

INTENTION TO LEAVE AND EMPLOYEE TURNOVER:  
EXPANDING UNDERSTANDING OF KEY ANTECEDENTS  
IN THE MODERN WORKFORCE

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## **Abstract**

This research expanded understanding of the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover in a sample of retail banking employees from a large Australian-based financial institution. In three empirical studies, this research provided unique insights into today's workforce and deepened understanding of how work related factors influence intention to leave and turnover.

The first study compared the relationships between work attitudes and intention to leave for part-time and full-time employees. By conducting structural equation modelling, the direct and indirect relationships between workplace attitudes and intention to leave for part time and full time employees were examined. It was found that job satisfaction was more important to consider in retention of full-time employees and affective commitment was more important to consider for part-time employees. There were no significant differences in relationships between indirect antecedents based on employment status, however some significant indirect relationships were found.

The second study adds to our understanding by examining the similarities and differences in predictors of intention to leave and turnover. Results indicated that decreased affective commitment, job satisfaction, perceived organisational support and age predicted intention to leave. In contrast, decreased performance, continuance commitment and increased intention to leave predicted actual turnover. Implications for these differences in understanding the turnover process were discussed.

In the third study this research offered a unique approach to understanding how combinations of motivation, commitment and performance may differentially impact intention to leave. To expand understanding about why employees of varying performance may consider leaving, interactions between these factors in predicting intention to leave were investigated. Results indicated that high performing employees with a strong promotion focus or high affective commitment reported significantly lower intention to leave compared to low performing employees. Theoretical implications for models of intrinsic sources of motivation as well as the practical implications for talent retention strategies were discussed.

## **Declaration**

In accordance with Monash University Doctorate Regulation 17/ Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) regulations the following declarations are made:

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes three original papers to be published in peer reviewed journals. The core theme of the thesis is employee intention to leave and turnover. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the candidate, working within the Department of Psychology under the supervision of Associate Professor Sally Carless and Associate Professor Giles Hirst (Department of Management).

In the case of Chapters 3, 4, & 5 my contribution to the work involved were as principal researcher and main author. The contribution of my supervisors as co-authors for these papers is acknowledged in the chapter declaration page that precedes each chapter. I have renumbered sections of submitted or published papers in order to generate a consistent presentation within the thesis. Editorial intervention was restricted to Standards D and E of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice.

I certify that I have made all reasonable efforts to secure copyright permissions for third-party content included in this thesis and have not knowingly added copyright content to my work without the owner's permission. Under the Copyright Act 1968, this thesis must be used only under the normal conditions of scholarly fair dealing. In particular no results or conclusions should be extracted from it, nor should it be copied or closely paraphrased in whole or in part without the written consent of the author. Proper written acknowledgement should be made for any assistance obtained from this thesis.

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

## ERRATA

- p 26 para 2, line 5 & 8: 'Gerstner for Gernster'
- p 38 para 3, line 1: 'and' for '&'
- p 39 para 3, line 10: delete '(U.S)'
- p 55 para 1, line 1 and p 77 para 3, line 5: '(n = 297) for (n = 295)'
- p 55 para 3, line 2: 'and' for '&'
- p 59 para 2, line 15: 'RMSEA < .05' for 'RMSEA < .5'
- p 65 para 3, line 4: 'individuals' for 'individuals''
- p 77 para 5, line 2: 'Scandura and Graen (1984) for '(Scandura & Graen, 1984)'
- p 89 para 2, line 9: 'Individual's intention' for 'Individuals intention'
- p 97 para 2, line 8: '(prevention and promotion foci)' for '(prevention and promotion focus)'
- p 100 para 2, line 3: 'one's' for 'ones'
- p 100 para 2, line 4: 'individual's' for 'individuals''
- p 115 para 3, line 4: 'attached' for 'attachment'
- p 152 Martin and Hafer reference: 'Journal of Vocational Behavior' for 'Journal of Vocational Behaviour'

## ADDENDUM

- p ii Abstract, para 2, line 2: remove "decreased" and replace with "are negatively related to" to read "Results indicate that affective commitment, job satisfaction, perceived organisational support and age are negatively related to intention to leave."
- p ii Abstract, para 2, line 4: remove "In contrast, performance, continuance commitment and increased intention to leave predicted actual turnover." Replace with "In contrast, performance and continuance commitment were negatively related to employee turnover, and intention to leave positively related to employee turnover."
- p 2 para 2, line 4: add "examining" to the beginning of the quote to read "examining the question of *how many* individuals are leaving to *which* individuals are leaving"
- p 13 para 1, line 2: add to sentence to read "other variables, particularly attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment..."
- p14 para 4, line 3: add to sentence to read "In the last two decades..."
- p 15 para 2, line 15: add "Classifications of part-time and full-time groups would benefit from specifying not only hours worked but also employee benefits such bonus options and leave entitlement to help build a more detailed picture of differences in employee experiences at work based on employment status."
- p 16 para 3, line 3: delete "recent" to read "In a meta-analytic review..."
- p 20 para 4, line 1: add author details "In a study using a large sample of non-faculty university employees, Maynard and colleagues (Maynard, Thorsteinson, & Parfyonova, 2006)..."
- p 21 para 1, line 7: delete "percentage (79%)" and add "number of full-time (n = 845) compared to part-time (n = 210) employees" to read "However, the practical application of these findings

is limited due to the large number of full-time (n = 845) compared to part-time (n = 210) employees in the study.”

p 30 para 2, line 6: insert ‘.’ to read ‘...prevention focus. Additionally...’

p 38 para 2 & 3, all: Re-arrange sentences to read:

“In a qualitative examination of the unfolding model Lee, Mitchell, Wise & Fireman (1996) interviewed 44 nurses about their decision to quit their jobs; they found that 33 cases fitted into one of the four paths specified in the model. This provides some support for the model; however, the 11 nurses (25%) that did not fit into a specific path highlighted some ambiguities in the model. In another study, Morrell, Loan-Clarke, Arnold & Wilkinson (2008) examined a larger sample of nurses (N = 352), finding that 23% of cases were unclassifiable. Specifically, these studies highlight that in the nursing industry, shocks and planned actions may not always fit into the paths specified in the unfolding model.

