

# Conceptualizing How Job Involvement and Organizational Commitment Affect Turnover and Absenteeism

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*This paper presents one conceptualization of how job involvement and organizational commitment could interact to affect turnover and absenteeism.*

The costs of turnover and absenteeism to organizations are well-documented (Mirvis & Lawler, 1977; Steers & Rhodes, 1978; Wanous, 1980); such costs are one reason why much effort has gone into understanding the causes or antecedents of these variables. Despite the differences between turnover and absenteeism as job behaviors (Porter & Steers, 1973), past research efforts in identifying presumed antecedents of turnover and absenteeism. Work-related attitudes, especially satisfaction facets, are commonly the focus in turnover and absenteeism research (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). The inability of satisfaction facets alone to account for a high percentage (over 15 percent) of variance in turnover and absenteeism has led to other approaches. These approaches include using withdrawal cognitions to predict turnover (Mobley, 1977), or focusing on other work-related attitudes such as job involvement and organizational commitment as independent predictors of turnover and absenteeism.

Several models (Mobley et al., 1979; Steers & Rhodes, 1978) link organizational commitment, or job involvement conceptually to turnover and absenteeism. Empirical research on organizational commitment generally has shown commit-

ment to be a significant predictor of turnover. As a predictor of turnover, organizational commitment has accounted for as much as 34 percent of the variance (Hom, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979) and as little as 3 percent (Michaels & Spector, 1982). Of course, inconsistencies across previous studies may be due to any of a combination of three reasons: (a) the way organizational commitment has been conceptualized and operationalized (Steers & Porter, 1983), (b) the way turnover has been conceptualized and operationalized (Price, 1977), or (c) the result of statistical artifacts such as sampling and measurement errors or a restriction of range (Hunter, Schmidt, & Jackson, 1982). For example, the interested reader may compare the studies of Arnold and Feldman (1982) with that of Clegg (1983). The relationship between organizational commitment and absenteeism also has been inconsistent (Angle & Perry, 1981; Hammer, Landau, & Stern, 1981; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Steers, 1977). For example, Hammer et al. (1981) found a significant negative relationship between organizational commitment and absenteeism, while Angle and Perry (1981) did not. Again, conceptualization and measurement issues relating to both the independent and dependent variables may account for these inconsistencies. For example, Chadwick-

Jones, Brown, Nicholson, and Sheppard (1971) listed seven ways absenteeism has been operationalized in various studies.

Less empirical research exists about the relationship of job involvement with turnover and absenteeism. However, a similar pattern of findings, as with organizational commitment, is exhibited. Job involvement seems to more consistently predict turnover than absenteeism, accounting for as much as 16 percent of the variance (Farris, 1971) and as little as 2 percent (Beehr & Gupta, 1978). Again, differences in studies may account for these discrepancies. In studies where job involvement significantly predicts absenteeism, the amount of variance depends on how absenteeism is measured (Cheloha & Farr, 1980).

As implied above, one general difficulty in interpreting the findings about organizational commitment and job involvement with absenteeism is that either the type of absenteeism is not noted, or different types of absenteeism are lumped together in several studies (Angle & Perry, 1981; Siegel & Ruh, 1973; Steers, 1977). The meta-analysis by Boal and Cidambi (1984) suggests that job involvement is a better predictor of frequency of absence than duration. It is more likely that a small number of absences of long duration actually are due to medical reasons. Conversely, frequent absences of short duration may reflect attitudinal problems. Thus, distinguishing types of absenteeism may be important. For example, Blau (1985a) found job involvement to be significantly negatively related to excused personal absence, but not to unexcused absence.

Beyond the cited methodological differences in past studies, one potential reason why the reported amounts of turnover and absenteeism variance accounted for by job involvement and organizational commitment have not been more consistent is that job involvement and organizational commitment may interact with each other to affect turnover and absenteeism. Conceptual models and empirical research, along with job involvement and organizational commitment, have been used as separate predictors of general turnover and absenteeism. However, using job involvement and organizational commitment

jointly (in an interaction) to understand or to predict specific types of turnover and absenteeism has not been often attempted.

