The Psychology of Lateness, Absenteeism, and Turnover

GARY JOHNS

Psychological processes underlying lateness, absenteeism, and turnover are reviewed. These processes have historically been dominated by a withdrawal model that assumes that the behaviors are the product of unfavorable job attitudes. It is argued that although the withdrawal model is useful for understanding the three behaviors, its dominance is something of an historical accident that is not well justified by contemporary meta-analytic evidence. Elaborations of the withdrawal model, including progression of withdrawal and the general withdrawal construct, are discussed. Alternatives to the withdrawal model include a social model and a dispositional model. The social model takes into account demography, social networks, and normative and cultural mechanisms. Dispositional perspectives center around personality and integrity constructs.

INTRODUCTION

The early days of work and organizational psychology were dominated by practical applications (Dunnette, 1976). Consequently, arriving at work late (Motley, 1926), being absent from work (Kornhauser & Sharp, 1932), and quitting work (Bezanson & Schoenfeld, 1925) were some of the first phenomena studied by work psychologists. Although these so-called work withdrawal behaviors have a long history of research prompted by their potential for cost and disruption, they have not until fairly recently profited from the kind of theoretical development that they deserve.

The labeling of lateness, absence, and turnover as withdrawal behaviors possibly originated with Hill and Trist's (1953, 1955) influential studies of accidents, absence, and turnover in a steel mill. The essential problem with the withdrawal label is that it connotes a single cause or motive to behaviors that are surely complexly determined. As such, the notion of withdrawal has exerted influence on research in this area well beyond its empirical basis.

Nevertheless, as a convention I will use the generic label withdrawal behaviors to refer to lateness, absence, and turnover and the term withdrawal model to refer to a model that posits attitudinal causes for the behaviors.

Given space restrictions, it is impossible to review the vast literature on withdrawal spanning antecedents, processes, outcomes, management, and methodology. Rather, I restrict myself to defining the behaviors, discussing their essential similarities, and reviewing three psychological models that pertain to the behaviors: the withdrawal (attitudinal) model, the social model, and the dispositional model. Although these models fit the purview of this handbook, it should be recognized that economists, sociologists, physicians, and epidemiologists have also had some useful things to say about withdrawal. The chapter concludes with ideas for improving research in the withdrawal domain.

Among the withdrawal behaviors, absence and turnover are covered most thoroughly because they have received the most research attention. However, lateness research has also contributed
to our understanding of withdrawal, and it is incorporated as warranted in what follows.

DEFINITIONS AND OPERATIONALIZATIONS

Adler and Golan (1981: 544) define lateness as "the tendency of an employee to arrive at work after the scheduled starting time." Johns (1995: 1) defines absenteeism as "the failure to report for scheduled work." Martocchio and Harrison (1993: 263) define it as "an individual's lack of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for him or her to be there." Thus, absence is the logical opposite of attendance. Price (1977: 4) defines turnover as "the degree of individual movement across the membership boundary of a social system." Lee (1997: 97) describes it as "the termination of an individual's formal membership with an organization." In any event, turnover is not the opposite of tenure, the amount of time a person has been employed by an organization.

These traditional definitions have in common physical removal from a particular workplace, either for part of a day, an entire day, or permanently. Thus, implicit in each is time allocation. Also, the unit of analysis in each case is the individual employee. Although lateness, absence, and turnover can all be expressed as rates of behavior that pertain to workgroups, departments, or organizations, such applications are less common in organizational psychology than might be imagined. The vast majority of research in psychology and management frames the withdrawal behaviors as dependent or criterion variables. Thus, the consequences of these behaviors have received much less theoretical and empirical scrutiny than their predictors (exceptions include Goodman & Atkin, 1984; Price, 1976, 1989; Staw, 1980; Tharenou, 1993). Finally, most research frames withdrawal behaviors as negative behaviors from the organization's point of view, presumably due to cost or disruption. This is so taken for granted that relevant underlying assumptions are seldom mentioned.

Most academic psychological research concerning lateness, absence, and turnover uses data from employee personnel files to measure the behaviors. Lateness is generally expressed as minutes late or the number of lateness incidents, both aggregated over some period of time ranging from several weeks to a year. There has been very little research on the psychometric properties of lateness data, although Blau (1994) presents a taxonomy of lateness (increasing chronic, stable periodic, avoidable) based on patterns of frequency and duration. Although there are many ways to count and aggregate absence data, many methods exhibit poor reliability and validity, especially in terms of presumptions about motivation and volition.

Contemporary research most often relies on total time lost (days) or frequency, the number of inceptions irrespective of duration. Typical aggregation periods range from 3 to 12 months. Chadwick-Jones, Nicholston and Brown (1982) and Hackett and Guion (1985) present evidence for the reliability and validity of these two measures. Johns (1994b) reviews the psychometric properties of a wide range of self-report measures of absence, the most salient of which is a marked tendency for underreporting.

Turnover is usually expressed as the occurrence of voluntary separation from an employer during some arbitrary time window ranging from a few months to well over a year. This arbitrary, cross-sectional treatment of time has been criticized by advocates of event history or survival analysis approaches (e.g., Somers & Birnbaum, 1999; Peters & Sheridan, 1988). Campion (1991) discusses the validity of the assumption of voluntariness and alternative conceptions of turnover, including that thought to be functional for the organization.

THE WITHDRAWAL MODEL

At its core, the withdrawal model assumes that withdrawal behaviors occur in response to unfavorable job or work attitudes. Prominent among these are job dissatisfaction and low organizational commitment. Hulin (1991) provides the most complete statement of this model, arguing that the various manifestations of withdrawal constitute means of adapting to unfavorable job attitudes. The meaning of adaptation is not very clear. On one hand, the idea of avoidance or escape from negative work situations figures prominently in the notion of withdrawal. On the other hand, more proactive and restorative notions are also connoted by adaptation (Hackett & Bycio, 1996; Staw & Oldham, 1978). Hulin (1991) and Hanisch, Hulin and Rosnowski (1998) assert that exactly which withdrawal behavior is enacted in response to negative attitudes is partially a function of existing constraints on the other behaviors (cf. Johns, 1991).

Below it will be argued that:

1) the withdrawal model is useful in understanding lateness, absence, and turnover;
2) its usefulness is sometimes exaggerated at the expense of other models;
3) this perceived usefulness was something of an historical accident;
4) turnover research particularly suffered from the hegemony of the withdrawal model.

Some History

During the decade spanning 1955 to 1964 several key publications in work and organizational
psychology appeared that would profoundly shape research concerning withdrawal behaviors for many years to come. Each of these publications summarized empirical evidence bearing on a key premise of the human relations movement, the belief that positive attitudes toward one's work and organization would result in a wide variety of favorable organizational outcomes, including enhanced productivity and reduced accidents, lateness, absence, and turnover. The felicity of these outcomes for the war effort provides a notable subtext to the earlier research (cf. Tansey & Hyman, 1992).