Studies in the accounting industry found a higher percentage of cases that could be categorised into the paths specified in the unfolding model. Lee and colleagues (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, Hill, 1999) examined accountants, adding to the explanation of decision paths and planned actions by finding only 7.4% of cases that did not fit into a path. Donnelly and Quirin (2006) examined the decision paths of 46 accountants and found that in 41 of the 46 cases, the decision path fitted the model. When compared to the nursing studies (Lee et al., 1996; Morrell et al., 2008) these studies provide evidence to suggest that the utility of the unfolding model in explaining decision paths may depend on the work context.”

p 55 para 1, line 3: add sentence to read “Of the 782 respondents, the majority were female (88%). The percentage of female respondents in this study is representative of the percentage of female employees in the retail banking population within the organisation (83%).”

p 56 & 59, *Analysis* section: the analysis methods used and the conclusions drawn are further supported by “Byrne, B.M. (2001). *Structural equation modelling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.”

p 79 para 4, line 1: to address the point relating to a six month time-span between collection of attitude and performance data, add para below to p 91 after para 2:

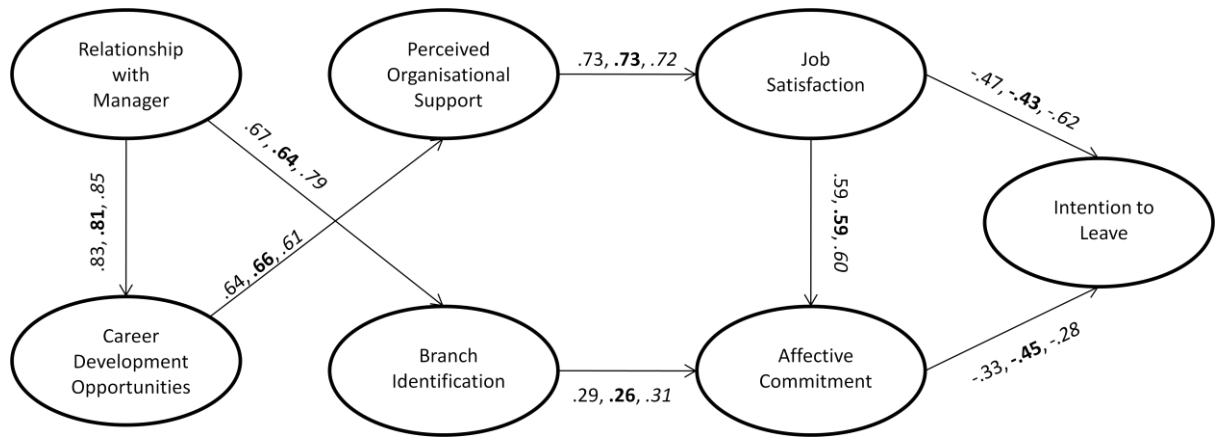
“The six month time-span between collecting attitude and performance data may have had a particular impact in the current study. It is possible that the manager who rated an employee’s performance was not the same manager that the employee had when the attitudinal data was collected. This may have limited the ability to generalise findings surrounding performance ratings, and may be more pronounced in larger samples with higher rates of turnover. However, performance was rated on a rating scale with clearly specified criteria, and based on performance targets, which is designed to limit the variability between managers on performance ratings. It would be beneficial for future research to examine relationships between attitudes and behaviour at different time periods to further expand our understanding.”

p 57 Table 3.1, notes under table: delete current notes and add text below:

“\*\* indicates significant differences between part-time and full-time group means at .01 level”

“\* indicates significance difference between part-time and full-time group means at .05 level”

p 61, Figure 3.2: Delete current figure and add:



p 68, after para 1: insert para “A third limitation of this study is the use of cross sectional and same-source data. Cross-sectional data are collected at the same time, and cannot be used to accurately inform the sequence of attitudes that are related to intention to leave. Therefore, although some hypothetical sequences of causality were proposed in this paper, longitudinal data would provide more accurate indication of causality. Additionally, the data was all collected from the employee (same-source), which may have resulted in some impact of common method variance. Common method variance can result in over or under estimation of the strength of relationships between variables (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In the current study, steps to reduce common methods variance were taken, these included highlighting protection of their anonymity to respondents, counterbalancing the order of factors in the questionnaire, using well-researched items, and ensuring all items measured the targeted factor with limited load on other factors. Additionally, the effect sizes in this study were large, which indicates that although impact of measurement error may have influenced the results, small deviations would not have resulted in substantially different conclusions.”

p 81 Table 4.1: remove values in “3. Role” row, and replace with “-“.

p 82 Table 4.2: “N = 782” is accurate. p 77 para 1, line 1: Delete “781” and replace with “782”.

p 83 para 2, line 3: delete “The results indicate that age, perceived organisational support, job satisfaction, and affective commitment significantly predicted intention to leave, such that as the predictors increased, intention to leave decreased.” Replace with “The results indicate that age, perceived organisational support, job satisfaction, and affective commitment were negatively related to intention to leave.”

p 91, after para 1: Insert para “A limitation of this paper is the inability to make causal assumptions as most data was cross sectional. Cross sectional data is collected at the same time, and cannot be used to accurately inform the sequence of attitudes that predict employee turnover. Although some hypothetical sequences of causality were proposed in this research, the exact sequence of influence would need to be measured using longitudinal data. Nevertheless, an advantage of this study was the data was collected from multiple sources. Employee-rated attitudes, manager-rated performance and employee turnover data from organisational records was collected and matched to each employee. This approach was designed to reduce the impact of common method variance (Podsakoff, et al., 2003) adding more strength to the conclusions drawn from attitude, performance and turnover data.”

p 101 para 2, line 3: delete “are” to read “The finance context reflects an ideal location to test our hypotheses as bank institutions often rely on extrinsic sources of motivation...”

p 101 para 3, line 1: add “between” to read “Respondents were between 17 and 65 years old...”

p 104 para 1, line 7: delete “of” to read “In the final step of the analyses the interaction variable was entered.”

p 106 para 2, line 5: delete “increasing” to read “In line with the hypothesis for employees with high promotion focus performance was significantly negatively related to intention to leave,  $t = 7.23, p < .01$ .”

p 106 para 2, line 7: delete “increasing” to read “For low promotion focus performance was negatively but not significantly related to intention to leave,  $t = 1.90, p = .06$ .”

p 108 para 2, line 8: delete “increasing” to read “In line with the hypothesis for high performing employees affective commitment was significantly negatively related to intention to leave,  $t = 34.82, p < .01$ .”

p 108 para 2, line 10: delete “increasing” to read “For low performing employees, affective commitment was significantly negatively related to intention to leave...”

p 110, para 1, line 4: delete “We found that high performers were less likely to consider leaving as either their promotion focus or affective commitment increased. Replace with “We found that for high performers, promotion focus and affective commitment were negatively related to intention to leave”

p 112, para 4, line 6: delete “Increased affective commitment was significantly related to lower intention to leave.” Replace with “Affective commitment was negatively related to intention to leave.”

p 115, after para 1: insert para “A limitation of this paper is the inability to make causal assumptions related to the attitudinal data, as this was cross sectional. Cross sectional data is collected at the same time, and therefore cannot be used to accurately inform the sequence of attitudes that predict employee turnover. Nevertheless, an advantage of this study was that the data was collected from multiple sources, and different points in time. Employee-rated attitudes, manager-rated performance and employee turnover data from organisational records was collected and matched to each employee. This approach was designed to reduce the impact of common method variance (Podsakoff, et al., 2003), and further strengthen the conclusions drawn from the study.”

p 124, para 1, line 4: delete “Decreasing affective commitment, job satisfaction, and perceived organisational support were the key predictors of intention to leave. In contrast, decreasing performance ratings and continuance commitment, as well as increasing intention to leave predicted employee turnover.” Replace with “Affective commitment, job satisfaction and perceived organisational supported were negatively related to intention to leave. In contrast, performance and continuance commitment were negatively related, and intention to leave was positively related to actual turnover.”