According to Morrow (1983), job involvement and organizational commitment are related, but distinct, types of work attitudes because of their different *referents*. For employees with a high level of job involvement, the job is important to one's self-image (Kanungo, 1982). These individuals identify with and care about their jobs. Employees with a high level of organizational commitment feel positively about the organizations they work for: They identify with a particular organization and wish to maintain membership in it (Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). Workers with high levels of *both* job involvement and organizational commitment should be the most motivated because they are attracted by both the job and the organization. As such, job involvement and organizational commitment may function as interactive "orientations."

For example, the job itself can help an individual meet his/her intrinsic growth needs (Kanungo, 1982), while the organization can help an individual meet his/her social and other extrinsic reward needs (Angle & Perry, 1983; Sheldon, 1971). Also, based on past empirical research, it seems that job involvement and organizational commitment complement one another as predictors of turnover and absenteeism. Generally, job involvement accounts for a greater percentage of variance in absenteeism than organizational commitment, while organizational commitment accounts for a greater percentage of turnover variance than job involvement (Boal & Cidambi, 1984). From either an analysis of variance or a moderated regression standpoint (Saunders, 1956), one would predict that the job involvement by organizational commitment interaction terms will be significant. Also, specific interactive combinations of job involvement and organizational commitment levels will help to predict particular types of turnover and absence behaviors. The degree to which prior research indirectly captured these more complex interactive combinations also helps explain the wide ranges of turnover and absence variance.

## **Operationalizing Job Involvement and Organizational Commitment**

Different interpretations of job involvement have evolved while studying the relationship of job involvement to numerous variables, including job characteristics, performance, turnover, and absenteeism (Kanungo, 1982). A literature review revealed several different conceptualizations of job involvement, including job involvement defined as: (a) the degree of importance of one's job to one's self-image (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965; Lawler & Hall, 1970); (b) the degree to which an individual is actively participating in his/her job (Allport, 1943; Bass, 1965); and (c) the degree to which an individual's self-esteem or self-worth is affected by his/her perceived performance level (French & Kahn, 1962; Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960). For the conceptual framework presented in this paper, job involvement is defined as the extent to which the individual identifies psychologically with his/her job (Blau, 1985b).

Two different approaches have been taken in defining organizational commitment (Steers & Porter, 1983). In the first approach, organizational commitment is referred to as a *behavior*, while in the second approach, organizational commitment is referred to as an *attitude*. In the behavioral approach, the individual is viewed as committed to an organization if he/she is bound by past actions of "sunk costs" (fringe benefits, salary as a function of age or tenure). Thus, an individual becomes "committed" to an organization because it has become too costly for him/her to leave. In this approach, organizational commitment is depicted as more calculative in nature (Etzioni, 1961), and the works of Becker (1960), Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972), and Salancik (1977) are incorporated.

In contrast, in the attitudinal approach, organizational commitment is viewed as a more positive individual orientation toward the organization; here, organizational commitment is defined as a state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals, and he/she wishes to maintain membership in the organization in order to facilitate its goals. Incorporated

into this approach are the works of Etzioni (1961), Kanter (1968), and, especially, Porter and his colleagues (Porter et al., 1976; Porter & Smith, 1970; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Since this conceptual framework emphasizes linking job involvement and organizational commitment as work-related *attitudes* to turnover and absenteeism, the attitudinal definition of organizational commitment will be used.

## **Turnover, Absenteeism, and Their Relationship to the Conceptual Model**

Dalton, Todor, and Krackhardt's (1982) important distinction between two types of turnover, dysfunctional and functional, will be used here. From the organization's perspective, dysfunctional turnover occurs when an employee leaves voluntarily, but the organization's evaluation of the employee is positive. However, from the organization's perspective, functional turnover occurs when an employee leaves voluntarily and the organization's evaluation of the employee is negative.

