups may have varying attitudes toward employers due to the implementation of AA. These contradicting findings could be an indication that there are differences in the motivations of White and Black ICT professionals in South Africa. Other interesting findings were the two
important discrepancies that occurred between these two studies in SA among ICT professionals. They were job security and a further need to be of service to the industry. In contrast, the current study found that the majority of Black ICT professionals were less concerned about job security and stability. At the center of Speight and Smith’s (2006) study was the high need for job security among Whites and, and it is consistent with prevailing conditions in the South African IS employment market. As Speight and Smith suggested, employment equity legislation might have “further hamper[ed] job prospects for some groups, particularly White males” (p.128). This would be an expected outcome from this SA racial and gender group which had 78.3% representation in Speight and Smith’s study. As I found in this study, the explanation for this finding could be the fact that even though there is a lot of job hopping in SA, this is about class and race issues. Professionals who hop the most are from the designated groups, and White professionals did not move at the same rate as the Blacks. Instead, this study found that the White ICT professionals were insecure that their jobs would be taken away by Black professionals. However, some White professionals also asserted that they no longer had loyalty to their organization; and, according to Speight and Smith (2006), many South African ICT professionals immigrated to countries with more powerful and stable economies and infrastructure. This is still the desire of many White ICT professionals according to the present study.

Unlike the United States and South Africa, the majority of Indian professionals were satisfied with their salaries. This was consistent with the intrinsic motivation theory which suggests that some individuals are not necessarily motivated by money but, instead, by their passion for the job. Finally, contrary to Speight and Smith’s (2006)
findings that SA IS professionals profess their desire to serve the industry, the Indian professionals did not explicitly indicate an alternative desire that reflected that inner desire to do the job just for the love of the job or to serve for personal fulfillment. This finding signifies the differences in motivational needs of ICT professionals who may want to use their IT expertise to serve their communities in a way that they could satisfy their passion. This finding is unique in Speight and Smith study as I could not ascertain that there was any such desire in other studies in the IS and turnover literature; yet according to these researchers, “the desire has grown significantly in South Africa since 1996 and may be indicative of the local social trends” (p. 128).

In qualitative studies such as that by Lacity et al. (2008) and the present study, other constructs beyond those indicated in the turnover models emerged during the interviews, and both studies allowed those themes to be added to the findings. Lacity et al.’s study found five additional constructs— namely, management support, organizational culture, career development, supervisor support, and company policies. “Rather than add five new constructs to the model, [they] searched the literature to identify a construct rich enough to encompass all these factors [and they] selected perceived organizational support as the umbrella construct” (p. 236). Contrary to that effort, the current study mentioned various constructs that emerged under either ILMs or ELMs and added them to the model. The common constructs that emerged in these two studies were management support, career development, HR policies (which the current study refers to as ILM factors), and desire for challenging work. My findings conflicted with Speight and Smith’s 2006 study about organizational commitment except that there was desire to emigrate to the West in both of the studies. I proposed psychological
contract to replace organizational commitment which was non-existent among the ICT professionals and that was contrary to Speight and Smith (2006) study even though these studies were both done in SA.

**Turnover and Restraint of Trade Agreements**

What is distressing about all the job hopping occurring in the South African market was the absence of non-compete agreements, or what others called the restraint of trade agreements, that protect the interests of the current employer. This is in line with what Fallick, Felischman, and Rebitzer (2006) asserted about non-compete agreements.

As Fallick et al. (2006) noted in regards to Silicon Valley in California,

> The high rates of mobility by knowledgeable employees were likely to impose nontrivial costs on employers. These costs may cause employers to take actions to limit job-hopping even when the social benefits of agglomeration economies exceed the costs [because] job-hopping between companies…increases the likelihood that knowledge acquired in one firm is employed in another. These knowledge spillovers can hamper innovation by reducing the rewards to investing in human capital (p.472).

Perhaps employers need to take to heart this warning and engage in non-compete agreements which Gilson (1999) describes as “the most important legal mechanism for reducing interfirm mobility. These agreements limit an employee’s ability to work with competing firms in a specific geographic area and for a specific period of time” (p. 472). These contracts protect the employer from the transfer of confidential information about the company’s future plans, business operations, and upcoming products. If trade secrets were revealed to competitors, the damage could be devastating giving other companies a
competitive advantage. Unlike California, where such contracts are not enforced, the South African Law of Contract makes it possible to enforce such laws, and legal precedence has been set within the ICT sector. In recent months, the former chief executive officer (CEO) of the SABC was awarded more than R4.4 million for a restraint of trade agreement and told to refrain from any employment with the broadcaster’s competitors in South Africa for at least 18 months. According to one newspaper, *The Mail and Guardian Online*, the purpose of the agreement to restrain was “to safeguard the SABC's protectable interests for an agreed period” (August 14, 2009). Such agreements can reduce the possibility that an employee would work for a competitor or even a new employer in the future. Moreover, these agreements can probably encourage higher levels of investment in human capital by employers. They could perhaps help employers to temporarily reduce the high mobility of senior ICT professionals among firms.

With the rising level of competition in the South African ICT market, ICT professionals increasingly, leave their employers for new opportunities. Competition within the sector drives the labor markets as well as increased employment offers by other organizations. While the employing organization within the ICT sector may have some influence over some of the ILM factors, there are constraints that are beyond the direct control of the ICT sector.