p 124, para 2, line 3: delete “Decreasing job satisfaction was found to be related to increased intention to leave; however, job satisfaction was not significantly related to actual turnover.” Replace with “Job satisfaction was negatively related to intention to leave; however job satisfaction was not significantly related to actual turnover.”

p 134 para 2, line 10: delete “that” to read “...however the relationship was stronger for high performers.”

p 135 para 3, line 6: delete “In addition to intention to leave, decreased performance ratings and continuance commitment predicted actual turnover.” Replace with “Intention to leave was negatively related, and performance as well as continuance commitment were positively related to actual turnover.”

p 136 para 3, line 6: delete “The results in Chapter 4 indicating that decreasing performance is related to actual turnover but not intention to leave are supported by the unfolding model of turnover.” Replace with “The results in Chapter 4 indicating that performance is negatively related to actual turnover but not intention to leave are supported by the unfolding model of turnover.”

p 153 para 1, line 1: add “D.C.” to read “Maynard, D.C., Thorsteinson, T. J. & Parfyonova, N. M.”

p 154, para 11: Insert additional reference “Podsakoff, P.M, MacKenzie, A.B., Lee, J. & Podsakoff, N.P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioural research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5). 879-903.”



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My gratitude goes to my main supervisor, Associate Professor Sally Carless and associate supervisor, Associate Professor Giles Hirst who have guided, challenged and persisted with me throughout the development of this thesis.

Sincere thanks to the organisation and employees that participated in this research. Without your support this thesis would not have been possible.

I am grateful for the financial support received from the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing, & Health Sciences postgraduate research scholarship. The editorial support of Dr Lisa Lines in preparing the final stages of this thesis was appreciated.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends for their endless support and encouragement. I look forward to spending much more time with you now.

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## **Chapter 1. Improving Work for Employees and Employers**

Humans are drawn to experiences that help them feel valued, satisfied and fulfilled in their lives. People engage in many activities during the course of their lifetime, such as spending time with family, work, travel, volunteer activities, study, hobbies, and participation in clubs or interest groups. Despite this range of activities, it is inevitable that most spend the majority of their lives working. Due to the large part that employment plays in people's lives, a decision to leave a place of employment is often associated with significant adjustments for the individual, and his or her family and friends. These adjustments may mean a change in location, lifestyle, career or social networks, which can be associated with considerable stress and anxiety. Understanding how experiences at work can be optimised is important for improving people's lives overall.

The recent global economic turmoil, resulting in many difficult times for both individuals and organisations, highlighted the fragility of the employee-employer relationship (Hipple, 2010). In today's global workforce, decisions made by individuals on the other side of the world can change the course of people's working lives. In many cases, this can have significant flow-on effects on our personal lives. The recent economic hardship and stretching of resources emphasised the importance of creating a work environment that contributes to employees staying motivated, productive, and committed to the organisation through both intrinsic and extrinsic sources.

From the employer's perspective, having employees who are unhappy, unsatisfied and unproductive creates unnecessary financial and operational problems (Sightler & Adams, 1999). Further, high turnover rates result in excessive and avoidable direct and indirect costs for organisations (Phillips, 1990; Corporate leadership council, 2005). The significant costs associated with consistently high turnover mean it is

important for organisations to understand how employees' work experience can be improved and have more influence over who leaves and why (Allen & Griffeth, 1999).

### *Understanding Forgotten Groups*

Developing a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of employees' experiences and attitudes at work is an important focus in the twenty-first century. Allen and Griffeth (1999) highlight that the focus of employee turnover research needs to move from 'the question of *how many* individuals are leaving to *which* individuals are leaving' (p. 525). One significant issue that could be considered further relates to differences in antecedents of intention to leave and turnover based on employment status.

While previous research has examined antecedents and consequences for full-time employees' decisions to leave an organisation (Allen, 2004; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Price, 2004), fewer studies have examined the experiences of part-time employees (Thorsteinson, 2003). Therefore, there is potential to further explore what may cause someone to decide to leave a part-time job and the differences that exist between full-time and part-time employees in this process. Models and theories derived from empirical research with full-time employees have been generalised to explain the experiences, attitudes and behaviour of part-time employees (Price, 2004). However, given that there are a variety of different reasons why an individual would engage in part-time work, there is also likely to be a variety of reasons why they would choose to leave a part-time job (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Shockey & Mueller, 1994).

Part-time employees traditionally have higher turnover rates than their full-time colleagues (Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Nardone, 1995; Thorsteinson, 2003). This is an important point to consider, particularly in industries in which training and development is often required before beginning the role, such as the financial sector. In many cases,



part-time employees receive the same induction training to full-time employees; however, they have less output over the short term compared to full-time employees due to fewer hours spent working. Thus, a high turnover rate for part-time employees is potentially very costly to an organisation.

### *Talent is Key*

The loss of high-performing employees is another area that can be very costly to organisations and affect long-term sustainability (Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997). An increasingly competitive global marketplace has led many organisations to spend considerable time and resources identifying and retaining talent to assist in succession planning (Nyberg, 2010). Understanding the key factors that help retain high-performing employees is beneficial for maximising the investment in these employees, and can help avoid losing talented employees.

The link between commitment and intention to leave or employee turnover has been well established in the literature (Cohen & Hudecek, 1993; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Price & Mueller, 1981). A large part of retaining high-performing individuals is related to providing the right balance of challenges and rewards to help them remain motivated to continue performing well and improve (Nyberg, 2010; Sturman, 2003; Trevor, et al., 1997). Understanding the most effective ways to motivate high-performing employees both intrinsically and extrinsically would be valuable for increasing retention of high-performing employees. Additionally, understanding could be expanded by examining combinations of factors that are most conducive to retaining employees of varying performance levels (Allen & Griffeth, 1999; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004).

*Deepening Understanding*

Research consistently supports the direct relationship between job satisfaction and commitment with intention to leave (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). However, less consistent findings have been found in relation to the influence of the leader, team and organisation as antecedents in the turnover process (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Harris, Harris, & Harvey, 2007; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Deepening understanding of the network of antecedents in the turnover process should help to uncover a more diverse range of strategies for improving experiences at work and retaining valuable employees.

In recent years, the use of statistical analysis techniques, such as structural equation modelling, provides a larger scope to examine relationships among predictors and the indirect effect of variables (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992). Adopting this type of analysis enables greater depth of understanding into the range of influences on intention to leave and employee turnover. This is possible because with structural equation modelling, the relationships among predictors can be investigated rather than solely focussing on direct predictors (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1982).

*Intention and Behaviour*

Many psychological studies assume a strong link between intention and behaviour when examining antecedents (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). However, the complex nature of the mind means that intentions do not always result in actual behaviour (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). In some cases, particularly in relation to important decisions such as leaving a place of employment, there may be factors that influence an employee to move or not move from intention to leave to turnover behaviour. Assuming that the antecedents of intention and behaviour are the same could

be problematic for accurate comparisons of research findings, understanding employee experiences at work, and for designing effective retention initiatives.