In their influential review of the attitude–work behavior literature, Brayfield and Crockett (1955: 408) concluded that there was little appreciable relationship between attitudes and performance, but that 'the data are suggestive mainly of a relationship between attitudes and two forms of withdrawal from the job [absence and turnover]'. In an independent review conducted at the same time but published later in book form, Herberg, Mausner, Peterson and Capwell (1957: 111) were more favorably inclined toward an attitude–performance connection. However, they also concluded that a stronger relationship existed for withdrawal, describing attitudes as 'unequivocally related' to both absence and turnover. Finally, Vroom (1964: 186) reported 'a consistent negative relationship' between job satisfaction and turnover, 'a less consistent negative relationship' between satisfaction and absenteeism, and 'no simple relationship' between satisfaction and performance.

A cogent argument can be made that the conclusions of the three reviews cited above established the status of a withdrawal-from-dissatisfaction model as appropriate for describing absence and turnover (and by extension, lateness) and did so by virtue of the presumed contrast to research on performance as much as any strong connection between satisfaction and absence or turnover. Subsequent qualitative reviews of the absenteeism and turnover literature (Muchinsky, 1977; Muchinsky & Tuttle, 1979; Nicholson, Brown & Chadwick-Jones, 1976; Porter & Steers, 1973; Price, 1977) indicated that the withdrawal model exerted something of a theoretical closed shop on withdrawal research, as other approaches to studying the behaviors simply tended to report atheoretical associations with demographic variables or organizational variables such as work unit size.

A Controversial Assertion

It is my contention that the closed shop that the withdrawal model exerted on absenteeism research began to falter in the early 1980s but that it persisted in turnover research, to its detriment. This course of events stemmed from a series of publications in the domain of absenteeism that unfroze researchers' attitudes about the behavior and a parallel series of publications that solidified the extant turnover paradigm.

In 1976, Nicholson et al., published a qualitative review of the satisfaction–absence literature that included substantial original data. Going against the prevailing paradigm, they concluded that there was little if any connection between the two variables. Although the authors might have been overinfluenced by their own unoptimistic data (Hackett, 1989), this assault on the withdrawal model gained notice. It also corresponded to emerging research that work attitudes did little to supplement more distal influences on absence, such as demographics and job characteristics (Johns, 1978). At the same time, Steers and Rhodes (1978) presented the first version of the demand model of attendance (Steers & Rhodes, 1978, 1984; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Although this model incorporated job satisfaction, it rejected it as a principal cause and also considered pressure to attend (e.g., work ethic, group norms, economic conditions, reward system) and ability to attend (e.g., sickness, family matters), factors that might run counter to work attitudes. Importantly, the model reminded researchers of the complexity of attendance behavior. Equally importantly, although its premises stimulated research (reviewed by Rhodes & Steers, 1990), the larger model itself did not become the focus of intensive, repeated testing.

Other publications contributed to the unfreezing of the withdrawal model's hold on absence research. Chadwick-Jones et al. (1982) presented theory and data that framed absenteeism as a product of social exchange. The same year, Johns and Nicholson (1982) urged researchers to look beyond the withdrawal model, recognize the social context of absenteeism, and incorporate a wider range of methodologies. The call for a more social, contextual, view of absence was perhaps the most notable contribution of these publications.

A final point that might be made concerning the work that emerged in theev period under consideration has to do with research on technologies to manage or control absenteeism. In a word, this research can be described as eclectic, ranging from financial incentives (Schwartz, 1985), to self-management (Frayne & Latham, 1987), to alternative working schedules (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright & Neuman, 1999). Importantly, this research was not grounded in a single theoretical model, such as the withdrawal model. Thus, the tendency for prevailing technology to calcify theory (cf. psychoanalysis and Freudian theory) was not a salient issue.

Recently, two comprehensive independent reviews of the absenteeism literature have appeared. Johns (1997) concluded that great strides had been made in absenteeism research in the preceding 15 years, citing advances in the understanding of absence cultures, how people view their own
absence behavior, and other approaches that do not rely on withdrawal model dynamics. Examining roughly the same retrospective period, Harrison and Mantochiu (1998: 342) described absence research as 'healthy, robust, cumulative' and having 'vigor, vitality, and variety.' Tellingly, Johns (1998a) recounted the wide variety of research methods that was used to achieve this state of affairs.

Following the three seminal reviews concerning withdrawal that were published between 1955 and 1964, the withdrawal model dominated turnover research into the 1990s (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). As will be seen shortly, this persistence is not well explained by the meta-analytic evidence concerning the relation between job satisfaction and turnover. What, then, does explain it?

During the 1955–1964 period, March and Simon (1958) published the immensely influential book *Organizations*. In this book, they developed a model designed to explain the motivation to 'participate' in organizations, a model that was meant to explain the quit–stay decision. Basically, turnover was framed as a function of two factors – the perceived desirability of movement from the organization (determined by job satisfaction) and the perceived ease of movement (determined by perceptions of alternative job prospects). For current purposes, this model had two crucial features. First, it reinforced the emerging notion that job satisfaction was a salient predictor of turnover. Next, it portrayed turnover as a calculated, rational process in which the calculus of desirability and ease of movement appeared absolute. This provision of a formal model of turnover had a tremendous impact on subsequent research, narrowing its focus to that prescribed by rational affect (Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Lee, 1997).

As dissatisfaction with the withdrawal model was mounting among absence researchers, Mobley (1977) presented a model that elaborated the cognitive processes between job dissatisfaction and turnover, building on March and Simon (1958). The model proposed that people evaluate their existing job. If they are dissatisfied, in sequence, they think of quitting, evaluate the utility of job search and the costs of quitting, develop the intent to search for alternative jobs, make the search, evaluate the alternatives, compare the alternatives to the current job, and attend to quit or stay, and act on their intentions.

The Mobley model had two noteworthy features. First, in proposing to measure variables psychologically closer to the actual act of turnover (such as intent to quit), it had the potential to account for increased variance in turnover. Although this criterion has been of particular interest to many turnover researchers, it is a dubious criterion by which to evaluate the validity of a within-person process model (Fichman, 1999; Mohr, 1982). Next, and more important, the Mobley model was decidedly cognitive, a characteristic that fit the Zeitgeist of the times, sandwiched temporally between the cognitive revolution in job interview research (Webster, 1964) and that in performance appraisal (Ilgen, Barnes-Farrell & McKelvie, 1993). Mobley's model, confirmed in its broad brushstrokes and modified in its details, 'dominates all work on psychological approaches to turnover' (Hom & Griffeth, 1995: 57).

Mobley's (1977) contribution to the solidification of the withdrawal model as the cornerstone of turnover research was reinforced in the same period by a technology that came to dominate research on recruitment (Rynes, 1991) – realistic job previews. This technique, providing recruits with frank and realistic information about a prospective job and organization, is strongly oriented toward the containment of turnover. Although realistic previews have been argued to reduce turnover by several mechanisms, enhanced job satisfaction is thought to be a key component (Wanous, 1992). As Wanous explains, job satisfaction could theoretically be boosted by screening out those inclined to be dissatisfied or by reducing the documented unrealistic expectations of those who accept a job offer. Thus, unlike for absence research, the withdrawal model dominating turnover research found a corresponding technology in realistic job previews.