*Career Development and Turnover*

Employees’ ambitions for professional and career development surfaced as a critical mechanism for retention in this study as well as a point of conflict between White and Black groups. Legally, South African employers are expected to train and develop
their workforce, especially members of the designated groups. Training can be provided internally by the employing organization to upgrade the skills of their workers, or the employees can be sent out for short-term courses outside the organization. Since the implementation of AA, the development focus has shifted to AA appointees who do not have the necessary skills needed in the sector. Providing employees with the most recent career and development opportunities increases their market value; however, this may also result in staff turnover. Other studies found that the deficiency in development of skills and talent in SA was the second major determinant of attrition after compensation, and that was accurate for the present study; people wanted to be multiskilled and involved in continual learning. However, the internal training provided by the organizations had become unpopular and was complicated by two factors. First, because of the fear that their jobs would be offered to Black professionals, White trainers (usually White males who would train others because of their expertise and long-term experience in the sector) decided to withhold some crucial information which ensured that the trainees did not comprehend everything. For instance, P20 and P21 decided they would not train Black professionals in outside broadcast because the latter would be given their jobs. The trainers felt that they had been overlooked and sidelined for senior positions. This finding is supported by a study by Thomas (2002) which indicated:

There is a prevalence of negative expectations about candidates from designated groups, heightened scrutiny of them, fears and resentments on the part of those who stand to lose promotional opportunities and the resultant overt and covert sabotage of the process, for example, by the withholding of information and by
the exclusion of members of designated groups from formal and informal networks and systems that assist in job progress. (p. 240)

Second, it is not cost effective for an employer to train all the members of the designated groups, who have varying levels of knowledge and competence. As a result, there is resistance from some employers to recruit from members of these groups unless the workers are already “employable” and have the training and experience required. Thomas (2002) confirmed the observation by P4 (personal communication, July 17, 2008) that “the South African workplace is characterized by (among other factors), high turnover, especially amongst those from designated groups” (p. 239). These conclusions cannot be disregarded because these problems negatively impact the ICT sector.

External Labor Market Job Turnover Factors

External labor market job turnover factors were explored next. The questions of ELMs dealt with turnover factors that were not necessarily instigated by the ICT companies but by the general operating environment in the sector. These included legislated labor laws such as the Employment Equity Act (EEA), competition within the sector, the general shortage of a skilled ICT workforce, and the demand for skilled labor. These are the influences from outside individual ICT companies and, indeed, outside the field. This study focused on what appeared to be the primary external factors bearing on turnover. Prominent in the responses was the gap between the demand for ICT workers and the supply. Research on human resource availability in South Africa has shown that the shortage of ICT professionals was a result of a number of causes such as marked expansion and emerging technologies. Although these constraints were beyond the direct

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control of the ICT sector, various industries might have some influence over some of them.

RQ 3: What do the South African ICT employees believe are the effects of affirmative action (AA) on staff turnover?

The third research question looked into the effects of AA on the South African ICT employees’ turnover. Employment in South Africa had always been legislated. Based on their gender, race, and level of education, job seekers knew clearly which professions they could choose from. However, with the advent of the new democracy in 1994, everyone was promised equal treatment and equal opportunities in the job market. Although some jobs are open to all ethnic groups, others need specialized training that South African Blacks in general did not have and would not know where or how to obtain it. The EEA generated new demands which promoted turnover but also created new incentives for companies to retain workers to meet the AA demands.

Affirmative Action and Turnover

The Role of Education

After 1994, the new SA government noted that competition for jobs was unfair to Blacks, women, and people with disabilities (Msimang, 2001). Blacks suffered from lower educational levels and were mostly employed in low-paying jobs. Until the late 1990s, when the companies were required to increase Blacks’ participation in the labor force, some employers made efforts to recruit educated Blacks while others made attempts to accommodate Blacks who were already employed. However, the impact of the Bantu Education Act (no. 47) of 1953 left an excess of poorly educated Blacks. Bantu education, according to Commey (2003), stipulated that “the concept of racial ‘purity,’ in
particular, provided a rationalization for keeping Black education inferior. . . ” It meant that] Black Africans “should be educated for their opportunities in life” and that there was no place for them “above the level of certain forms of labor” (p. 36). The educational system led to low educational achievement levels which handicapped many Africans and became an impediment to job promotions of Black professionals even when they joined the mainstream labor market. That presented unfair competition for job because employers used educational requirements as a screening tool for the jobs.

The individual’s job-related experience and the highest level of formal education were key determinants of the ability to secure suitable employment and workforce participation. These two aspects hampered the progress and integration of Blacks in management positions. It was therefore no surprise that there were a few Blacks in middle management, because they did not have the work experience related to the management of people.

The lower educational level and the inferior education and training for Blacks . . . hindered affected group members from gaining the traits and skills necessary to compete with those not disadvantaged by discrimination. In a historical context the State spent more resources on the educational advancement of Whites. The State furthermore prohibited Black persons from entering educational institutions earmarked for Whites (Greeff and Nel, 2003, p. 27).

Thus, the government's approach to education was designed to perpetuate the class division of labor along racial lines (Simmonds, 1990). The Government consciously created a Bantu education system that was inferior relative to other racial groups. The system restricted people to specific geographic areas with dismal socioeconomic
conditions. As a result, appropriate academic preparation was withheld, although some Blacks managed to gain university degrees from historically Black universities, and others left the country and went into exile where they organized alternative education programs. Although efforts were made toward improvement in education and employment for Blacks, lack of related work experience and proper education were key factors of the labor market that did not facilitate mobility and promotions to management positions of Black ICT professionals. Historically, they held jobs that tended to be unskilled and required little training. The impact of such policies can still be seen in the inequities in the distribution of skills between White and Black population groups.