Research has provided consistent evidence to support the use of intention to leave as a predictor of turnover (Griffeth, et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Price & Mueller, 1981). However, meta-analytic reviews indicate that although intention to leave is one predictor of turnover, much of the variance in turnover is still unexplained (Griffeth, et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). The introduction of turnover models, such as the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), propose an alternative explanation. The unfolding model deviates from the traditional view that turnover behaviour is preceded by a well-considered intention to leave. Research comparing predictors of intention to leave and turnover may offer additional explanations for the dynamics operating in the turnover process.

#### *Aim and Scope*

The aim of this research was to expand understanding of the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover. To achieve the aim, workplace attitudes, perceptions, performance, and turnover behaviour of employees working in a large global Australian-based financial institution were examined. In this research it is certainly acknowledged that the employee turnover process is a thoroughly research area in the organisational psychology and management literature. However, some key limitations to the current understanding of intention to leave and employee turnover will be uncovered.

The breadth of attitudes and perceptions examined in this research combine areas that have been well researched (for example job satisfaction and organisational commitment) with areas that have received less attention (for example regulatory focus and branch identification) in the turnover literature. In addition, employee attitudes will

be matched with individuals' manager-rated performance and employee turnover data over a 12-month period. The research was limited to ways that organisations can influence employees' attitudes and behaviours at work. The analysis of predictors focuses on demographic characteristics, work place attitudes, perceptions and performance. Personal situations or outside influences, such as marital status, family arrangements or external labour market trends, were considered beyond the scope for this thesis. In terms of the theoretical scope, this research focuses on the dominant models of employee turnover that have guided turnover research over many decades (Bluedorn, 1982; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mobley, 1977; Price, 1977).

### *Overview of the Thesis*

Chapter 2 provides a review of existing employee turnover and intention to leave literature relevant to this thesis. Firstly, the chapter outlines employee turnover and intention to leave and then moves to a critical review of the key antecedents. Throughout the discussion, relevant theories that contribute to expanding our understanding of employee turnover are integrated. The chapter also provides a review of the dominant employee turnover models that have been proposed. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the main themes that emerged from the review and how the current research will address these issues. Chapters 3 to 5 are each separate empirical papers that are currently being considered in academic journals.

Chapter 3 examines a gap in the understanding of key predictors of intention to leave by comparing part-time and full-time employees. Specifically, this study compares the direct relationships between job satisfaction and affective commitment with intention to leave for part-time and full-time employees. The indirect effect of perception of career development opportunities, relationship with the manager, perceived support from the organisation, and identification with the branch on intention

to leave was also examined. The differences and similarities in relationships based on employment status are discussed.

In Chapter 4, the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover are compared. The chapter examined the demographic details, workplace attitudes, and performance factors that are most strongly related to intention to leave and turnover. The differences in antecedents of intention to leave and turnover, and the implications for these differences are discussed. Next, Chapter 5 focused on why employees of varying performance may consider leaving. Interactions between motivation, performance and commitment in predicting intention to leave are investigated. Chapter 5 provides a unique approach to understanding how combinations of these factors may differentially affect intention to leave.

Finally, Chapter 6 highlights the main findings in this thesis, discussing how each chapter has advanced understanding about the key predictors of intention to leave and employee turnover. Areas for future research are also identified throughout. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings and the main limitations of the thesis are discussed.

### *Conclusion*

Employee turnover and intention to leave have been researched over a number of decades, providing significant theoretical and practical advancement (Mobley, 1982; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; Price, 2004). However, the complexity and importance of understanding this process means there are still issues that remain unresolved and new issues emerging in the changing global workforce.

This research will offer a unique contribution to particular areas of the research literature by expanding understanding about the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover. Each chapter provides some novel insights into understanding

the main antecedents of different groups of employees, and unique combinations of predictors, as well as comparing the antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover.

## **Chapter 2. Employee Turnover and Intention to Leave: A Critical Review of Antecedents, Models and Theories**

Employee turnover has been widely studied as an indicator of organisational performance (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Successful organisations treat their employees well and effectively manage the employee turnover rate. This effective management results in improved financial growth, increased productivity, and allows them to hold a desirable position as a preferred employer in the market place. Managing employee turnover requires an understanding of the specific characteristics of the workforce, and the factors that may influence different groups to leave or remain at the organisation.

The aim of this chapter is to identify the key gaps in the employee turnover and intention to leave research that will be the focus of this thesis. Firstly, this chapter will provide an overview of employee turnover and intention to leave. Secondly, the key antecedents of intention to leave and turnover as well as relevant theory will be discussed. The chapter will then provide an overview of the main models of turnover that have guided research in this area. Finally, gaps in the literature and the main areas that this thesis will address are discussed.

### *Defining Employee Intention to Leave and Turnover*

Price (1977) defines turnover as ‘the degree of individual movement across the membership boundary of a social system’. There are two important elements to highlight in Price’s definition of turnover. Firstly, the conceptualisation of turnover as a dynamic process is important and differs from other structural concepts that generally do not vary as much over time. Defining turnover as a dynamic process has implications for the complexity of the process and network of influencing factors (Mobley, 1982). Secondly, Price’s definition highlights the movement across the membership boundary

of a social system. In this thesis, the social system refers to the organisation as a whole unless otherwise stated, as in some cases it may also refer to the smaller team or work unit.

Employee turnover is commonly categorised as being voluntary or involuntary. Involuntary turnover occurs when an individual does not initiate the termination of employment such as in the case of dismissals and layoffs. In most cases of involuntary turnover, the decision to terminate is made by the organisation (Price, 1977). In contrast, voluntary turnover involves a decision by the employee to leave the organisation. Voluntary turnover is the most common type of turnover in organisations and is the focus in the research literature (Price, 2004).

Some researchers categorise turnover as either dysfunctional or functional. Dysfunctional turnover refers to high-performing employees who leave the organisation. Functional turnover refers to low-performing employees who decide to leave the organisation or are terminated. Dalton, Todor and Krackhardt (1982) argue that by distinguishing between functional and dysfunctional turnover, a more realistic picture of turnover is gathered. Dalton and colleagues (1982) argue that just as voluntary and involuntary turnover have different antecedents and need to be treated separately, functional and dysfunctional turnover should also be examined separately.

#### *Theory of Reasoned Action and Intention to Leave*

The theory of reasoned action was developed to help explain the complex decision making process (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the theory of reasoned action, an individual's intention to perform a particular behaviour is an immediate determinant of the behaviour itself (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The theory of reasoned action proposes that intention is influenced by two key factors; attitude and subjective norm. Attitude refers to the individual's perception of



the situation and how they think it would be to carry out the behaviour. Subjective norm refers to the individual's perception of the social pressures to perform the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Landridge, Sheeran & Connolly, 2007). Later, the theory was revised to also include another component, perceived behaviour control to account for differing levels of control individuals may have over performing the intended behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of reasoned action has been applied to understand complex decision making in a variety of situations such as decisions in regard to health related activities (Orbell, Hodgkins & Sheeran, 1997; Sheeran & Orbell, 1999), holiday pursuits (Gollwitzer & Brandstatter, 1997) and employee turnover (Prestholdt, Lane & Matthews, 1987). Despite the common application of the theory of reasoned action in turnover research, minimal research could be identified that examined the validity of this theory in understanding the turnover process (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Furthermore, while process theories of turnover support a considered step from intention to behaviour (Mobley, 1982) more recent theories highlight alternative explanations for turnover that do not propose such sequences (Lee and Mitchell, 1994). Future research could further explore the validity of the intention-behaviour link in the turnover process.