In terms of distinguishing among types of absence, one simple distinction that previous studies (Blau, 1985a; Cheloha & Farr, 1980; Fitzgibbons & Moch, 1980) make is between organizationally excused versus organizationally unexcused absences. Based upon these studies, it seems that organizations operationalize excused absence to include (within defined limits) categories such as: personal sickness, jury duty, religious holiday, funeral leave, and transportation problems. However, as Johns and Nicholson (1982) noted, absence behavior can have a variety of meanings for individuals. Examining different levels of individual job involvement and organizational commitment can give researchers some insight into these meanings and it can help them understand the causes of absence. Also, it is important to connect the meanings of absence with operationalizable absence behaviors.

In the model presented here, a four-category taxonomy describes the meanings of absence. While future studies should attempt to obtain the

"true" (as opposed to employee-cited) reason for an individual's absence, to test this model, here it is suggested how the meanings of absence may be deduced from the data of previous studies. These absence categories are: medical, career-enhancing, normative, and calculative. In the medical category, absence is viewed as a response to various infrequent and uncontrollable events [illness, injury, fatigue, and family demands (sick spouse or child)]. If such an absence (medical) occurred, it probably would be operationalized as a sporadically occurring excused absence. Other characteristics that help identify when this category is used are: when the ratio between frequency and total days absent is less than one, when the absolute values in this ratio are small, and when a time series analysis of the data suggests absenteeism is a random occurrence. In the career-enhancing category, absence is depicted as a mechanism that allows the employee to further task- and career-related goals. This category is more difficult to detect. If the career-enhancing activity is directed *within* the organization, the frequency of *excused* absences is more likely to peak shortly before transfer. If the career-enhancing activity is directed *outside* the organization, *unexcused* absences are more likely to peak shortly before quitting.

However, such an absence analysis is possible only "after the fact"; hence, a true prediction is not possible. For the normative category, absence is viewed less as a motivated behavior and more as a habitual response to the norms of the work group (organization) regarding absence. As such, this type of absence probably would be operationalized as a consistently occurring excused absence (perhaps, "personal days," since many organizations allow employees to take a certain number of personal days per year). More importantly, rather than absenteeism appearing as a random walk, as with the medical category, definite patterns will emerge. Thus, for this group, it would be expected not only to predict frequency but also when absenteeism will happen. Finally, the calculative ab-

sence is viewed as a coin of exchange (Johns & Nicholson, 1982) in either fulfilling or modifying the implicit social contract between the employee and employer, and as a time allocation strategy for enhancing nonwork outcomes. This type of absence would be operationalized in terms of the employee using a certain amount of the excused and unexcused absences permitted by the organization, depending on how much the employee felt he or she should modify the implicit social contract. It could be predicted that an extremely apathetic employee (low job involvement and organizational commitment) would take full advantage by using both kinds of absences as long as the sanctions imposed were not too severe (termination). Thus, the absolute frequency and total number of days absent should be greatest for workers who are the most apathetic.

Obtaining reliable and valid measures of absence is critical for increasing one's confidence in correctly inferring these four meanings of absence categories. Ideally, organizations should provide detailed records regarding type and *timing* of an employee's absence behavior, as well as overall (organizational) employee absence behavior. Then, the four suggested absence categories can be operationalized by combining the various pieces of information. Ideally, normative absences could be distinguished from career-enhancing and calculative absences based on patterns. Normative absences should be specific and more predictable (higher percentage of employees only taking off certain days as "personal days"), versus career-enhancing and calculative absences, which should be broader and less predictable. Of course, many organizations do not keep sophisticated absence records that show either type or time of absences. Thus, researchers should be aware of potential problems (reliability and validity) when dealing with absenteeism measures (Landy, Vasey, & Smith, 1984). If such methodological problems are present, they may prevent the investigator from finding significant results.