Besides education and job-related experience, the gender and color of professionals determined the kind of opportunities they would have access to in the ICT sector. Black professionals and women were handpicked for career and professional development. Through professional development, these professionals who were not adequately prepared through education to hold senior positions, if they were trained at all, became competitors to Whites, thus deepening the concerns of White workers about AA because they believed that preferential placement would be given to designated groups anyway. This was true for women as well. Their gender opened doors for them. P6 got her position in management at ETV to “balance” the middle management tier in the newsroom that was male dominated. In a similar vein, P14’s feelings of tokenism reflected the company’s selection of women just to comply with the law. This therefore, meant that as long as AA is implemented the way it is, there are no opportunities for Whites.
The issue of AA was highly associated with divisiveness, vengeance, and lack of meritocracy. AA was mistakenly construed to mean that only Africans could benefit from this policy, but, in fact, Black includes Coloreds and Asians as well. In fact, AA had excluded other ethnicities such as the Chinese South Africans until June 18, 2008 when a landmark decision was made in the Pretoria High Court that Chinese South Africans (who were classified as Colored during apartheid) also qualified for the benefits of the country’s EEA and BEE. The ruling came after the Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA) went to court to establish that their members should be beneficiaries of the EEA and BEE. An order was granted that the Chinese be included under “Black people,” which already covered Africans, Coloreds, and Indians. ICT workers from these groups are part of the Black group under the EEA, but they have been marginalized in the workplace, thus perpetuating racial divisiveness among the groups. It did not make any sense to me why the Chinese South Africans were not automatically classified under Coloreds, as was the case with the previous apartheid laws. This incident confirms P8.1 and P8.2’s observation that among the Black groups, BEE and AA benefited Black Africans more than the others. The enactment of AA had upset many professionals to the extent that some chose to terminate their jobs because of it.

A country’s political and socioeconomic factors can affect what goes on within organizations, even though organizations can neither control nor insulate themselves from such market turbulences. The findings of this study suggest that the current labor South African laws, in particular EEA-regulated recruitment, which impacted certain individuals in the workplace, was problematical. The AA policy affected individuals at a personal level. The policy has worked for some people, but it was also considered unfair
and hampered the advancement of others. This study narrated the participants’ varied experiences of the successes and frustrations of the AA policy in South Africa and indicated how the segmented SA labor force views this policy. It showed that the implementation of AA affected both the direct beneficiaries and the other employees who did not directly benefit from this policy. There is no doubt that race and gender issues influenced the decisions of some workers to leave their employers.

The support or lack of support of EEA by employers and other employees led to animosity and an uneasy workplace environment for both the AA candidates and fellow workers. Furthermore, AA reinforced the already existing stereotypes, negative attitudes of both the recipients and opponents of this policy. In addition, it discouraged team spirit, work commitment, and made the workplace a battlefield where individuals with important knowledge did not transfer and disseminate skills throughout the organization because of their fears of losing their jobs to new entrants to the market. Those with long-standing knowledge refrained from sharing their expertise and choose instead to leave and work for the opposition. P4 left Radio 702 when he felt that the organization was poorly led by AA appointees. Consequently, there was neither the flow of ideas nor the skills transfer that was needed for AA beneficiaries.

To try to bring about equality among all the citizens, Manyi (2008) suggested that AA was introduced as

One of the fundamental pillars of transformation to ensure that our society is normalized using agreed and legislated policies that are protected not only by the constitution of this country but even by an international convention of the International Labor Organization (ILO).
There was no doubt that Black men and women of all races were gaining ground in middle management and perhaps technical worker positions as well. In a way, the EEA had opened doors that were closed for White women as well. The analysis of race in the ICT sector revealed that AA had increased access to the jobs that Blacks held. In fact, AA generated a high mobility of these professionals. However, the gains of these professionals were related to the voluntary vacating of previous jobs and loss to the employers.

In agreement with this view, the Business Report (October 10, 2007) projected that the spate of chief executive resignations from large South African companies could be due to AA. It concluded that:

The movement of affirmative action executives between jobs could…be a factor, as 31 percent of respondents in the survey experienced poaching of affirmative action executives, while 36 percent encountered regular headhunting of qualified and experienced Black executives by recruitment agencies” (Salgado, 2007, p.1).

This study discovered that AA exacerbated the racial tension between ethnic groups and increased dissatisfaction in the workplace. Although AA was meant to redress the imbalances of gender and race in the SA workforce, apparently, AA was hurting the SA economy in more ways than one. This study found significant factors that highly influenced the ICT workers’ intentions to terminate their employment as the result of the implementation of AA. AA was pushing ICT professionals away from their jobs for two major reasons. First was the abuse of AA in recruitment and hiring such as employing unqualified personnel, sidelining others in promotions and poor performance. The second reason concerned racial and gender tensions, which included distrust, perceived reverse
discrimination, negative feelings toward each other, labeling and/or tokenism, and use of intemperate language. By abuse I mean improper hiring practices that place unqualified people in positions of power and overlooked others for promotions in the name of AA. In addition, the view that candidates of a certain gender and race were entitled to be provided with the job without merit also counts as abuse. This was the view of those who felt AA candidates were getting preferential treatment. Furthermore, the misuse of AA for retaliation for racism and sexism was perceived as improper.

Objectively, AA required that professionals from the designated groups (Blacks and women) with the necessary and required skills be given the opportunity to partake in employment activities to integrate them into the mainstream economy. The process becomes exploitation if an individual is hired and placed in a job for reasons other than those related to the nature and scope of the job or simply so as to comply with the EEA. For instance, if the AA candidates were promoted to senior positions before they acquired the necessary skills, it was highly likely that this would negatively affect the performance of others. When the unqualified person’s poor performance and lack of skills became evident, then individuals started using derogatory terms to refer to the candidate’s poor management, lack of professionalism, or weak leadership. If co-workers felt that they could not do their work because of the incompetence of others, it lowered the morale and motivation of the other employees. In fact, some ICT workers indicated that they would leave their jobs if they were led by individuals who did not have relevant educational training in broadcasting. In turn, the beneficiaries were aggravated by characterizations of them as incompetent or lacking professionalism.
While there was gender tension caused by AA, racial tensions were stronger among the ICT professionals in SA. Although there was already mistrust between various racial groups in SA, AA contributed to the decline of relationships, and EEA had become a political minefield. The analysis showed that Whites, males in particular, were dissatisfied with AA and regarded it as discrimination in reverse. Many participants in this research did not consider AA to be the appropriate measure to correct labor market representation. Individuals were aggravated by the implementation of AA and had expected better treatment from the policy. Some felt that if SA wanted true transformation, everybody should be treated equally; and unfair labor practices should not be implemented or earlier mistakes repeated. Dissatisfaction was also expressed by other racial groups that showed distrust and had poor working relationships with each other. It was expected that AA candidates would not want to be perceived as “tokens or political appointees” so some of these left their positions looking for better welcoming work environments.