Intention to leave refers to an employee's cognitive withdrawal and willingness to leave his or her current place of work (Mobley, 1982; Price, 1977). Intention to leave is included in turnover models as a direct precursor to employee turnover (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000; Mobley, 1982). Furthermore, a review by Steel and Ovalle (1984) supported the validity of intention to leave as a predictor of employee turnover. Although intention to leave is a commonly accepted indicator of employee turnover (Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Mobley, 1982; Price, 1977), limited studies have specifically compared the antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover (Cohen, 1999;

Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 2002; Mueller, Boyer, Price & Iverson, 1994; Vandenberg & Barnes-Nelson, 1999).

Intention to leave is consistently found to have stronger negative correlations with job attitudes, such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction, when compared to employee turnover data. For example, in a meta-analysis of studies in the social service industry (Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001) it was found that organisational commitment was strongly and inversely correlated with intention to leave ( $r = -.54$ ), but only weakly and inversely correlated with actual turnover data ( $r = -.16$ ). Similarly, job satisfaction was found to be moderately correlated with intention to leave ( $r = -.40$ ) but more modestly related to actual turnover ( $r = -.19$ ) (Barak et al., 2001).

There are several reasons why intention to leave data are more commonly used as a measure of withdrawal rather than using employee turnover data. Firstly, intention to leave data can be collected more easily and via self-report questionnaires, whereas actual turnover data need to be collected at a designated period after the initial questionnaire data have been completed. The process of collecting actual turnover data can be complicated by organisational change or employee privacy policies. Further, if turnover data can be accessed it is often necessary to have a substantial period of lag time to obtain a sufficiently large turnover sample.

#### *Collection of Turnover Data*

The optimal length of time to leave between the collection of questionnaire data and actual turnover statistics remains an unresolved issue in the literature (Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979; Price, 2004). In earlier turnover research (Price, 1977), it was considered important to have a substantial amount of leavers in the sample in order to accurately compare the factors influencing both leavers and stayers, even if this led to years of lag time. However, in more recent years, it has

been highlighted that lengthy time lags may in fact adversely affect the overall findings as other variables can become less relevant to the actual turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Price, 2004).

In earlier work, Price considered 20% of leavers in a sample as a desirable minimum, and waited 14 months to get an 80-20 split between stayers and leavers (Price, 1977). In a review of the development of this initial turnover model, Price (2004) later argued that 14 months between collection of questionnaire data and the collection of turnover data was too much time to accurately compare attitudes and turnover (Price, 2004). Although an even split is optimal, the length of time required to get such a split would mean that many other variables with the environment would have substantially changed, and could potentially influence the results. After 14 months, it is likely that there have been changes to different aspects of the working environment. These changes may include changes in employee attitudes, roles, organisational structure, and the external labour market.

Recent studies have used time lags of between one and four years (Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007; Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Senter & Martin, 2007). In a longitudinal study of Navy personnel, turnover data were collected up to two years after the attitudinal data collection (van Breukelen, van der Vlist & Steensma, 2004). Van Breukelen and colleagues (2004) acknowledged that links between attitudes and turnover are likely to be stronger and more relevant if a shorter time lag is adopted. The results of their research indicated that the variance explained by attitudes was reduced as the time lag increased.

Recent research has recommended considerably shorter time frames and lower ratios of leavers as acceptable and useful guidelines in the current working environment. For example, a recent longitudinal study examining organisational commitment,

intention to leave, and employee turnover had an 8% turnover rate after a period of six months in a sample of 578 university alumni (Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2008). The authors noted that although 8% was not a high turnover rate, it was a sufficient ratio and similar to turnover rates typically reported in published research (Griffeth et al., 2000).

After reviewing evidence on turnover, Griffeth and his colleagues (2000) concluded that lengthening time frame between collecting initial data and turnover rates to increase the ratio of leavers to stayers may be counter-productive to the overall results. Although lengthening the time frame to collect turnover rates increases the validity of the comparison groups in relation to turnover, increasing a time frame over 12 months may compromise the relevance of the attitudinal measures to that particular turnover event. Reducing the time lag to less than 12 months is likely to be especially influential in cases in which intention to leave has been measured and these attitudes are compared to rates of actual turnover.

### *Employment Status*

Labour market statistics indicate that percentages of part-time employees are increasing across the industrialised world (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Polivka, Cohany & Hipple, 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). There is consistent evidence to suggest that part-time employees have higher turnover rates than full-time workers do (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005; Sager, Varadarajan & Futrell, 1988). However, the research findings are far less consistent when examining relationships between job attitudes and turnover for full-time compared with part-time employees.

Traditionally, most employee turnover research has focussed on the experiences of full-time employees (Allen, 2004; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Price, 2004). In the last decade, the nature of the workforce has changed to include more part-time roles (Price, 1999). Despite this increase in the number of employees working flexible hours and

those working part-time, a substantial amount of research has still focussed on the experiences of full-time employees only (Price, 2004, 1977).

Research that has examined a large part-time workforce has led to contrasting findings (Jackofsky & Peters, 1987; Rotchford & Roberts, 1982b; Sinclair, Martin & Michel, 1999). One reason for the varied conclusions from empirical research comparing part-time and full-time employees may be related to the different ways that these two groups have been defined. There has been inconsistency in the number of work hours that researchers have used to categorise part-time and full-time employees. In some studies, employees are considered part-time if they are employed to work for 35 or fewer hours per week (Martin & Hafer, 1995). Other studies have considered part-time employment to be less than 38 working hours a week (Nardone, 1995), 36 hours or less over a specific number of weeks (Martin & Sinclair, 2007), and fewer than 32 hours a week (Senter & Martin, 2007). Many studies comparing part-time and full-time employee experiences have not specified the number of hours worked by each group (Peters, Jackofsky & Salter, 1981). In order to assist in developing more consistent and specific findings, it would be useful for future research to define how they classified part-time and full-time employees.

### *Partial Inclusion Theory*

Based on role theory, partial inclusion theory refers to a divided involvement of individuals in a range of social systems, resulting in a different experience in systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978). This theory has been used to help understand the differing experiences of part-time and full-time employees as a member of an organisation or team within that organisation (Senter & Martin, 2007). Employees are likely to be involved in a variety of social systems (work, home, hobbies and clubs). As highlighted by previous scholars, it is not reasonable to assume that part-time employees will be

involved to the same extent as full-time employees in the 'work system' (Miller & Terborg, 1979). Previous research has also indicated that as part-time employees spend fewer hours performing their role, they may not be as influenced by the environmental pressures of the workplace compared with their full-time colleagues (Peters et al., 1981).

### *Factors Influencing Intention to Leave and Employee Turnover*

Factors that influence turnover can be categorised into three groups: (1) personal characteristics, such as demographic details; (2) work related variables, including attitudes about the work environment and people within it; and (3) non-work related variables such as spouse's working situation, location, and family situation (Cohen, 1999). A large body of research has examined the complicated relationship between employee attitudes and intention to leave as well as the relationship between employee attitudes and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Price, 2004). However, less research has investigated these relationships in relation to employment status and specific work contexts (Allen, 2004). This review will now explore the attitudes and perceptions that influence the employee turnover process, with a specific focus on research that has compared the relationships based on employment status.