The contemporary paradigm, grounded in rational withdrawal from dissatisfaction, has gradually provoked a mounting degree of criticism as to its limitations. As Somers (1996: 315) explains, 'criticisms of the current turnover paradigm are harsh, to the point that we need new ways of thinking about the process of employee withdrawal.' Specific criticisms include a lack of cumulative knowledge (Somers, 1999), an excessively narrow and rational causal model (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, Mitchell, Wise & Fireman, 1996), and the use of 'research designs that are inherently flawed' (Peters & Sheridan, 1988: 232). Furthermore, Phillips's (1998) meta-analysis of realistic job preview outcomes for turnover reveals validity coefficients so low that they beg utility estimates to justify the practice, with mean rs in the -.05 to -.09 range depending on setting and turnover measure. The corresponding mean r for the relationship between exposure to realistic previews and job satisfaction was actually negative for lab studies, although it was positive (.10) for field studies. However, the met expectations hypothesis, which suggests that lowered expectations upon hiring will result in post-hire satisfaction and reduced turnover, has now been rather strongly refuted by empirical evidence. Although finding initial support (Wanous et al., 1992), the apparent role of met expectations has been shown to be a statistical artifact of the well-known problems of difference scores and residual difference scores (Hom, Griffeth, Palich & Bracker, 1999; Irving & Meyer, 1994, 1999).
Contemporary Evidence Concerning the Withdrawal Model

Job Satisfaction

Table 12.1 presents a summary of what I believe to be the best meta-analytic evidence concerning the relationship between job satisfaction and various work behaviors. Estimated population correlations are shown, all of which are corrected for sampling error. Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1983) examined the relationship between satisfaction and job performance, correcting for unreliability in both variables. Hom and Griffin (1995) summarized the connection between satisfaction and turnover, correcting for unreliability in satisfaction. Hackett and Guion (1985) estimated the correlation between satisfaction and time lost (total days absent) and frequency (number of absence incidents), correcting for unreliability in the absence measures. Hackett (1989) examined the relationship between satisfaction and absence, controlling for unreliability in both measures as well as refining the criteria to include frequency measures of excused absence and time lost measures of unexcluded absence. Finally, Koslowsky, Sagie, Krausz, and Singer (1997) summarized the relationship between satisfaction and lateness, controlling for unreliability in both variables.

A number of interesting points emerge from a review of Table 12.1. First, in contrast to the qualitative reviews of the 1955–1964 period, the data appear to measure an association between job satisfaction and turnover. In fact, a case might be made that the opposite is true. Second, there is little in the data to explain the continuing dominance of the withdrawal model in turnover research as compared to absenteeism research. Third, satisfaction with the job that is the satisfaction facet that best predicts performance, turnover, and absenteeism. Fourth, there would appear to be some correlation validity and practical utility for satisfaction in predicting all criteria, particularly since a linear combination of facets would likely exceed any of the values for individual facets given in the table.

The meta-analyses upon which Table 12.1 is based often reveal wide confidence intervals that signal the presence of moderators. Unfortunately, there has been relatively little examination of just when and how withdrawal processes might be more or less likely to apply, or to whom. This is curious, given the large literature concerning the sometimes elusive connection between attitudes and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Deutscher, 1973). Absence, lateness, and turnover are often constrained by organizational policies and environmental factors (Johns, 1991), but these are seldom systematically investigated as a means of refining the withdrawal model. In fact, the study of withdrawal behaviors has particularly suffered from the poor understanding of context that has generally characterized the field of work psychology (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Johns, 1993, 1998b; Mowday & Sutton, 1993). Nevertheless, it is probable that work attitudes interact with factors such as medical status to affect absenteeism (Johns, 1997). For instance, Webb, Redman, Hemminkus, Kelman, Gibberd and Sanson-Fisher (1994) found that job dissatisfaction and problem drinking had a compound effect on absences due to injury. More prosaically, Smith (1977) found that work attitudes predicted attendance on a very snowy day in Chicago but not on the same clear day in New York. Some people may be more inclined than others to withdraw in response to job dissatisfaction. Hackett (1989) found that the negative relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism increased as the percentage of women in research samples increased.

In the domain of turnover, most research on moderators has centered around one issue—the potential for alternative employment or perceptions thereof to condition the impact of satisfaction on quitting. Such variables, of course, exemplify March and Simon’s (1958) ease of movement construct. One of the great mysteries of organizational behavior research has been the frequent failure of perceived employment alternatives to predict turnover and their repeated failure to interact with job satisfaction to predict turnover (Griffith & Hom, 1988). These failures are all the more striking when it is observed that aggregate turnover rates are highly correlated in the expected direction with unemployment rates and other economic conditions, both across time and industries (Halin, Roznowski & Hachiya, 1985). Steel and Griffith (1989) cited several possible reasons for a rather low ($r = .13$) population estimate of the relationship between perceived alternatives and turnover, and, by extension, their failure as a moderator. Single-item measures of alternatives may lack reliability and fail to capture both the quantity and quality aspects of perceived alternatives. Also, people who are not actively seeking jobs may have an unvaried view of the job market. Most importantly, however, individual-level studies of turnover have tended to use occupationally homogeneous, cross-sectional samples—people in one job in one organization experiencing one labor market at one time (Johns, 1991; Steel & Griffith, 1989). This is hardly conducive to variation in perception of alternatives. Indeed, Carsten and Spector (1987) used meta-analysis to show that local unemployment rates, coded post hoc, moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover as reported in a sample of individual-level studies. When unemployment was low, a more substantial connection between dissatisfaction and turnover was observed.
Table 12.1  Meta-analytic corrected correlations between job satisfaction and work behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Absence (Time lost)</th>
<th>Absence (Frequency)</th>
<th>Absence (Time lost)</th>
<th>Absence (Frequency)</th>
<th>Lateness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>.063 (.25)</td>
<td>-.640 (.16)</td>
<td>-.069 (.41)</td>
<td>.000 (.34)</td>
<td>-.070 (.26)</td>
<td>-.080 (.24)</td>
<td>-.220 (.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>.145 (.18)</td>
<td>-.140 (.13)</td>
<td>-.071 (.40)</td>
<td>-.066 (.34)</td>
<td>-.070 (.21)</td>
<td>-.090 (.24)</td>
<td>-.280 (.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>.186 (.21)</td>
<td>-.100 (.14)</td>
<td>-.055 (.42)</td>
<td>-.107 (.37)</td>
<td>-.080 (.25)</td>
<td>-.130 (.23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>.207 (.35)</td>
<td>-.190 (.25)</td>
<td>-.068 (.42)</td>
<td>-.162 (.40)</td>
<td>-.140 (.28)</td>
<td>-.210 (.28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers</td>
<td>.123 (.20)</td>
<td>-.100 (.11)</td>
<td>-.049 (.41)</td>
<td>-.035 (.34)</td>
<td>-.070 (.22)</td>
<td>-.070 (.23)</td>
<td>-.160 (.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall*</td>
<td>.185 (.54)</td>
<td>-.190 (.78)</td>
<td>-.096 (.22)</td>
<td>-.134 (.33)</td>
<td>-.230 (.8)</td>
<td>-.150 (.17)</td>
<td>-.110 (.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.286 (.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance data from Iaffaldano and Machiavelli (1985); turnover data from Hom and Griffith (1995); absence data from Hackert and Guion (1985, left two columns) and Hackert (1989, right two columns); lateness data from Koslowsky et al. (1997). Number of coefficients in parentheses. *For overall satisfaction, correlations with withdrawal behaviors include both sum-of-facets and global measures. For performance, 185 is global and .286 is sum-of-facets.