The Colored and Asian workers were disenfranchised by the AA policy as well, and they held it responsible for their lack of promotional opportunities in the sector. All these aspects indicated that AA was divisive and contributed to negativity and lack of integration among groups. It was clear that there was no amicable solution on how to best implement that policy in a way that would satisfy everyone involved. EEA is a policy whose main objective is to increase race and gender representation. It was clear that the policy was needed; it had worked to increase the number of those who were not originally represented in the sector, but there were some problems, which resulted in others leaving their jobs. Eagerness to fill positions with AA beneficiaries sometimes hurt
the ICT sector because employers made inappropriate hiring decisions. People benefited differently from AA policy, and there was resistance from those who felt they were not benefiting. Black women benefited twice: for their race and gender. In general, both Black and White males objected to this. Opponents of AA concluded that job appointments had not been based on competence but rather on gender and race. By and large, it was clear from this study that all the various groups wanted a piece of the AA pie because all the racial groups were affected by AA in a variety of ways. In search of companies that were receptive to AA appointees, beneficiaries were nevertheless fearful of being seen as tokens and concerned that their appointments were sometimes politically motivated; some chose to leave when they found other job alternatives.

*RQ. 4: How do the South African ICT staff believe a demand and supply gap affects voluntary staff turnover?*

The fourth research question explored what the South African ICT staff believed were the effects of the demand and supply gap on voluntary staff turnover. This gap, unlike the forces that arise within the field, was the result of external influences, apparently beyond the control of the individual organizations. The entry of new communication operators to the market created openings for mobility. Competition among operators widened the prospects of choice for services and opened up new avenues that contributed to an array of job opportunities which increased job hopping as I explain later.

*Competition and Turnover*

It was common practice in the typical ICT company that ICT workers were hired from outside at almost every level. Even among the most obliging employers, with regard
to internal hiring and AA recruitment, it was clear that the rate of external hiring was significant. For instance, SABC and ICASA were partially funded by the SA government and so had to implement government legislations, yet these organizations hired some of their employees from the outside. But for ICASA, recruiting from the outside was much more common at the top than at the bottom. I suspect this was because these professionals had skills that were appropriate to a specific job. Moreover, regulators normally obtained these skills by undergoing a thorough regulatory apprenticeship that required on-the-job training.

However, the consensus from the interviews differed with this view, because a large number of companies hired more workers at the junior technicians’ level than at any other level. In reality, labor markets for the junior and intermediate technicians seemed to provide adequate mobility to a considerable extent, given that the demand for skilled workers exceeded the available supply. Based on the fact that external hiring occurred at all three ICT levels, it would be surprising to find any company protected from both internal and external labor market forces. For instance, if employers could recruit even senior-level employees from the outside, then employers must be prepared to meet market reward systems in order to retain their workforce.

*Job Search Techniques*

The most interesting finding in this study related to the recruitment and hiring practices used by ICT workers. Other than the referrals, the study found two unconventional practices that were being used. The first was walk-ins to potential employers to obtain information about specific jobs. This was in contrast to the normal recruitment practice of obtaining information from the recruitment agencies, major local
newspapers, or online advertisements. I suppose the scarcity of skilled workers in the ICT field led to strategies that simplified the professionals’ job search. The second unconventional practice related to rehiring professionals who had previously left the employer in senior positions. Interviews with ICT managers confirmed their eagerness to employ people with technical experience from different sectors. Similarly, intentional poaching of workers by competitors reflected the desperate need for qualified and experienced professionals who could immediately perform their job tasks without additional training. The rehiring of workers reflects the dire need for employable professionals with relevant skills. These employment strategies expand opportunities for changing jobs, thus increasing turnover.

**RQ. 5: What turnover model best characterizes the South African ICT sector?**

The findings of the turnover model provided significant turnover factors that affected the SA ICT workers. The proposed model was premised on and extended Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model and added the SA context of new and additional constructs, such as a shift in psychological contract and turnover culture. Many South Africans did not believe that there was any loyalty between the employer and the workers. They talked about being loyal to themselves and their social networks.

**Turnover Model and SA ICT Sector**

The point of departure was that turnover was normal and acceptable in the ICT sector in South Africa. It did not occur simply because people were dissatisfied with their jobs. Leaving one’s job had become so popular that it was accepted as normal to simply leave if one wanted to. Therefore, loyalty to any organization was discarded for two reasons. First, individuals’ self-interests were upheld before the interests of the organization. In that kind of environment, the organizational commitment, turnover
culture, and turnover intentions were most often pre-existing conditions when one began a job. Second, because of the psychological contract shift between employers and employees, leaving an ICT job was normal, and there was no expectation on the part of employers that they would retain ICT professionals for long because of what P4 called a “revolving door where they (individuals from designated groups) just come in and go” (personal communication, July 17, 2008). The fieldwork observations of this study revealed that the increasing mobility of ICT workers in South Africa was a normal feature of the ICT-based economy. Even if the employers wanted to retain the workers that they had, competition for the ICT professionals was extremely fierce, and workers were snatched up and would not last long with any employer. This was in line with the conclusions of Rouse (2001) that IT professionals were bombarded with high salaries to attract them.

I therefore propose that loyalty or long-term organizational commitment should not be added as a turnover construct that could affect SA ICT workers. The greatest emphasis must be placed on the shift of the psychological contract between the employer and the employees. This conclusion was based on the fact that normalcy or validation of a certain behavior practiced over a period of time became a norm which in turn became part of ICT culture. The normalcy of turnover culture has not been extensively studied, and this construct provided a unique explanation for the SA ICT turnover.

Unlike the claim in previous studies that individuals take a particular path when they are dissatisfied with their jobs, I argue that in societies where turnover is normalized, people emulate others with similar attributes so as to gain acceptance and, to feel comfortable and welcome within their homogenous groups. To validate this argument, I explore the social networks, organizational rewards, affirmative action, competition and
the effects of hiring decisions, including new methods to recruit ICT professionals. I finally conclude that because of the shift in psychological contract between employers and employees, people were no longer loyal to the organizations.