### *Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction is an integral part of turnover models (Mobley et al., 1979; Price, 1977) and has been widely investigated as an antecedent of intention to leave and actual turnover (Mobley, 1982; Price, 2004; van Breukelen et al., 2004). A recent meta-analytic review of intention to leave and turnover studies provided consistent evidence for the important role of job satisfaction in the turnover process (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Of all the types of satisfaction that were measured, job satisfaction was the strongest negative predictor, explaining 19% of variance in turnover

(Griffeth et al., 2000). Given the overall support for a relationship between job satisfaction and turnover in the literature, this review will now focus on differences in the job satisfaction-intention to leave and job satisfaction-turnover relationships for full-time and part-time employees.

A recent meta-analysis by Thorsteinson (2003) found similar levels of job satisfaction in part-time and full-time employees across 38 studies examining both professional and non-professional samples. This similarity indicates that part-time employees are as satisfied as their full-time counterparts are in their role. Although research has compared levels of attitudes in full-time and part-time employees, few studies could be identified that have assessed whether the influence of job satisfaction on intention to leave varies according to employment status (Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Peters et al., 1981; Senter & Martin, 2007).

Peters and colleagues (1981) compared attitudes, such as job satisfaction and intention to leave, with turnover for telephone sales employees from a national retail merchandising organisation. In the sample of 31 full-time and 40 part-time employees, correlation analysis indicated that job satisfaction was significantly and inversely related to turnover in the full-time sample ( $r = -.35$ ) but not in the part-time sample ( $r = .14$ ). This study provides support to indicate that there are different antecedents of turnover for full-time and part-time employees. However, the findings are limited by the small sample size and lack of detailed statistical analysis that may help to uncover relationships that are more specific.

Despite minimal advancements in understanding key differences between the part-time and full-time groups, recent research has focussed on understanding the attitudes of different sub-groups of part-time employees (Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Maynard, Thorsteinson & Parfyonova, 2006; Senter & Martin, 2007). These studies

examined the effect of predictors, such as job satisfaction, on intention to leave, by dividing part-time employees into sub-groups, such as part-time working mothers, students, involuntary workers, young supplementers, and moonlighters (Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Senter & Martin, 2007).

Senter and Martin (2007) concluded that job satisfaction was one of the variables that differentially predicted turnover between sub-groups of part-time workers. Job satisfaction was also found to be significantly higher for employees who reported higher attachment with the organisation (i.e. full-time or part-time with fixed positions). The study also found that job satisfaction significantly and negatively predicted the turnover variable for young supplementers, moonlighters and full-time employees, but not the other groups of part-time employees. The results of the study by Senter and Martin (2007) indicate that some differences exist within the part-time sample, as well as between part-time and full-time samples. However, this study was limited because the type of turnover (voluntary or involuntary) could not be accurately recorded, as it was assumed that an employee left if they no longer appeared on union records. Additionally, the lengthy (four-year) period between collection of attitudinal and turnover data may have influenced the low correlation between job satisfaction and turnover.

Despite the inclusion of job satisfaction in most traditional turnover models, the issue of whether job satisfaction plays the same role for part-time and full-time employees in their decision to leave is largely unresolved. Given its dominant role in many turnover models, comparing the influence of job satisfaction in the turnover process for part-time and full-time employees requires further empirical attention in the literature.



*Organisational Commitment*

Organisational commitment is a critical component to understanding organisational behaviour. It is defined broadly as ‘a force that binds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target’ (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301). It is important to understand the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment because employees who are actively involved in and committed to the organisation are less likely to have cognitive withdrawal and leave. High organisational commitment is linked with extra-role behaviours and retention, whereas low organisational commitment is a common antecedent to reductions in productivity, increased absenteeism, cognitive withdrawal, and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Organisational commitment has been defined and measured in a range of different ways (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982) . Some researchers provide a broad definition of commitment, referring to the individual’s psychological attachment to the organisation (Mowday et al., 1982). Meyer and Allen (1991) defined three types of commitment: (1) *Affective commitment* is defined as employees’ emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation; (2) *Continuance commitment* refers to the perception of associated costs and benefits of leaving the organisation; (3) *Normative commitment* is used to describe the employees’ feelings of obligation to remain in the organisation.

In a meta-analysis that focussed on the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found correlations between organisational commitment and intention to leave ( $r = -0.46$ ), and organisational commitment and turnover ( $r = -.28$ ). Further, in a review by Griffeth and colleagues

(2000), organisational commitment ( $\beta = -.23$ ) was found to be a better predictor of turnover compared with job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.19$ ).

A meta-analytic review examining the links between organisational commitment and turnover suggested the length of time between attitudinal data collection and actual turnover is particularly influential on the strength of the commitment-turnover relationship for younger employees (Cohen, 1993). Longer periods between attitudinal and turnover data collection, tended to result in a weaker correlation between commitment and turnover. As also discussed by Griffeth and colleagues (2000), Cohen (1993) suggested that the strength of the relationship can be influenced by which items are used to measure organisational commitment. Although Cohen's review is beneficial in understanding the influence length of time lag has on the commitment-turnover relationship, the study focussed on correlations and did not address in detail the predictive relationship between the two constructs.

Similar to job satisfaction, research has found inconsistent results when examining the levels of organisational commitment of part-time and full-time employees. Some research has found no difference between organisational commitment of full-time and part-time employees (Clinebell & Clinebell, 2007; Thorsteinson, 2003). Other studies have found that full-time employees have stronger commitment to their organisation than their part-time colleagues do (Logan, O'Reilly & Roberts, 1973; Maynard et al., 2006). Most studies have compared mean levels of organisational commitment, and not specifically focussed on the influence of commitment on intention to leave or turnover.

In a study using a large sample of non-faculty university employees, Maynard and colleagues (2006) compared full-time employees to four sub-groups of part-time employees. The results of this study indicated that there were significant differences in

affective, normative and continuance commitment between full-time and part-time employees. Overall, the results indicated that involuntary part-time workers and students showed the weakest levels of commitment; caretakers and voluntary part-timers reported slightly stronger levels of commitment; and full-timers reported the strongest level of commitment. The study concluded that there are important differences in the sub-groups of part-time employees that should be considered in future research. However, the practical application of these findings is limited due to the large percentage (79%) of full-time employees in the study.

Limited research could be found that has compared the predictive power of organisational commitment on intention to leave or turnover. Martin and Hafer (1995) examined this relationship in a sample of 108 full-time and 372 part-time telemarketing employees using moderated regression analysis. The study investigated the linear and interactive effects of job involvement and organisational commitment on intention to leave based on Blau's model (Blau & Boal, 1987). Job involvement is defined as 'the extent to which employees psychologically identify with their jobs' (Martin & Hafer, 1995, p. 312).