**Decision Processes**

The original Mobley (1977) intermediate linkages model of turnover and simplified versions of it have been exposed to repeated empirical tests, most having been cross-sectional, a curious strategy for testing a within-person process model. However, research by Hom, Griffith, and colleagues (e.g., Hom & Griffith, 1991; Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffith, 1992; Hom, Griffith & Sellaro, 1984) has proven particularly cumulative and informative. Exploiting structural equation modeling, confirmatory factor analysis, meta-analysis, and longitudinality, these authors built upon previous research to devise the model shown in Figure 12.1. It shows that job satisfaction and organizational commitment influence both withdrawal cognitions and the expected utility of withdrawal. In turn, utility stimulates job search and the comparison of alternatives with the current job, a deciding factor for turnover.

This model is less serial than the original Mobley model, and it also involves fewer distinct variables; research has repeatedly had difficulty demonstrating the discriminability of all the constructs in the original model. It will also be noted that an explicit comparison of one’s job with specific alternatives predicts turnover quite well in contrast to the vaguely held perceptions of alternative employment discussed earlier (Hom & Griffith, 1995). An important innovation is the recognition of a direct link between withdrawal cognitions and turnover. This link allows for more impulsive, less calculated forms of withdrawal, as well as those that are calculated but do not involve alternative employment.

Research supporting the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee et al., 1996, Lee, Mitchell, Holton, McDaniel & Hill, 1999) shows the advantages of this approach. Among other things, the model describes how “shocks,” such as an unsolicited employment offer, might result in turnover irrespective of current satisfaction and without elaborate comparison processes. The unfolding model provides a welcome contextual alternative to the intrapsychic emphasis of the Mobley model and its offspring.

An instance of turnover would usually represent a more important event for an employee than would a series of absence or lateness episodes. Thus, it is not obvious whether a rational decision model might apply to the latter behaviors. However, at least in the case of absence, such models do seem to apply, although the relevant research has not been framed as withdrawal-from-dissatisfaction research per se. At the most general level, event history models have shown that absence events unfold over a period of time in nonrandom and nonhabitual ways depending on evident degree of voluntariness, temporal trends, and previous absence behavior (Fichman, 1988, 1989; Harrison & Hulin, 1989). More specifically, there is good support for Martocchio and Harrison’s (1993) decision theory of absence. This research shows that attitudes toward attendance, perceived norms to attend, and felt moral obligation to attend contribute to intention to attend work, which in turn is predictive of actual attendance (Harrison, 1995; Harrison & Bell, 1995; Martocchio, 1992). Unlike for turnover, this work complements, rather than dominates, other perspectives on withdrawal.

**Organizational Commitment**

Hom and Griffith’s (1995) inclusion of organizational commitment in the model shown in Figure 12.1 was done via meta-analytic inference, since most tests of the Mobley model and its variants did not include commitment. Using a clever combination of meta-analysis and path analysis, Tett and Meyer (1993) found that both satisfaction and commitment contributed independently to turnover intentions and cognitions, which in turn mediated almost all of their impact on turnover. Satisfaction was more highly correlated with intentions/cognitions than was commitment, while the reverse held true for actual turnover. They noted that their findings were somewhat clouded by the inclusion of withdrawal cognitions or
intentions in some scales measuring both global satisfaction and organizational commitment.

As might be expected from the nature of the construct, organizational commitment has been shown to be a better predictor of turnover than absenteeism. Tett and Meyer (1993) reported a corrected population correlation of –.33 for turnover, while Mathieu and Zajac (1990) reported .10 for attendance, the logical inverse of absence. Isolating six studies that used a frequency measure of absence, Farrell and Stamm (1988) estimated a mean correlation of –.23 with commitment, a figure that approaches the highest correlations observed for job satisfaction reviewed in Table 12.1. All of this evidence pertains to affective commitment. Johns (1997) reviewed more contemporary research based on Meyer and Allen’s (1991) tripartite theory of commitment. Although this research reaffirms the connection between affective commitment and absence, there is little evidence that implicates normative or continuance commitment. In particular, except for a study by Geller (1995), there is no support for the interesting prediction that continuance commitment (being locked into an organization) might actually stimulate absenteeism. Meyer’s (1997) review suggests that normative commitment (feeling an obligation to the organization) is consistently negatively related to turnover, while the connection with continuance commitment is inconsistent.

Social Exchange

The organization’s commitment to its employees may be a better predictor of withdrawal than the employees’ commitment toward the organization (cf. Shore & Wayne, 1993). In several samples, it has been shown that perceived organizational support is a particularly robust negative correlate of absenteeism (Eisenberger, Fosolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). This research complements work showing that perceived inequity stimulates absenteeism (Geurts, Buunk & Schaufeli, 1994; van Dierendonck, Schaufeli & Buunk, 1998; Van Yperen, Hagedoorn & Geurts, 1996) as well as that revealing an increase in absenteeism following the failure to obtain a promotion (Schwarzwald,
Koslowsky & Shultz, 1992). These findings suggest that the rather passive view of withdrawal suggested by the withdrawal model needs to be supplemented with more proactive, equity-restoring motives (Johns & Nicholson, 1982). Even more generally, they suggest the value of incorporating a social exchange perspective into the withdrawal model. For example, Shore and Barksdale (1998) found that turnover intentions were lowest among employees who saw their obligations to the organization and the organization’s obligations toward them as high.

**Progression of Withdrawal**

The connections among the various forms of work withdrawal have been of some interest to researchers. Theoretically, understanding such connections explicates more clearly exactly what is meant by withdrawal. Practically, such understanding may enable us to predict one form of withdrawal from the occurrence of another. Although relationships among lateness, absence, and turnover have been most studied, the withdrawal rubric might be extended to include psychological detachment, reduced in-role performance (Bycio, 1992; Bycio, Hackett & Alvares, 1990), reduced organizational citizenship (Chen, Hui & Sego, 1998; Mayer & Schoorman, 1992), choice of part-time work (Wise, 1993), or early retirement (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990).

Several plausible models might describe the connections between various withdrawal behaviors (Hulin, 1991; Rossie & Miller, 1984):

- **Independent forms.** Despite some surface similarities, the behaviors have different causes and functions, and should thus be unrelated to each other.

- **Spillover.** Withdrawal is nonspecific such that any given manifestation will be positively related to other manifestations.

- **Alternate forms.** If the occurrence of one form of withdrawal is constrained, a substitute form will be manifested.

- **Compensatory forms.** Similar functionality causes the specific forms of withdrawal to be negatively correlated.