The turnover model developed from this study indicates that there is no one path to actual turnover for the ICT workers. Leaving one’s job can be sparked by a variety of issues, ranging from individual attributes to ILMs and ELMs. Those turnover issues then triggered the drive to search for jobs and ultimately propelled workers to leave their current employer. Figure 12 indicates the turnover decision paths followed by South African ICT workers.

Figure 12. Turnover decision paths for SA ICT workers.
Based on the respondents’ interviews, it became clear that individual attributes such as race and gender influenced ICT professionals to think of leaving because of the perceived employment opportunities driven by AA for South Africa’s designated groups. On the one hand, as shown in Table 7 female professionals tended to be ICT users. Women looking for career growth had a perception that women’s ease of movement within ICT companies was still imperfect because of corporate cultures. This was consistent with the analogy of women hitting a glass ceiling in Western cultures (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Wirth, 2001), referring to corporate barriers that prevent women from taking leadership positions in organizations (Smith, 2000). Within the SA ICTs, this study found that women were considered weak especially for ICT jobs that required physical labor. Some men disapproved of women in OB who could not lift heavy equipment and “men still have to carry for them” (P20, personal communication, August 05, 2008). Therefore, it was concluded that female professionals were likely to have greater turnover intentions than their male counterparts. Moreover, age and tenure in the industry also increased the desires of young ICT workers to quit their jobs.

I concluded that AA continued to sustain the high mobility among educated and experienced Blacks and women because they constantly looked for jobs because they knew of employers’ need for labor policy compliance. In some cases, White males left because of dissatisfactions relating to being supervised by individuals who obtained jobs without merit. The stigma associated with AA also made some people uncomfortable and led to decisions to leave. In addition, as Joseph, Ng, Koh, and Ang (2007) indicated, one’s education is one attribute that indicates potential productivity and therefore,
influences one’s employability (p.553). The experiences and education of the ICT professionals made them more marketable but also the most likely to leave.

For internal labor market factors, it became clear that social networks, specifically professional workgroups, assisted those who had intentions to leave their employers. Money and recognition through internal promotions were the highest determinants in making decisions to leave. However, the distrust between employers and employees toward career and training opportunities had reduced the level of loyalty between them. Neither party wanted to invest resources in activities that would not yield any return on investment. Although educational achievement was usually correlated with getting the first job among ICT University students, additional school appeared to have an impact for junior technicians. They wanted their employers to provide further training or allow them to continue to train. Restated, it was observed that technicians wanted to continue to learn about new technologies and other topics of interest in their field.

Training and development was regarded among ICT core workers because it increased their marketability and ability to ascend to senior positions. As a result, the employer’s lack of provision for training and development opportunities was perceived as contrary to the needs of staff, so employees felt they could leave at any time that was convenient to them. In addition, people who had stayed longer in organizations wanted to be compensated for their experience and commitment to the employers. Because of the fierce competition in the sector, the professionals’ choices have expanded and there were alternative job opportunities not only in their current industries but also within the ICT sector as a whole.
More importantly, the external labor market factors sustained the increased mobility of the workers in this study. The new work environment in South Africa has opened up employment opportunities for qualified ICT workers. There were many new players who competed for the same ICT talent, and that had increased the marketability of the experienced and skilled workers. There was evidence that EEA contributed to the departures of ICT workers.

Limitations of Study

Methodological Blind Spots

All methods have their drawbacks; snowball and in-depth interviewing are no exception. There were some methodological blind spots for this dissertation that I need to acknowledge. Although the advantages seemed to outweigh the shortcomings, the criticism of the selection method for this study took two forms. First, the snowball method was biased toward highly connected respondents, and it gave preferential treatment to those participants. For instance, I had been interviewing mostly Black men at one TV station and had not been getting any referral to White interviewees, yet I could see them in the corridors of the building. P20, a White male, happened to walk in the crew room where I was interviewing, and I decided to take advantage of the situation and asked him if he would participate in my research. After I told him what my research was about, he agreed to participate and I took his contact details to schedule a meeting. Two days after my interview with P20, other White males approached me and told me that they wanted to talk about the EEA. Although I have no evidence that P20 said anything to them, I feel that those participants would not have been part of this research if I had completely relied on others to determine participants for me. Had they not been proactive
and decided to speak up, these minorities might not have been identified as possible participants. Similarly, only a few women were nominated, and I decided to purposely recruit them when I saw them on the sites, especially in those stations where I was granted permission to come at any time.

As indicated earlier, only a few women agreed to be interviewed; others misrepresented their contact details and gave false telephone numbers. I learned from that experience that the participation process should be drafted prior to the sampling to encourage participation from a variety of potential contacts because the snowball approach aims to locate information-rich key informants (Patton, 1990). Also, the researcher has to ensure a diversity of contacts by widening the profile of persons involved in snowball interviewing. Furthermore snowball technique tended to “discover agents that [reside] inside a single component of the communication industry” (Tsvetovat & Sharabati, 2006, p. 1). For instance, in the ICT regulatory sector, this research got to a stage where the respondents were suggesting names that had been recommended earlier by others. When I commented that I had already seen most of them, the participants admitted that there was a recycling of expertise in their industry. The final limitation was the bias toward broadcasters and telecom regulators. I did not have personal contacts from the Internet service providers (ISPs) and I ended up interviewing respondents from broadcasting and regulation. The study was therefore dominated by participants from broadcasting and telecom regulation.

Recommendations

This research set out to find answers to research questions related to causes of turnover of ICT workers in South Africa. ILM turnover factors, which include social
network formations and the resultant shift in the psychological contract between employees and employers, has influenced the job hopping of ICT workers. Psychological contract theory has in recent years become the key area of research in organizational behavior and human resource management. The interest in that area was sparked by changing global business tendencies as managers attempt to keep their skilled HR during the convergence of ICTs. In addition, academic scholars continually investigate the changing employment trends influencing the employee mobility in today’s job markets.