Martin and Hafer (1995) empirically examined the model of job involvement and organisational commitment by Blau and Boal (1987). They found no significant difference in the correlation between commitment and intention to leave for part-time ( $r = -.69$ ) and the full-time ( $r = -.73$ ) employees. For the most part, the pattern of results for the moderated regression was similar across full-time and part-time groups (Martin & Hafer, 1995). One difference in the results related to job involvement and commitment interaction. As proposed by the Blau and Boal model, full-time employees reported the lowest turnover intentions when organisational commitment and job involvement were both high. In contrast, part-time employees were found to have the lowest intention to leave when job involvement was low and commitment was high.

The findings by Martin and Hafer (1995) provides some evidence to suggest that although commitment is an important factor in part-time employees' decision to leave, their involvement in the job tasks may be less important. Further, Senter and Martin (2007) found differences in the relationship between organisational commitment and turnover between full-time and part-time employees. The results indicated that organisational commitment was the strongest predictor of turnover for part-time employees with fixed attachment. The understanding of this relationship would be deepened by further empirical research in different sectors.

### *Identification and Social Identity Theory*

The construct of identification has stemmed from social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Social identity proposes that an individual belongs to different social groups, and that his or her membership in these groups holds some emotional significance and genuine value to that individual (Tajfel, 1972). Social identity theory was developed to help understand how an individual's membership and interaction with a particular group helped that individual to understand and shape his or her place in society (Tajfel, 1972). This initial focus of social identity quickly grew to encompass the overall group, notions of in-group and out-group, and how these functions serve to confirm the underlying need for self-esteem as the key motivation to join a group (Tajfel, 1982). Three dimensions of social identity are distinguished: (1) a cognitive component encompassing awareness of being a member of the group; (2) an affective component that signifies an emotional attachment to the group; and (3) an evaluative dimension that relates to the value of being a member of a particular group (Tajfel, 1982).

Social identity theory posits that individuals identify as members of particular groups that they perceive to have similar characteristics to those they hold themselves.

Sometimes individuals are assigned to group membership, such as working in teams. The degree to which the individual identifies with the overall values of the group is likely to affect his or her psychological presence and *identification* with that group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Empirical research examining the specific relationship between branch identification and turnover appears to be quite limited. Identification was originally linked to turnover by Ashforth and Mael (1989); however, the relationship has received limited empirical attention since that time. Some research has found a positive relationship between organisational identification and turnover or intention to leave (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; van Knippenberg, van Dick & Tavares, 2007).

Saks and Ashforth (1997) found a moderate negative correlation between organisational identification and intention to leave. Using structural equation modelling, Cole and Bruch (2006) examined differences in the strength of prediction of organisational identification on intention to leave in different groups of employees working in India. The standardised regression coefficients for organisational identification predicting intention to leave was significant only for the workers group ( $R^2 = -.45$ ), but not for the senior management group ( $R^2 = .19$ ), or for the middle management group ( $R^2 = .00$ ). This finding indicates that the relationship between organisational identification and intention to leave may be stronger for particular groups of employees.

In another study, Johnson and Bernhagen (1996) found that the influence of organisational identification on turnover was predominantly indirect through organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Overall, the relationship between identification and intention to leave requires further exploration in different organisational contexts, particularly the effect of identification with the team or branch.

*Social Exchange Theory and Perceived Organisational Support*

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) refers to the evaluation of a series of interactions between the individual and another entity, such as an individual, group or organisation. The theory posits that individuals' attitudes and behaviour are influenced by the quality of exchanges between the two parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory focuses on the support, respect and trust in the relationship. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) was the basis for the development of perceived organisational support (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986).

Perceived organisational support was originally defined by Eisenberger and colleagues (Eisenberger et al., 1986) as 'global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being' (p. 501). Perceived organisational support was developed by Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) to assist in understanding the social exchange relations between an individual and the organisation. Employees who perceive high levels of organisational support would be expected to feel valued and supported by the organisation, and less likely to consider leaving.

Previous research has provided evidence to suggest that perceived organisational support is strongly related to attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1997), perceptions of others such as the manager (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson & Wayne, 2008), and behavioural outcomes such as job performance (Hui, Wong & Tjosvold, 2007). Some research has examined the effect of perceived organisational support on intention to leave (Harris, Harris & Harvey, 2007). Harris and colleagues (2007) found a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave among 418 employees ( $\beta = -.91$ ). The results also

indicated that perceived organisational support was a significant mediator of the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics and intention to leave. Additionally, in a study involving 153 employees of a Chinese manufacturing plant, structural equation modelling revealed that perceived organisational support was a significant predictor of turnover intention ( $\beta = -.73$ ) (Hui et al., 2007).

Despite the established positive relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave, few studies have specifically examined the relationship between perceived organisational support and actual turnover (Maertz et al., 2007). Maertz and colleagues investigated the relationship between perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, turnover cognitions, and turnover in a group of 225 social service employees. Structural equation modelling was used to test the effect of perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support on turnover. Results indicated that perceived organisational support was significantly related to turnover through normative and affective commitment. This finding suggests a link between commitment, leadership, and perceived organisational support in predicting turnover.

Some evidence indicates that the influence of perceived organisational support on intention to leave is most likely to be mediated by job satisfaction and organisational commitment. A study by Allen, Shore and Griffeth (2003) found evidence in two samples to suggest a significant relationship between perceived organisational support and turnover, which was mediated by organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Using structural equation modelling to analyse samples of employees, including 264 salespeople and 442 insurance agents, Allen and colleagues (2003) concluded that although important, perceived organisational support is a more distant antecedent of turnover through its direct positive relationship with organisational commitment.

Results of the various studies outlined in this section suggest that perceived organisational support is an important factor to consider when examining the antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover (Harris et al., 2007; Hui et al., 2007). Previous research also indicates that the relationship with turnover is often mediated by attitudes such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, or perceptions of leadership (Allen et al., 2003; Maertz et al., 2007).

#### *Leader-Member Exchange Theory and Relationship with the Manager*

Based on social exchange theory, leader-member exchange (LMX) was developed to explain the effect of interactions between leaders and subordinates (Scandura & Graen, 1984; Scandura, Graen & Novak, 1986). Scandura, Graen and colleagues (1984, 1986) proposed that the perception of quality of the relationship between a manager and his or her subordinate is dependent on the quality of interactions or exchanges between the two parties. High-quality relationships between a leader and a subordinate are characterised by trust, respect and genuine appreciation for each other. In contrast, low-quality LMX relationships are often forced, based mostly on the provisions of employment, and likely to lack genuine trust and appreciation (Erdogan & Enders, 2007).

Research indicates that high-quality LMX relationships exhibit more favourable attitudes such as job satisfaction (Hom & Griffeth, 1991), and positive workplace behaviours such as higher performance (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen & Rosen, 2007; Erdogan & Enders, 2007), reduced intention to leave (Gerstner & Day, 1997), and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). In a meta-analytic review Gernster and Day (1997) found differences in the relationship between LMX, intention to leave and turnover. Findings of their review indicated that LMX was significantly related to job performance, satisfaction, commitment, and intention to leave. However, Gernster and



Day did not find a significant relationship between LMX and turnover. This suggests that LMX may be more influential on intentions, but not necessarily translate into turnover behaviour.