- **Progression.** Withdrawal will progress from minor, less salient acts, such as occasional lateness, to more salient acts, such as absence and, finally, turnover.

In the domain of lateness, absence, and turnover, the independent forms model can definitely be ruled out, as meta-analyses reveal common attitudinal correlates (Table 12.1) and substantial positive correlations between the various forms of withdrawal at the individual level (Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Koslowsky et al., 1997; Mitra, Jenkins & Gupta, 1992). The latter finding also speaks against the generality of both the alternate and compensatory forms models, since both predict negative correlations. The difference between these two models is subtle. Alternative forms are based on the idea that the inability to react to dissatisfaction with one form of withdrawal will increase the occurrence of another form. Compensatory forms simply asserts that any act of withdrawal relieves dissatisfaction and thus reduces the probability of other acts. Isolated studies occasionally provide some support for one or the other of these formulations. Wise (1993) found that increased absenteeism was associated with a decrease in the adoption of part-time or casual work among nurses. Similarly, Dalton and Mesch (1992) determined that utility employees who requested a job transfer but had not received it experienced double the absence of those who had been given a transfer. Dalton and Todor (1993) speculated how absenteeism and the availability of internal transfers might affect subsequent turnover.

The strongest evidence appears to support the progression of withdrawal model. Longitudinal studies by Clegg (1983), Wolpin, Burke, Krausz and Freibach (1988), and Rosse (1988) found a lateness—absence progression, although Adler and Golan (1981) and Krausz, Koslowsky and Eisner (1998) did not. Blau (1994) found that a pattern of increasing chronic lateness was associated with elevated absence within the same 18-month period. Several studies reveal a progression from absence to turnover (Burke & Wilcox, 1972; Farrell & Peterson, 1984; Kanfer, Crosby & Brandt, 1988; Krausz et al., 1998; Rosse, 1988; Sheridan, 1985; Waters & Roach, 1979), and Krausz et al. (1998) found that the progression was mediated by reduced job satisfaction.

If there is truly a progression from lateness to absence to turnover, we might expect that the two adjacent relationships in the progression would be stronger than the unadjacent relation between lateness and turnover. In fact, this appears to be the case when meta-analytic evidence is examined. Koslowsky et al. (1997) reported a corrected correlation of \( r = 0.40 \) between lateness and absence, and Mitra et al. (1992) reported a corrected correlation of 0.33 between absence and turnover. Koslowsky et al., estimated the mean correlation between lateness and actual turnover to be 0.07 and that between lateness and an apparent composite of actual turnover and turnover intentions to be 0.27.

Researchers have tended to look for linear progression. However, it is possible that nonlinearity may better capture the process. Using neural network and response surface methodologies, Somers (1999) found that turnover was invariant over a fairly wide range of attitudinal variation but increased dramatically with small changes above a certain threshold. Using catastrophe theory, Sheridan (1985) found a discontinuous, nonlinear increase in absenteeism in advance of turnover among nurses.
Is There a General Withdrawal Construct?

The positive relationship among the various behavioral manifestations of withdrawal has encouraged Hanisch, Hulin and Roznowski (e.g., Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, 1991; Hanisch et al., 1998) to posit the existence of a broad organizational withdrawal construct made up of job withdrawal (e.g., turnover and early retirement) and work withdrawal (e.g., lateness, absence, and escapist drinking). As implied, they favor the aggregation of 'specific withdrawal behaviors' (their term) into behavioral composites or aggregates, although most of the extant published research on the matter appears to use self-reported feelings, desires, expectations, and intentions to engage in the behaviors (Johns, 1998c). Although some psychometric gains are argued for the approach, its chief advantage would appear to be its capacity to accommodate the influence of various contextual constraints on the elicitation of a particular form of withdrawal. In other words, the approach allows for the idea that adaptation (see above) through withdrawal may vary in form according to organizational policies, legal sanctions, economic conditions, and so on. However, this accommodation seemingly occurs by treating context as useful noise rather than probing its intimate relationship with the various forms of withdrawal (Johns, 1998c).

Johns (1998c) opines that the broad withdrawal construct puts predictability above theoretical precision. It also overlooks theoretical successes achieved by disaggregating various 'specific withdrawal behaviors,' such as that seen in the distinction between time lost and frequency of absence (Chadwick-Jones et al., 1982; Hackett & Guion, 1985) or between various patterns of lateness (Blau, 1994). Both Blau (1998) and Johns (1998c) worry that enthusiasm for a broad withdrawal construct has a tendency to beget a broad predictor construct that conflates attitudes, dispositions, and deviant tendencies. Adams and Beer (1998) found virtually no relationship between turnover intentions and retirement intentions. Nevertheless, the idea of a general withdrawal construct merits further research attention.

Conclusion

The withdrawal model, grounded in attitudes toward the job, gained prominence in part due to the assumption that attitudes predicted withdrawal better than they predicted performance. This assumption has been shown to be dubious. Nevertheless, the basic withdrawal model has demonstrated validity and the potential for development in the related domains of progression of withdrawal and a general withdrawal construct. However, researchers should also begin to pay greater attention to the neglected social and dispositional aspects of withdrawal.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF WITHDRAWAL BEHAVIOR

As seen earlier, the withdrawal behaviors have literally been defined as pertaining to individual actors. Thus, it is not surprising that traditional absence and lateness research was dominated by individual attitudes and demographic factors, and that traditional turnover research was dominated by job attitudes and the intrapsychic machinations of the exit process. Despite this individual-level focus, there is considerable merit to considering the susceptibility of withdrawal to interpersonal influence. After all, timely and regular attendance is a social obligation to be at a particular place at a particular time (Martocchio & Harrison, 1993). Similarly, as Price (1977) reminds us, turnover represents movement between social systems.

Organizational Demography, Diversity, and Withdrawal

The impact of social context on turnover has been dominated by research on organizational demography. Originally conceived by Pfeffer (1983) to pertain to the distribution of the length of service of a workforce (tenure diversity), the term has been extended to the study of diversity in age, gender, race, ethnicity, and functional background. Pfeffer proposed that the distribution of tenure would affect the dynamics of power and control as well as cohort identity and conflict between cohorts. In turn, these social-contextual factors were expected to influence organizational performance and turnover patterns. A key prediction is that those who are most different from the dominant tenure cohort are likely to become turnover statistics.

Williams and O'Reilly (1998) sketch the theoretical underpinnings that predict the impact of demographic diversity on group processes and performance. Basically, they argue that theories of social identity and attraction predict that diversity will promote lower social integration and cohesion in groups, by extension increasing turnover. On the other hand, information-processing and decision-making theories point to the value of diversity for increasing the pool of available information and the variety of decision perspectives. In turn, this could enhance group performance. If the predominant negative relationship between individual performance and turnover (Bycio et al., 1990; Williams & Livingstone, 1994) also holds at the group level, some reduction in turnover might accrue.

Williams and O'Reilly (1998) conclude from their comprehensive review that both tenure and age diversity are associated with elevated group or organizational turnover. Although some of this research fails to measure group processes, O'Reilly,
Caldwell and Barnett (1989) found that social integration mediated the relationship between heterogeneity of group tenure and turnover. There is also a body of basic research showing that tenure diversity has a negative impact on processes such as cohesion and communication, leading to dysfunctional turnover. This inference follows from the fact that those who are most different tend to leave and that there is no offsetting group performance improvement (Williams & O'Reilly, 1988).