In addition to the categories described above, Rosse and Miller (1984) pointed out at least five

implicit conceptual models relating to absenteeism and turnover. These models are: (a) Independent forms model—where absenteeism and turnover are viewed as unrelated to each other either because of differences in causes or consequences; (b) Spillover model—where an adverse work environment is assumed to cause a generalized nonspecific avoidance response; (c) Progression-of-withdrawal model—where individuals engage in a hierarchically ordered sequence of withdrawal including absenteeism and ending in quitting; (d<sup>1</sup>) Behavioral alternate forms—where the likelihood of one form of withdrawal, for example, absence, is a function of the constraints on the alternative behavior, for example, quitting; (d<sup>2</sup>) Attitudinal alternate forms—where a negative attitude may fail to translate into voluntary turnover if the employee feels this response is inappropriate (e.g., if the employee does not want to lose accumulated benefits); and (e) Compensatory model—where absence and turnover both represent means of avoiding an unpleasant work environment, then they should be related negatively.

The literature on these models ranges from nonexistent to contradictory (Rosse & Miller, 1984). One reason for this ambiguity is that different models may describe different individuals in different situations. Another reason is that initially it may be difficult to distinguish between these models. For example, it may be necessary to gather additional variables, such as perceived ease of mobility, to distinguish empirically between the behavioral alternate forms and compensatory models.

One goal of this conceptual framework is to link these conceptual models relating absenteeism and turnover to individuals who have different combinations of job involvement and organizational commitment. For example, perhaps because the independent forms model is a result of individuals high on job involvement and organizational commitment, operationally no relationship is found between absenteeism and turnover behaviors. However, if the progression-of-withdrawal model is due to individuals being

high on job involvement and low on organizational commitment, operationally this translates into significant positive relationships between absenteeism and turnover behaviors. Some research (Beehr & Gupta, 1978; Clegg, 1983) has found a positive relationship between absenteeism and turnover, while other research (Angle & Perry, 1981) has not. Classifying the samples of these studies first into job involvement and organizational commitment levels and then looking at the relationships between absenteeism and turnover behaviors according to the above-mentioned models, may help researchers to understand prior inconsistent findings. Of course, an individual's absence and turnover behavior could reflect some combination of these five models linking absenteeism and turnover and, thus, would be more difficult to explain. Although this conceptual framework of job involvement and organizational commitment implies differences between individuals in absenteeism and turnover, individuals can change their own levels of job involvement or organizational commitment, or both, over time. This framework can connect such changes to different absenteeism and turnover patterns that an individual exhibits.

### **The Conceptual Framework**

Table 1 presents the conceptual framework, using high and low combinations of job involvement and organizational commitment to predict turnover and absenteeism. Job involvement and organizational commitment are partitioned into high and low categories and, then, combined into four cells: (1) high job involvement—high organizational commitment; (2) high job involvement—low organizational commitment; (3) low job involvement—high organizational commitment; and (4) low job involvement—low organizational commitment. Each cell is predicted to have a different impact on turnover and absenteeism. These proposed categories may be derived using a median split on questionnaire scales, for example, job involvement (Kanungo, 1982) or organizational commitment (Porter et al., 1976).

Table 1  
*Using High Versus Low Levels of Job Involvement and Organizational Commitment to Predict Turnover and Absenteeism (Hypothetical)*

Cell (Describing Individual)	Effort Focus	Salient Satisfaction Facets	Label	Impact on Voluntary Turnover (Organization's Perspective)	Category Describing Meaning of Absence Behavior	Model Describing Relationship Between Turnover & Absenteeism
1. High Job Involvement & High Organizational Commitment	individual task-related = higher; group maintenance- related = higher	work itself future with company pay co-worker supervisor	Institution- alized Stars	Dysfunctional	Medical	Independent Forms
2. High Job Involvement & Low Organizational Commitment	individual task-related = higher; group maintenance- related = lower	work itself working conditions pay	Lone Wolves	Mixed, Depends on Task Interde- pendence	Career-Enhancing	Progression-of- withdrawal
3. Low Job Involvement & High Organizational Commitment	individual task-related = lower; group maintenance- related = higher	co-worker	Corporate Citizens	Mixed, Depends on Task Interde- pendence	Normative	Attitudinal Alternate Forms
4. Low Job Involvement & Low Organizational Commitment	individual task-related = lower; group maintenance- related = lower	reward	Apathetic Employees	Functional	Calculative	Spillover/Behavioral Alternate Forms