Organizations need to be aware of the most current cost-effective job search techniques that their competitors use. Some of the techniques observed saved employers millions of rands recruiting professionals whose skills have been tried and tested. First, however, HR managers need to understand the importance of the restraint of trade agreements, especially for senior ICT employees who might choose to work for competitors when they have confidential information that may render the current employer to be at a competitive disadvantage. Second, managers need to comprehend that organizational commitment could be high but not last long. These characteristics are only short-lived and self-interest or self-worth took the precedence. Third, employers need to be wary of being the training agents for their competitors. To ensure competency and attraction of professionals, companies need to align their training needs to the ambitions of their employees. It appeared that career pathing was most desired by the workers. According to Byars and Rue (2000),

Career pathing is a technique that addresses the specifics of progressing from one job to another in the organization. It can be defined as a sequence of developmental activities involving informal and formal education, training, and
job experiences that help make an individual capable of holding more advanced jobs (p.234).

In other words, the significance of education had not shifted. The exchange of ideas and clear communication would reduce anxiety caused by uncertainty about when things would happen and address the development needs, career opportunities, and the accessibility to stimulating work activities for staff because a challenging work environment is highly significant to the ICT professionals (Burnes, 2006).

Many other themes and topics emerged during the course of this study beyond the ones that have been highlighted in this work. Among those that could be addressed in a longer presentation of this information would be the turnover consequences of the mismatch of salary and performance with the job title. These resulted in conflicts between senior and junior employees in the areas of work underload and overload especially where there was understaffing. Titles indicated mastery of certain technologies and, when ignored, affected job search and turnover. Recognition from management was an ILM factor that was often overlooked to the detriment of the organization’s ability to retain employees. While interdepartmental recruiting within the employing organization was recognized as a factor by some of the participants, the question remained whether it was a significant contributor to the turnover question. Issues brought up in the course of the research conducted here include addressing what might become a turnover culture, anticipating mass departures, assessing how parenthood and employment could be helped to complement each other, and evaluating the consequences of immigration.

Researchers continually attempted to develop an understanding of the complications of various constructs relative to job hopping and mobility among ICT
professionals. The increasing competition and new players in the ICT sector have provided a large area for scholarly research to explore and explain new findings. If such studies were done, there’s a chance that mature theories might be extended or new theories developed. Specifically, the present study recommends to other scholars that the previous theories of loyalty are no longer accurate for the South African ICT workers. Extended organizational attachment did not necessarily promise any long-term relationship between the employer and the employee. The impact of current global market activities, such as recessions, lay-offs, domestic labor laws, and the demand for specific skills has heightened the changing psychological contract between the employer and the employee. Therefore, all these ongoing market changes and behaviors must be fully investigated and understood. Finally, as the world is becoming smaller because of technological advancements and their convergence, an understanding of other nations and of the cultural influences on job markets becomes critical in a global economy. Cultural experiences are unique and impacted by changing market forces. Research undertaken in this area could help management and turnover theorists explain and decrease the high turnover rates of these scarce and in-demand professionals. I recommend the inclusion of the change in the psychological contract as the major determinant for turnover for the SA ICT workers in Lee and Mitchell’s unfolding model of voluntary turnover as presented by Rouse (2001) as one of the elements. The elements of turnover culture and labor laws need to be emphasized as unique to the South African work environment.

The knot of causes and effects in examining labor market job turnover factors was tempting to undo. But it needed not be unraveled to suggest remedies. Each of the elements discussed here proved to have various degrees of influence on ICT labor market
turnover. Some of these occurred as company and ILM forces while others were externally generated. But all of them were amenable to some degree of control by employers. Most were familiar management practices and not so innovative as to elicit resistance.

This study suggests that investments in training, both in Universities and on site would make significant contributions to the supply side, contributions that could help the industry expand with less disruption from turnovers. Both the employers and the employees could benefit from cooperative job listings; that is, companies would advertise their openings in a pool arrangement rather than in secret. Cooperation could reduce competition. Open communication in a company could also have substantial benefits. Management personnel could listen to employee needs, ranging from a need for variety in work assignments to security in one’s position. Open communication could make efforts such as enhancing sensitivity to affirmative action efforts more effective. It could also supply advance warning of mass exoduses. Funds saved in these efforts might even pay for retention bonuses. Finally, it is recommended that South African ICT employers consider the utilization of the non-compete contracts, particularly for their senior workers in the three geographic areas of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban.

Research Contribution

Lacity, Iyer, and Rudramuniyaiah (2008) and Jiang and Klein (2002), in their studies on job turnover, recommended that contributions from other cultures other than the developed world need to be explored. As Mourmant and Gallivan (2007) suggested with regard to turnover, various workplace situations were likely to result in unique individual considerations by individuals. Specifically related to the South African ICT
professionals, and given its shortcomings detailed earlier, the present study makes recommendations in two areas. The first, is the issue of loyalty to self versus the employers. Interviews in this study have shown that the previous assertion that employees should be loyal and put their employer first have become a thing of the past. ICT professionals were not intimidated by employers’ ILMs if they disagreed with them. The professionals’ needs were simple and clear; they wanted to develop, be challenged, and rewarded. Second, in South Africa, the labor market has been fundamentally interrupted by EEA. This study determined that AA had negatively impacted a segmented labor force and accelerated the turnover and mobility trends of the divergent ICT worker groups affected by the EEA in differing ways. The objective of EEA was sound, but faulty implementation became hurtful to both the internal and external labor markets.