Pelled (1996) presents a theory proposing that diversity of more visible demographic characteristics will promote turnover via affective conflict, while diversity of job-related characteristics (e.g., functional specialty) will bolster task performance via task conflict. Unfortunately, there is little research that examines the impact of the distribution of visible characteristics such as gender, race, or ethnicity on turnover and virtually no such research on absence. Recently, Harrison, Johns, and Martocchio (2000) explored how demography might influence absenteeism. For instance, it is well established that women exhibit higher absence rates than men (Côté & Haccoun, 1991) and that younger employees are absent more than older employees (Hackett, 1990). As gender or age diversity increases, it is likely that conflict concerning appropriate attendance norms would increase, especially under conditions of high task interdependence (cf. Barker, 1993). Harrison et al. (2000) also speculate that employees originating from more collective cultures might be more accepting of absence due to community or extended family concerns than those from individualistic cultures. In every case, diversity might affect both attributions concerning the legitimacy of certain causes of absence (cf. Addae & Johns, 1998; Johns & Xie, 1998) as well as expectations concerning what constitutes a reasonable level of absence.

Social Networks and Withdrawal

There has been a small but informative body of research concerning how location in social (i.e., communication) networks is related to employee turnover. This research has some conceptual ties to demography research in that communication patterns are logically linked to the concepts of identification, integration, and cohesion that are thought to underpin demographic effects.

Feeney and Barnett (1997) describe three models by which communication patterns might underlie employee turnover:

Structural equivalence. Turnover tends to occur among employees who communicate with identical others, whether or not they communicate directly with each other. That is, turnover follows patterns of informal role similarity.

Social influence. Turnover tends to occur along direct communication lines. That is, people who have direct links with leavers are likely to quit.

Erosion. Turnover tends to occur among those who lack strong communication links to others. That is, those least central to the communication network are prone to quit.

Both the structural equivalence and the social influence model allow for modeling and social information-processing mechanisms to influence turnover. However, structural equivalence would seem to load more on cognitive mechanisms (such as seeing the case with which a structural counterpart found a new job), while social influence might implicate both cognitive and affective information. Although the erosion model does not rule out modeling of turnover among the less attached, it differs conspicuously from the other two models in that it implicates a lack of communication in the turnover process. Thus, this model best represents the organizational demography prediction that those who are most different tend to leave.

All three models may be relevant to the turnover process. Krackhardt and Porter (1986) predicted and found structural equivalence among fast-food employees, describing the resulting turnover as a 'snowball effect.' Although they did not test the other two models, other analyses (Krackhardt & Porter, 1985) appear to run counter to the social influence model. However, Feeney and Barnett (1997) found support for all three models in a sample of supermarket employees. This is important, because it highlights the potential for multiple meanings of turnover in a single research site.

In some respects, network analysis treats turnover as an independent variable in that it is assumed (at least under structural equivalence and social influence) that turnover among some people causes turnover among others. Not nearly enough has been made of this perspective, in spite of the obvious impact that turnover might have on any well-defined social system. In other analyses of their fast-food data, Krackhardt and Porter (1985) examined the impact of turnover on the attitudes of friends who remained with the organization. Contrary to expectations, they found that friends became more satisfied and committed after the resignation of close counterparts. The authors attributed this effect to a reduction in negative cues from dissatisfied leavers. Similar insights might be had from research concerning the reactions of 'survivors' of corporate layoffs (e.g., Brocker & Wiesenfeld, 1993). Although this work is seldom identified as turnover research and does not employ network analysis, it indirectly concerns the impact of involuntary turnover on existing social networks.
Norms, Culture, and Withdrawal

Despite their insights, the demography and network approaches have some 'black box' qualities that limit their usefulness. However, there has been a growing body of research, mostly in the area of absenteeism, that looks more directly at the social correlates and causes of withdrawal.

Interest in the social causes of absenteeism began with the simple observation that there are differences in absence levels and patterns across social units such as workgroups within departments, departments within plants, and plants within companies, as well as between occupations, industries, and even nations (Chadwick-Jones et al., 1982; Johns, 1997). In many cases, these differences are of such a nature or magnitude that they are unlikely to stem from the simple distribution of individual characteristics such as ill health, work attitudes, or demographics. This logic, itself admittedly black box in nature, gave rise to the search for possible social correlates and causes of absence that would account for group differences. Rather peculiarly, differences in the base rate of turnover across samples have been portrayed as statistical artifacts (e.g., McEvoy & Caciolo, 1987) that need to be corrected rather than sources of research inspiration.

It is now well established that perceived workplace norms play an important role in the occurrence of absenteeism. That is, people who tend to see their coworkers as exhibiting high absence tend to be absent more themselves. This finding applies to a wide variety of operationalizations of absence norms, including direct numerical estimates (e.g., Johns & Xie, 1998), ratings of peer absence (Baba & Harris, 1989), subjective norm estimates (e.g., Harrison, 1995), and return potential estimates (Gale, 1993). Gellatly (1995) found that perceived absence norms mediated the connection between workgroup absence frequency rates in one year and the absence exhibited by individual members the following year.

Why is absenteeism especially susceptible to social influence? Johns (1997) reviews considerable indirect evidence that both actors and observers tend to view absence as mildly deviant behavior. For example, people tend to underreport their own absence and see their attendance behavior as much better than that of their peers (Johns, 1994a, b; Johns & Xie, 1998). Despite such individual self-serving, attendance norms provide guidance regarding the vagaries of how much deviant behavior is considered legitimate in a given social setting (Gellatly & Luchak, 1998).

Gale (1993) found that cohesive workgroups and those operating under high task interdependence had the strongest norms against absence, and that such norms predicted time lost for both individuals and groups. Xie and Johns (2000) reported similar mediated results for cohesiveness among Chinese workgroups. In general, group cohesiveness is negatively associated with absenteeism, and both the task and social aspects of cohesion have been implicated (Johns, 1997). However, some interesting interactions have been observed, suggesting that the impact of cohesiveness is conditional. Drasgow and Wooden (1992) found cohesion resulted in high self-reported absence when job satisfaction was low and low absence when satisfaction was high. Xie and Johns (2000) determined that workgroup cohesiveness interacted with absence culture salience, the latter reflecting the group's attention to absenteeism and agreement about appropriate attendance levels. Although high cohesiveness was generally associated with low absence, the absence of cohesive groups also increased as cultural salience increased. The authors interpreted this as collusion in the most socially organized groups to take days off, reminiscent of Edwards and Seullion’s (1972) case observation of posted 'absence schedules' in a well-organized metals plant.