The first cell contains individuals who have high levels of job involvement and organizational commitment. Since work is important to their self-image, it is expected that these individuals would exert a high level of personal task-related effort on their jobs. Effort typically is viewed in terms of intensity, and it can be operationalized as an amount of time spent working on the task (Hall, Goodale, Rabinowitz, & Morgan, 1978; Terborg, 1977). In addition, because these individuals strongly identify with the organization and its goals, it is expected that they will exert a high level of group maintenance effort to help maintain the organization. Indirect support for this proposed relationship comes from Buchanan (1974) and Rhodes and Steers (1981). In both studies, group norms regarding work were related positively to organizational commitment.

As such, the individuals in this first cell represent the most valuable members to an organization, that is, *institutionalized stars*. From a long-range career development perspective, it is expected that eventually these individuals would become mentors, if not sponsors. If these individuals leave the organization voluntarily, the impact of this turnover on the organization is most dysfunctional because generally it is difficult and costly to replace them. Mobley (1982) suggested that the negative consequences of employee turnover include: (a) for organizations—replacement costs, loss of high performers, and productivity loss, and (b) for “stayers”—disruption of social and communication patterns, loss of functionally valued co-workers, and decreased satisfaction. Although it seems that such negative consequences would be relevant particularly when institutionalized stars leave, research specifically addressing this concept is needed. It is expected that individuals in this cell will have the lowest level of absences because of their high levels of job involvement and organizational commitment. Limited empirical support for this idea is found in a study (Blau, in press) where nurses with higher levels of job involvement and organizational commitment showed less unexcused absenteeism than nurses with lower lev-

els of job involvement and organizational commitment.

Each of the four types discussed above will respond to different organizational and personal cues when deciding whether to quit, or to be absent; this is also true when they choose the meanings they attribute to their withdrawing. With respect to institutionalized stars, the present authors believe that multiple facets of job satisfaction will be equally salient in any decision to withdraw. For them, five facets of particular salience are: satisfaction with the work itself; satisfaction with their future within the company; satisfaction with supervision and co-workers; and satisfaction with their pay, especially as it reflects both internal and external equity. Because of the importance of work to their self-image, institutionalized stars would be especially sensitive to the kind of work they do. Because of their commitment to the organization, they would be sensitive to their role and future in the organization, their relationship to the supervisor and their co-workers, and the organization's treatment of its employees. Background empirical research supporting these positive links among job involvement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction facets come from previous work (Cheloha & Farr, 1980; Hom, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979; Saal, 1978).

Finally, because institutionalized stars will be high in both individual task and team-related effort, it is believed that they will be especially sensitive to both internal and external perceptions of pay equity. Mowday (1979) pointed out that the concept of equity often is interpreted as the association between an employee's effort at work and the pay he or she receives. For institutionalized stars to quit, they would need to be: (a) unhappy/disillusioned with the organization [Disillusionment could occur because of either goal displacement or a change in the organizational culture or climate.]; (b) dissatisfied with their work; and (c) feel underrewarded. [Condition (a) would serve to move the institutional star from Cell 1 to Cell 2, i.e., lone wolf. Condition (b) would serve to move the institutional star from

Cell 1 to Cell 3, i.e., corporate citizen. The present authors hypothesize these changes occurring before any actual turnover.] The unlikely co-occurrence of all three leads to the prediction that institutionalized stars generally do not actively seek other positions, though they would be sought after. Regarding absenteeism, institutionalized stars would make the greatest effort to be at work, due to their high levels of job involvement and organizational commitment. Therefore, it is hypothesized that medical reasons (Johns & Nicholson, 1982) will dominate the potential causes of absenteeism for them. Finally, since voluntary turnover is not actively sought but may occur while absenteeism is a sporadic function of health, family demands, and so on, the present authors do not believe there will be a consistent relationship between turnover and absenteeism among institutionalized stars. Thus, the independent forms model best describes the relationship between absenteeism and turnover for them.