Suggestion for Future Research

We have seen from this research that there are many turnover factors in converging ICT work. However, it became clear that this was an area available for expansive exploration. Future scholars might want to pursue research in the following areas. First, studies of a similar nature, which investigate turnover factors in other cultures, need to be done to test the turnover constructs that are found in literature in developed countries. That might help to compare the outcomes that emerge in other contexts. In South Africa, it would be valuable to investigate the unexpected intentional rehiring procedure of ICT workers in order to determine whether it could be classified as a voluntary or involuntary turnover factor. Second, future research needs to find out why the intermediate-level ICT staff members at some organizations such as the SABC prefer internal turnover and just want to circulate within the corporation. Further studies need to
investigate how the omission of a non-compete agreement sustains the high mobility employment for ICT workers. Many South African ICT professionals regarded turnover as a normal and an accepted practice. Future studies need to investigate if a high turnover culture reflects the acceptance of turnover as part of working norms.

Although remuneration was a major issue among ICT males in South Africa, female participants in the present study did not complain about their salaries. P23 indicated that money was one thing that motivated her to change jobs but the majority of women were happy that they were able to pay their bills although they would appreciate more money. Although gender differences towards pay did not emerge in this study, as more women are making inroads to the prominent positions as managers in the ICT sector, pay differentials for women in the West have been identified as one of the major issues in the workplace; future studies could benefit to delve more into the experiences of women in terms of pay differential, obligatory three months maternity leave stipulated in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the absence of paternity leave which implies that primary responsibilities for household and child care are still seen as part of the woman’s job. More attention should be devoted to the possible gender disparities developmental opportunities and other responsibilities as well.

In addition to advancing our knowledge about these issues, the study raises many other questions that could be addressed in future research. One, it would be of interest to reexamine the motivational factor of turnover culture among specific industries such as broadcasting and IT independently and tease out these different industries at greater length. Second, it would be of value to expand on the turnover differences between the IT and broadcasting technicians. Finally, technicians and management are two groups that
have varying perspectives and experiences about turnover; it would be beneficial to be more specific in analyzing these different structural levels. Finally, the analysis of centralized and decentralized organizational structures that could be looked into to possibly expand the job scope of ICT professionals.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Confidentiality Policy
I am Adele Mavuso Mda, a doctoral student in the School of Media Arts and Studies (formerly School of Telecommunications) at Ohio University in the United States. I am working on a dissertation research as part of my doctoral studies. I have contacted you to participate in this study because you are employed in the South African ICT industries. I am interested in understanding the reasons why South African ICT professionals intend to stay or leave their current employers. Specifically, I am looking at professionals employed in the ICT industries with 2 to 10 years of experience. Participants must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research. I shall highly appreciate your cooperation. The interview will be tape-recorded, but only the researcher will have access to the full transcriptions. This interview will take about 1 hour to complete. The interview consists of questions asked in organizational, management and employment areas. If there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, please feel free to point them out to me and we will go on to the next question. You have the option of ending this interview anytime. Portions and quotations from this interview may appear in my final dissertation report but I will remove any personal references. Your name and company will be kept anonymous. Can we continue? Thank you for your participation.

Identification of Interviewees

Interviewee’s Code No.: P----------------- Date: -------------- Time: -------
Location of Interview:---------------------------------------- Gender: ------
Ethnicity: ---------------------------------------- Education: ----------------------------------------
Occupation: ---------------------------------------- Age: ----------------------------------------
Evolution of the Participants’ Jobs in ICT Industries

1. Could you tell me about how long you have worked in ICTs?
2. How did you get this job?
3. Was it a promotion or did you come from elsewhere?
4. Tell me about your experiences in other jobs - prior to accepting your current position.
5. Tell me about the departures themselves from other jobs.

I. Turnover Models

Organizational Commitment
1. Feelings about the current company
2. Could you tell me about your relationship with this organization?
3. How important is the relationship to you?
4. How difficult is it for you to leave your job?

Turnover Intentions
1. Tell me about where you see yourself in the near future (in a year’s time).
2. Could you tell me if you are actively looking for alternatives?

II. Turnover Culture
1. Relationships with social / professional groups
2. Extent and Nature of social contacts and communication about job opportunities.
3. Philosophy (ies) regarding attachment and loyalty with your networks.

Probes if necessary:
1. Tell me if you have followed any acquaintances when they left for other jobs.
2. Could you tell me if there are situations where you were influenced by others to stay in your job?
3. Is leaving your job easy and accepted practice for you?
4. How often have you left your jobs since you joined the industry?

III. Job Satisfaction and Organizational Reward Systems

Job Satisfaction
1. Tell me how you feel about your job (What parts make you happy or unhappy?)
2. Concerning your current job, what do you like about the work you do?
3. Concerning your current job, what do you not like about the work you do?

Rewards/Costs:
1. Are you generally satisfied with your compensation?

IV. Demand and Supply Gap

Organizational Alternatives
1. Tell me how easy / difficult it is to get a job with the specific skills that you have.
2. [If appropriate] are equal or better jobs readily available to you in other organizations?

V. Affirmative Action / Employment Equity Act

1. Could you tell me about your feelings about the EEA requirements and goals?
2. What are some of the problems / benefits of EEA enforcement?
3. Tell me if the problems / benefits of EEA make you leave your job?