The very best evidence concerning the impact of social influence on withdrawal comes from cross-level and multilevel studies that appear to illustrate the impact of work unit absence or lateness culture (Chadwick-Jones et al., 1982; Johns & Nicholson, 1982, Nicholson & Johns, 1985) on individual behavior. Some of this research shows that absence or lateness aggregated at the unit (usually workgroup) level accounts for variance in the withdrawal of individual work unit members (Blau, 1995; Gellatly & Luchak, 1988; Johns, 1994c; Markham & McKee, 1995; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990). This research variously implicates perceived absence norms, the salience of the absence culture, and supervisory expectations as explanatory mechanisms. Other research has shown that aggregate views about the likely consequences of absence (Martocchio, 1995) as well as those concerning cohesiveness and cultural salience (Xie & Johns, 2000) account for variance in individual absence. George (1990) found that the positive affective tone of workgroups was negatively correlated with group absence rates. Iverson, Buttlage and Magurn (1999) determined that hospital wards with greater similarity in union membership status viewed absence as less legitimate when industrial relations climate was positive.

It must be emphasized that the findings supporting the existence of absence and lateness cultures are most impressive because virtually all of the research has controlled for relevant individual differences, especially in job satisfaction. This means that there is truly value added by the social approach to withdrawal.

As noted above, cross-site differences in turnover have been more often viewed as statistical nuisance rather than research opportunities. Nonetheless, some of the research on organizational culture and person-organization fit speaks indirectly to possible
social influences on turnover. Sheridan (1982) found that differences in value profiles among six large accounting firms resulted in differential turnover rates. Measures of person organization fit, whether based on value differences (e.g., O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Vandenberge, 1990) or direct perceptions of fit (Saks & Ashforth, 1997) have been shown to predict subsequent turnover. Research bearing on Schneider's attraction-selection-attrition model suggests that the personality traits of organizational members may tend toward homogeneity over time, leading to attrition among those who fail to fit and thus creating distinctive climates or cultures for turnover (Schaubroeck, Gunter & James, 1998; Schneider, Goldstein & Smith, 1995).

Conclusion

One only has to examine the rather large differences in withdrawal behavior across various social units to see that what is considered normal is not an absolute matter and is unlikely to be a sole product of aggregate individual differences. This suggests that social and contextual influences on withdrawal deserve our attention. This may require a shift in level of analysis from the individual to the individual within a relevant social unit.

DISPOSITION AND WITHDRAWAL

Is there a dispositional substrate to some withdrawal behavior? That is, are some people prone to lateness, absence, or turnover by virtue of their personalities? Although the proneness concept has a history in the domain of withdrawal (Froggatt, 1970; Garrison & Muchinsky, 1977; Ghiselli, 1974), the history is checkered. This is due to concern that proneness is a hollow, circular construct, indistinguishable from the regularity of behavior that gives rise to its attribution (cf. Johns & Nicholson, 1982). Does the proneness concept have any scientific substance, or is it simply proof of people’s tendency to attribute higher levels of what are normally low-base-rate behaviors to dispositional causes? A proneness explanation grounded in disposition suggests some stability of withdrawal behavior over time and especially across situations. The evidence of such stability is fairly well established for absenteeism. Farrell and Stamm's (1988) meta-analysis determined that absence history was correlated .65 with current absence frequency and .71 with time lost. Rentsch and Steel (1998) found that frequency of absence measured in 1983 was significantly correlated with frequency in five subsequent years, the consecutive rs being .74, .67, .56, .59, and .53. Regarding stability under situational change, Brenner (1968) reported that absence from high school was positively correlated with absenteeism in subsequent employment. Similarly, Ivancevich (1985) found that past absence predicted subsequent absence even when substantial job design changes intervened.

There is very little evidence regarding the stability of turnover. However, Judge and Watanabe (1995) applied event history techniques to the turnover behavior of the US National Longitudinal Surveys Youth Cohort over a 10-year period. They determined that past quits were predictive of subsequent turnover, even controlling for other variables that have been shown to stimulate withdrawal.

In conclusion, the stability of absence and turnover appears conducive to a dispositional model. However, it does not rule out situational causes, such as the impact of chronic ill health on absence or the impact of structural opportunity (e.g., personal contacts gained through a series of past jobs) on turnover.

Over the years that the withdrawal model was dominant for all specific forms of withdrawal, occasional associations between personality and turnover were reported in the literature. Very little such research concerned absenteeism. Reviews did find evidence of associations between personality and turnover, particularly implicating ‘extreme’ values on personality dimensions (Muchinsky & Tuttle, 1979; Porter & Steers, 1973). However, as Muchinsky and Tuttle pointed out, reported significant associations were often drawn from a large pool of nonsignificant associations generated from the application of personality inventories and then seldom cross-validated. This tactic, typical of work-personality research of the era, was far from theory-driven.

Hough and Schneider (1996) recounted the advances in research that have rekindled interest in personality in organizations. Chief among these are the emergence of the the five-factor model of personality (the Big Five, Digman, 1990), the linking of specific traits to specific criteria, and the development of specialized work-related measures that draw on the Big Five, especially integrity tests. If personality influences withdrawal it would seem to operate through some combination of integrity, affect, or cognition.

Integrity

A potential link between disposition and withdrawal lies in the general (and somewhat vague) domain of undependability, irresponsibility, and low integrity. These traits signal deviance, and, as noted earlier, there is much evidence that people see absence as deviant behavior (Johns, 1997). Although such negative views of turnover are less documented and probably less intense, Ghiselli's (1974) portrayal of the 'hobo syndrome,' a form of
irrational occupational wanderlust characterized by high mobility and low organizational commitment, is an example.

If these deviant attributions are smoke, do they signal fire, in the form of a deviant underpinning to some withdrawal activity? The best evidence comes from meta-analyses of integrity or honesty tests designed to predict theft and other counterproductive job behaviors. Overt integrity tests tap attitudes toward honesty and integrity and are generally designed to predict theft. Personality-based integrity tests (usually drawing from subtraits falling under the Big Five conscientiousness dimension) index integrity indirectly and are designed to predict broader counterproductivity. An extensive meta-analysis by Ones, Viswesvaran and Schmidt (1993) concluded that latency, absence, and turnover were part of a broad composite of counterproductive behaviors predictable with both types of measures. However, more detailed analyses of these data are instructive. Ones, Viswesvaran and Schmidt (1992) found that the mean corrected correlation between personality-based tests and absenteeism was .33, while the corresponding figure for overt tests was .09. In another meta-analysis that did not differentiate test type, Viswesvaran, Ones and Schmidt (undated) reported an average corrected validity of .29 for the prediction of voluntary turnover and .34 for the prediction of involuntary turnover due to theft. These figures for dedicated integrity measures are much higher than the correct correlations that Barrick and Mount (1991) reported between the Big Five dimensions and turnover, the highest of which was .09 for conscientiousness. Such meta-analytic treatment is unavailable for the relations between the basic Big Five dimensions and absenteeism. However, Judge, Martocchio and Thoresen (1997) found that time lost was negatively related to conscientiousness and positively related to extraversion. They also found that absence history partially mediated these associations, a finding that squares with a dispositional model. No association was observed for neuroticism. Conte and Jacobs (1999) reported a negative association between consciousness and frequency of absence, but not latency.