The second cell contains individuals who exhibit a high level of job involvement and a low level of organizational commitment. Although work is important to them, they do not identify with the organization or its goals. Therefore, such employees will exert a higher level of individual task-related effort, but will not show much group maintenance-related effort. These individuals represent the *lone wolves* of an organization. Individuals in this cell may become mentors in a limited sense because they may attract others who share an interest in their work. Gouldner's (1958) definition of *cosmopolitans* shares much in common with individuals in this cell. According to him, cosmopolitans are "those low on loyalty to their employing organization, high on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an outer reference group orientation" (p. 290). Lone wolves are especially sensitive to either the satisfaction facets of the work environment that directly involve their work, for example, the work itself, physical working conditions, or the facets that reflect the importance of their work, such as pay. Because lone wolves are not bound

to the organization, such individuals would seek to leave voluntarily if better task-related opportunities arose elsewhere.

The impact of turnover by lone wolves would be mixed. Despite the higher individual task-related effort, from which an organization can benefit, lone wolves never attempt to integrate themselves into the organization. They can breed resentment among other group members by increasing such members' group maintenance activity workload. Perceived inequitable work overload can damage the cohesiveness of a group (Hackman, 1976). However, this impact will be mediated by the amount of task interdependence. Thus, turnover among lone wolves can create greater problems for stayers, whose tasks are sequentially or reciprocally interdependent (Thompson, 1967), because of the stayers' reliance on lone wolves. Stayers who have pooled interdependent tasks, however, will not feel such repercussions because of the more independent nature of such tasks. It should be noted that jobs with pooled interdependence typically require longer training times. Thus, turnover on these tasks is more undesirable per se because of replacement costs. Absenteeism among lone wolves would reflect career-enhancing behaviors. With their combination of high job involvement and low organizational commitment, lone wolves believe in maximizing their work opportunities. Such individuals are more willing to violate the organization's absence policy if there is a conflict between personal and organizational goals, because of the importance of their own work agenda. Accordingly, it is expected that there would be a positive relationship between absenteeism and turnover. Thus, empirically the progression-of-withdrawal model should best describe the relationship between absenteeism and turnover for lone wolves. [The progression-of-withdrawal model predicts that individuals would move hierarchically through absence and other forms of withdrawal (e.g., tardiness) up to eventual turnover.]

The third cell contains individuals who exhibit a low level of job involvement and a high level



of organizational commitment. Their work is not personally important, but they do identify strongly with the organization and its goals. Therefore, such employees do not exert much individual task-related effort, but focus instead on group maintenance-related effort. Since social involvement has been positively linked to organizational commitment (Sheldon, 1971), perhaps, individual need for affiliation plays a role in facilitating this relationship. These individuals represent the *corporate citizens* of an organization. Individuals in this cell may become mentors in a limited sense. Their knowledge of organizational politics enables them to guide younger peers in "the ropes to skip and the ropes to know" (Ritti & Funkhouser, 1977). Gouldner's (1958) definition of *locals* shares much in common with the individuals in this cell. According to Gouldner (1958), *locals* are "those high on loyalty to the employing organization, low on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an inner reference group orientation" (p. 290).

Although corporate citizens are not as valuable to organizations as institutionalized stars, and possibly, not as valuable as lone wolves, the impact they have when they leave an organization cannot be dismissed lightly. Katz and Kahn (1978) noted that organizations attain constancy and stability when members carry out their prescribed roles (behavioral expectations). Corporate citizens especially are likely to conform to the organization and carry out their prescribed roles or behavioral expectations. Thus, in cases where group norms favor high personal productivity (e.g., Japanese workers), individuals high on organizational commitment may be equivalent to individuals high on job involvement in terms of task-related effort. Note, however, that the reasons motivating their behavior are different (Fishbein, 1967). Speculating from Mobley's (1982) general discussion about the consequences of turnover, one negative outcome to stayers of losing corporate citizens would be a loss in cohesiveness, since corporate citizens devote much of their energy to group maintenance. Of course, an important key to evaluating how dys-

functional the turnover is depends upon such factors as the *number* of stars or lone wolves. This is especially important because corporate citizens are not expected to leave voluntarily. An organization overloaded with corporate citizens runs the risk of having too many people who are willing to attend meetings and not enough people who are willing to take on specific responsibilities. Again, the present authors think the impact of corporate citizen turnover will be moderated by the type of task interdependence.