Probes if necessary:
1. Is EEA beneficial to you? If yes / no how?
2. What do you want in order that your services can be retained by your company?
3. Finally, is there anything that we haven’t covered that is important to your overall satisfaction with your current job or current employer?
APPENDIX II: DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Titles</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Tenure in ICT</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Manager: Broadcasting Regulation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Colored</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>MA: Communication</td>
<td>ICASA</td>
<td>June 26, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Group News Editor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>ND Journalism</td>
<td>e-TV</td>
<td>July 17, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Assignments Editor</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dev. Admin</td>
<td>e-TV</td>
<td>July 17, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Senior Manager Regulatory</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Law: USA</td>
<td>Neotel</td>
<td>July 22, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>P8.1</td>
<td>Head of IT</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>BCOM: CS</td>
<td>e-TV</td>
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<tr>
<td>P8.2</td>
<td>Deputy Manager IT</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>IT Certificate</td>
<td>e-TV</td>
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<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Broadcast Systems Administrator</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Diploma IT</td>
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<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Product Manager</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>Colored</td>
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<td>BCOM</td>
<td>Neotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Regulatory Manager</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>BA; LLB</td>
<td>Neotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>P16</td>
<td>Systems Specialist</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>ND IT; MGIS</td>
<td>SABC Newsroom</td>
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<td>P17</td>
<td>Senior Systems Administrator</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>N3 (NTC3)</td>
<td>SABC</td>
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<tr>
<td>P18</td>
<td>Senior Technician High Technology</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>P19</td>
<td>Specialist Final Controller</td>
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<td>August 05, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P21</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>N. Higher D. in Engineering</td>
<td>SABC (OB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>P22</td>
<td>Coordinator: Quality Assurance and Control</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>SABC (OB)</td>
<td>August 05, 08</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>P23</td>
<td>Assistant Director: TV News</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Diploma in HR</td>
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<td>P24</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>N6 Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>SABC (TV News)</td>
<td>August 05, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P25</td>
<td>Executive Head Special Regulation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>LLM – Master of Laws</td>
<td>Vodacom</td>
<td>August 07, 08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P27</td>
<td>Production Assistant</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>BA. Comm.</td>
<td>SABC (TV News)</td>
<td>August 07, 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>P28</td>
<td>Vision Controller</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>A+ Diploma in Engineering</td>
<td>SABC (TV News)</td>
<td>August 07, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P29</td>
<td>Head: Regulatory Compliance</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>BLC, LLB, LLM - (intellectual property) LLM (Corporate Law)</td>
<td>CELL C</td>
<td>August 08, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P30</td>
<td>Manager: Regulatory Affairs</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>African</td>
<td>Law (Canada)</td>
<td>CELL C</td>
<td>August 08, 08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P31</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>ND Engineering</td>
<td>SABC</td>
<td>August 11, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P32</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P33</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Colored</td>
<td>Diploma in Engineering</td>
<td>SABC</td>
<td>August 12, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P34</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>ND Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>SABC</td>
<td>August 12, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P35</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Diploma Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>SABC</td>
<td>August 12, 08</td>
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<td>P36</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Higher ND B/Casting</td>
<td>SABC</td>
<td>August 12, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P37</td>
<td>Vision Controller</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Higher ND B/Casting</td>
<td>SABC (TV News)</td>
<td>August 05, 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>P38</td>
<td>Councilor</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>MA. Comm. &amp; Econ.</td>
<td>ICASA</td>
<td>August 08, 08</td>
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### APPENDIX III: ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>Asynchronous Transfer Mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIBD</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCCSA</td>
<td>The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>Black Economic Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEMAWU</td>
<td>The Broadcast, Electronic Media and Allied Workers’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Board of Trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDMA</td>
<td>Code Division Multiple Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWMWA</td>
<td>The Communications Workers’ Union and the Media workers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOL</td>
<td>Department of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTT</td>
<td>Digital Terrestrial Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>Employment Equity Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELMs</td>
<td>External Labor Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco</td>
<td>Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>Final Control Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRA</td>
<td>Job Reservation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSE</td>
<td>Johannesburg Stock Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>International Business Machines Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICASA</td>
<td>Independent Communications Authority of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Cricket Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEEE</td>
<td>Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILMs</td>
<td>Internal Labor Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labor Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KZN</td>
<td>KwaZulu Natal</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTN</td>
<td>Mobile Telephone Networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWASA</td>
<td>The Media Workers’ Association of South Africa (MWASA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAS</td>
<td>New Automation System</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>TV Outside Broadcasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>Return on Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROT</td>
<td>Restraint of Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SABC</td>
<td>South African Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAPA</td>
<td>South African Press Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATRA</td>
<td>South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNO</td>
<td>Second National (telcom) Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VANS</td>
<td>Value added networks services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITS</td>
<td>Witwatersrand University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Affirmative Action refers to “voluntary and mandatory efforts undertaken by … governments and private employers…to combat discrimination and to promote equal opportunity in …employment for all. The goal of AA is to eliminate discrimination against women and ethnic minorities and to redress the effects of past discrimination” (Crosby, Iyer &amp; Clayton, 2003, p. 94).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>Asynchronous Transfer Mode: An advanced data transmission technology that utilizes fixed length packets (48 bytes: 8 bits per byte) to carry voice, video, and data signals on the same telecommunications line (Flournoy, 2004, p.443).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>Black Economic Empowerment is a government policy that promotes new opportunities for Black people to have ownership in various industries and have control over economic activities in all the sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Board of Trustees: The governing body of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDMA</td>
<td>Code Division Multiple Access: A wideband, spread-spectrum technology used to increase information capacity as well as security by managing the available radio spectrum differently (Flournoy, 2004, p.445).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>The Employment Equity Act 1998 is an employment legislation that contains a number of provisions providing for affirmative action and protection against, amongst other things, unfair discrimination and sexual harassment. The Act applies to all employers (public and private sectors) and uses gender neutral language (ILO, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEEE</td>
<td>Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers: A professional association that helps set telecommunications system standards (Flournoy, 2004, p.450).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSE</td>
<td>Johannesburg Stock Exchange is the largest stock exchange in Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICASA</td>
<td>Independent Communications Authority of South Africa: An agency of the South African government reporting to the</td>
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</table>
Department of Communication that regulates various matters relating to communications.

ICT

Information and Communication Technology. According to Islam and Islam (2006), ICT is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store, retrieve and manage information. ICT includes both networks and applications. Networks include fixed, wireless and satellite telecommunications, broadcasting networks. Well-known applications are the internet, database management systems and multimedia tools (p.809-810).

Microwave:

Line-of-sight, point-to-point transmission of signals at frequencies above 1000 MHz (1GHz), used both in terrestrial and satellite communications (Flournoy, 2004, p.450).

ROT

Restraint of Trade is a contract in which one party (the employee) agrees with another (the employer) to limit or restrict his freedom in the future to trade with another external party who was not a party to the employer/employee contract.

VANS

Verizon partners describe value added networks system as a communication network that provides features beyond basic transmission of information. For example, a data network that provides protocol translation or a voice network with enhanced call routing or distribution features. 