Is it possible that the observed relationships between integrity and withdrawal actually signal the orthodox withdrawal model in disguise? That is, could satisfaction mediate between integrity and withdrawal? The answer is of some theoretical importance. As noted earlier, Blau (1998) and Johns (1998c) expressed concern that Hanisch et al.’s (1998) general withdrawal construct is confounded with deviance while being defined as a response to job dissatisfaction. Where does this leave the integrity construct? The answer to this question might be more apparent if job satisfaction and related attitudes were used as criteria in integrity research, which has evidently not been the case. Nevertheless, some speculation is possible. Both Ones, Schmidt and Viswesvaran (1994) and Hough (1992) address the validity of the integrity construct, agreeing that it is composed of conscientiousness and emotional stability but disagreeing on the agreeableness dimension. Thus, it appears that there is the potential for integrity to affect withdrawal independently of job satisfaction.

Affect and Cognition

Speculation that the integrity model can be separated from the conventional attitudinal withdrawal model does not in any way preclude dispositional influences on withdrawal behaviors via dissatisfaction. As Hough and Schneider (1996) remind us, personality is more than integrity. Indeed, there is growing evidence that there is a dispositional component to job satisfaction (Judge, Locke & Durham, 1997). Day, Bedeian and Conte (1998) found that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between the personality dimensions of self-control and extraversion and propensity to quit. Certainly, personality traits outside of the integrity nexus may be associated with withdrawal. For example, George (1989) found that positive affectivity was positively associated with being in a good mood at work, which in turn was negatively associated with absences. Iverson, Okealns and Erwin (1998) reported somewhat analogous results, showing that positive affectivity stimulated feelings of personal work accomplishment, which in turn were associated with reduced absenteeism. The latter connection was not mediated by job satisfaction.

It is possible that personality might influence withdrawal via its impact on cognitions about the behaviors themselves rather than via affective mechanisms. For instance, personality might influence people’s beliefs about the extent to which a given absence incident is viewed as legitimate or voluntary. Seeing an absence as legitimate or as beyond one’s control is likely to pose fewer barriers to engaging in the behavior. Judge and Martocchio (1995, 1996) studied the perceived degree of control that respondents believed they would have when faced with a variety of absence-inducing scenarios. They found clear evidence that personality affected these attributions. Individuals with external locus of control, low work ethic, a tendency to make excuses, or self-deceptive personalities were more prone to attribute absence events to external than internal causes. Similar effects might occur for turnover. Thus, we might expect chronic optimists to perceive more job alternatives and to view prospective job changes more favorably than pessimists.

Conclusion

As illustrated, there is developing evidence suggesting that personality may play a role in some
Withdrawal behavior. As indicated, it is still an open question to what extent such relationships are mediated by job satisfaction. Issues of moderation may be more important and are conspicuously absent from the personality-withdrawal literature. Barrick and Mount (1991) found that personality was more strongly associated with performance when job autonomy was high. Perhaps the same is true for latency and absence. More generally, personality may interact with other factors to affect withdrawal. For instance, Mowday, Stone, and Porter (1979) found that needs for achievement and affiliation interacted with job scope to predict turnover. More theory-driven research in this domain is desirable.

IMPROVING WITHDRAWAL RESEARCH

A number of improvements can be suggested for withdrawal research that build upon past research. Although space does not permit detailed elaboration of these ideas, it should be emphasized that they are intended to be implemented in the context of full theoretical development and justification.

Withdrawal research would profit from more active integration with related literatures to which has an obvious but unexploited affinity. Turnover research would particularly profit from greater linkages with areas that can highlight the context in which the behavior might occur, such as the work on careers (Ornstein & Isabella, 1993; Sullivan, 1999; Taylor & Giannantonio, 1993). Also, research on turnover could both contribute to and profit from linkage with the literature on expatriate adjustment (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998).

Withdrawal research needs to be less organization-centric, better incorporating how off-the-job factors affect withdrawal. Morgan and Herman (1976) showed how nonwork consequences influenced absenteeism more than organization-mediated consequences. Giaccone, Kelloway, and Gottlieb (1996) explored how eldercare responsibilities influenced absenteeism. We need to know much more about such matters, including how family situations affect turnover (cf. Cohen, 1997). In a related vein, we need more research on what people are doing when they are late or absent (Haccoun & Dupont, 1987) and where they are going when they quit (cf. Campion, 1991). Such knowledge will help us explain anomalous patterns of withdrawal.

Withdrawal research needs to better incorporate the role of time. Although the major forms of withdrawal can all be framed as problems concerning the allocation of time and place, and events that unfold over time, these facts of life have not made a strong impression on withdrawal theory or research. The problems of doing cross-sectional research on turnover have been recognized (Peters & Sheridan, 1988), and event history methods have clarified the role of time in turnover (Dickter, Roznowski & Harrison, 1996; Somers, 1996; Somers & Birnbaum, 1999). What is needed, however, is stronger theory that can capitalize on event histories. The unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) is one such theory. Harrison and Martocchio (1998) cleverly reviewed the absenteeism literature around the concept of time, discussing long-term (e.g., dispositional), mid-term (e.g., attitudinal), and short-term (e.g., acute stress-related) sources of variation in absence and the corresponding appropriateness of various absence aggregation periods.

Withdrawal research needs to be more focused on the changing world of work, recognizing the influence of new technology, teamwork, and revised psychological contracts. For example, it is not at all clear that the traditional rational affect paradigm for turnover speaks very well to the attraction and retention of high-tech talent, so-called knowledge workers. The unfolding model of turnover, which allows for a more contextualized range of paths to quitting, seems quite promising in this regard (Lee & Maurer, 1997). Harrison et al., (2000) discuss how information technology allows for work to be accomplished independent of the structures of time, space, or direct social influence. In turn, they argue that the resulting “weak situation” favors the stronger influence of individual attitudes and personality on absence, which they redefine as withdrawing from the task, a specific assignment or project. On the other hand, they submit that forces for increased teamwork will favor the increased impact of social control on absence, control that may be accomplished by workplace tension as teams face the realities of disciplining their own members.

We need to understand the cross-cultural similarities and differences in withdrawal behaviors and their determinants and consequences. Since the act of withdrawal can be measured in a culture-free way, the information gap in this area is surprising. Abrams, Ando and Hinckle (1998) determined that organizational identification predicted turnover intentions in both Britain and Japan, but that perceived social norms concerning turnover had less influence in Britain than in more collectivist Japan. Johns and Xie (1998) found that both Canadians and Chinese self-served, underreporting their own absenteeism and seeing their attendance records as superior to those of their peers. However, the Chinese also saw their workgroups’ attendance as much superior to that of their occupation, thus exhibiting group-serving. Both similarities and differences in the perceived legitimacy of various causes of absence were observed across the two cultures. Adida and Johns (1998) described a cross-cultural model of absence legitimacy based on locus of control, time urgency, social support, and gender-role differentiation. More work of this nature is warranted.
To conclude, withdrawal research has a venerable history that has not suffered from the faddishness and fashion of much construct-centered work. On the other hand, it has suffered from a lack of theoretical development both within and beyond the core tenets of the basic withdrawal model. Much remains to be done.

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