Since so much of their effort is directed at group maintenance functions, corporate citizens are especially sensitive to satisfaction with their co-workers. Also, they are sensitive to the norms and absence climates of their organizations. Thus, corporate citizens are less likely to violate illegitimately the organization's absence rules because they identify with the organization. However, they are more likely to take advantage of the organization's legitimate absence rules to deal partially with their low job involvement. Thus, corporate citizens will have different attitudes vis à vis the desirability/legitimacy of absenteeism versus turnover. The attitudinal version of the alternate forms model, which predicts that negative work attitude will not translate into turnover if the person feels that quitting is not an appropriate response, best describes their behavior. Indirect support for the differences between lone wolves and corporate citizens comes from Weiner and Vardi (1980).

The fourth cell contains individuals who exhibit low levels of job involvement and organizational commitment. Work is not viewed as being important to the self-image of these employees so they do not exert a high level of task-related effort. Furthermore, because they do not strongly identify with the organization, these individuals just exert the minimum effort (task- and group-related) to get by. Therefore, the individuals in this cell represent the least valued members to an organization, that is, *apathetic employees*.

Since apathetic employees are bound to the organization neither by their work nor by their

commitment to the organization, their attachment and compliance with organizational expectations/norms is based on calculative judgments (Etzioni, 1961). Thus, they would be most sensitive to feelings of reward satisfaction (pay, promotions) and to the availability of other opportunities in decisions to withdraw.

It is hoped, as a result of initial screening techniques and favorable market conditions, apathetic employees will not be hired by the organization. Unfortunately, promising employees sometimes change and organizations can do little because they are protected by a kind of institutionalized job security (Dalton et al., 1982). Examples of institutionalized job security include university tenure and collective bargaining agreements. From the organization's perspective, if apathetic employees leave voluntarily, such turnover is functional, especially if these employees are replaced by individuals who fall into the other cells.

Concerning absenteeism, it is expected that apathetic employees would take advantage, to the maximum, of any company policy that does not penalize absenteeism. For example, it is expected that absenteeism rules that reflect a "use it or lose it" philosophy would result in the highest levels of absenteeism among apathetic employees. An interesting research question would be to what degree do other types of employees (e.g., institutionalized stars, lone wolves) take advantage of such absenteeism rules. Based on the above suppositions, the spillover model generally describes apathetic employees. However, whether their lack of attachment results in high rates of absenteeism or turnover depends on the constraints associated with each behavior, for example, labor market conditions limiting job opportunities. Thus, the behavioral version of the alternate forms model also would describe their behavior.

Interestingly, while reciprocal and pooled task interdependence can create the greatest organizational problems from the standpoint of turnover, absenteeism results in greater problems when employees work on tasks requiring reciprocal or sequential interdependence. The former is due to the fact that employee education and training levels are high, thus making it more difficult and costly to replace these individuals. The latter is due to the amount of task interdependence. Absenteeism here could create bottlenecks or shut down the production/service function altogether while absenteeism on tasks requiring pooled interdependence would only lengthen the service queue. The literature on task design (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Rousseau, 1977) suggested that it is most likely that apathetic employees will be working with long-linked technologies. Thus, high levels of absenteeism, which are expected, would create special problems for other workers.

## Conclusion

Job involvement and organizational commitment have been used to predict general turnover and absenteeism. This paper describes how job involvement and organizational commitment can enhance our understanding of task-related effort as well as withdrawal behaviors. Empirical research is needed to test the adequacy of this model. However, to do so, researchers will need to: (a) utilize such techniques as moderated regression (Saunders, 1956) to test for the significance of the interaction effect which our model suggests will be significant and large; and (b) attempt to assess the reasons for the absenteeism/turnover as well as the frequency or severity of the act itself.

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