More recently, research examining the nature of the LMX-turnover relationship was conducted with a sample of 207 truck drivers and their managers (Morrow, Suzuki, Crum, Ruben & Pautsch, 2005). Results indicated a non-linear relationship between LMX and actual turnover, indicating similar patterns to those found by Harris and colleagues (2005). However, Morrow and colleagues (2005) also found some evidence to suggest a possible second curve in the relationship indicating that turnover is highest for very low and moderately high levels of LMX but lowest for moderate and possibly extremely high LMX. This finding would require further examination in different organisational contexts because the regularly mobile nature of truck drivers' work is likely to be different to that of other industries.

Overall the relationship between LMX and both intention to leave and turnover would benefit from further research. Further research would help to uncover whether the effects of a high-quality relationship between manager and employee are limited to shorter-term attitudes and performance, or whether the effects translate into increased desire from the employee to remain at the organisation in the longer term. Specifically, the differences in the relationship with intention to leave and employee turnover could be examined. Additionally, future research could examine whether this relationship is similar for both full-time and part-time employees.

### *Career Development Opportunities*

Career development opportunities refer to formal or on-the-job training, and temporary or permanent promotional opportunities for the purpose of increasing the employees' skills, knowledge and experience (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999). In

the current competitive labour market, retaining high-quality and productive employees is becoming a top priority for many organisations (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005; Morris, Lydka & Fenton O'Creevey, 1993). Despite this practical usefulness, employees' perception of the availability and quality of career and development opportunities has received relatively limited attention in the turnover literature (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005).

This review was unable to identify research that has specifically addressed the relationship between perceptions of career development opportunities and intention to leave or turnover. Maurer, Pierce and Shore (2002) proposed a social exchange model to understanding the perceived benefits of employees engaging in development activities. The model proposed by Maurer and colleagues (2002) suggests that allowing employees to engage in development activities is beneficial for the individual, manager and organisation. The individual is able to develop new skills, knowledge and approaches, leaving him or her feeling more competent and valued enough to invest in further development. A similar pattern of results could be expected for the career development opportunities and intention to leave relationship.

The quality and quantity of personal learning may also influence employees attitudes and behaviour (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). Lankau and Scandura (2002) found that personal learning was a significant negative predictor of intention to leave and that personal skill development was negatively related to turnover. Their research provides some evidence to indicate that personal learning reduces employees' intention to leave. However, the effect that perceptions of career, learning and development opportunities have on an employee's intention to leave is an area that could be explored further.

### *Regulatory Focus Theory*

Regulatory focus is a relatively new concept developed to help understand individual differences in motivations for working towards goals (Higgins, 1996, 1997).

It provides an additional means for elaborating on the hedonic principle of how people approach pleasure and avoid pain (Lieberman, Molden, Idson & Higgins, 2001). The broader basis of this theory is linked to motivational theory and understanding why individuals engage in different behaviours and desire different outcomes.

According to regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1996, 1997), when individuals adopt a promotion focus, they work towards their goals that align to their ideal self, focusing on achieving goals to gain or avoid missing out on positive outcomes. For example, an employee may strive to meet his or her sales targets to gain a bonus (presence of positive outcomes), or a manager may take away awards if employees do not follow correct sales processes (absence of positive outcomes). In contrast, a prevention focus involves individuals working towards their goals to align to their ought self. For example, employees may strive to perform their job according to organisational processes to avoid being reprimanded for incorrect conduct (absence of negative outcomes) or to avoid a negative performance review (presence of negative outcomes).

The relationship between regulatory foci, production and safety performance was investigated using a helicopter computer-simulated task in a university student sample (Wallace, Little & Shull, 2008). Production performance was categorised as the number of eliminated enemies in the simulation task and safety performance was categorised as minimising damage to the individual's own and allies' helicopters. Results of the research indicated that a natural inclination for promotion focus was positively related to production performance, and a prevention focus was positively related to safety performance, regardless of the complexity of the task. This suggests that individuals who have a promotion focus, a focus on hopes and aspirations, demonstrate superior performance in relation to productivity goals (to eliminate enemies). In contrast, those with a prevention focus, a focus on avoiding negative

outcomes, tended to perform better on the safety component of the task (minimising damage to own and allies' helicopters). While these findings are a step forward, the task is a simulation exercise, not one naturally occurring in the workplace for most employees. Therefore, it would be beneficial to examine this relationship in a work setting using existing performance indicators.

A recent study involving 520 public and private sector employees from over 30 different organisations in Greece investigated links between regulatory focus and different types of commitment (Markovits, Ullrich, van Dick & Davis, 2008). This research found that individuals reporting a chronic promotion focus reported stronger affective commitment to their organisation compared with individuals who adopted a chronic prevention focus. Additionally, Markovits and colleagues (2008) found that prevention focus was more strongly related to continuance commitment compared with promotion focus, and that normative commitment was found to be equally related to both prevention and promotion focus. The findings provide some support for a link between regulatory foci and different types of commitment, as proposed by Meyer and colleagues (2004). Although the findings of this study provide some evidence to suggest a link between motivation and commitment components, further research in alternate settings and using second-source data is recommended.

Although regulatory focus has been examined in relation to various behavioural outcomes, limited research has investigated links between regulatory foci and commitment. Further, no studies were found that examined the effect of an individual's regulatory foci on his or her intention to leave. Through understanding regulatory focus, future research could link key areas of research, such as motivation and commitment, that have previously been researched in isolation (Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004).

*Performance and the Jackofsky Model*

The consequences of turnover, particularly the indirect costs associated with high-performing employees leaving, can have serious implications for productivity, profit and growth of organisations (Trevor, Gerhart & Boudreau, 1997). Further, retaining consistently low-performing employees can have a negative effect on the overall success of the organisation. The question of why employees with varying levels of performance may choose to leave is important to consider; however, findings in relation to the performance-turnover relationship have been quite variable.

The extent to which performance influences employee turnover and intention to leave has been an area of continued debate in the psychology and management literature (Allen & Griffeth, 1999). Some turnover models have proposed a direct relationship between performance and intention to leave (Bluedorn, 1982; Jackofsky, 1984; Jackofsky & Slocum, 1987). However, other scholars have suggested that performance has a more distal influence on the turnover process (Allen & Griffeth, 1999; Griffeth et al., 2000). Others suggest the relationship is mediated by pay growth (Nyberg, 2010) or moderated by time (Iverson & Deery, 2000). While the strength of the relationship has been debated, the direction of the relationship has also been the topic of contention in the literature.

Jackofsky (1984) proposed a model of turnover based on level of performance. The model proposes that the job performance is moderated by two key variables: (1) desirability of movement out of the organisation—job satisfaction; and (2) ease of movement out of the organisation—external job market. This model also includes partial determinants that influence ease and desirability of movement individually. The partial determinants that may influence ease of movement are aspects such as labour market conditions and tenure. Factors that may influence desirability of movement or

job satisfaction could be job related stimuli such as understanding of role and leader behaviour, or individual differences such as age and self-esteem. Overall, the Jackofsky model proposes that individuals are most likely to terminate their employment if they have high performance, job satisfaction is low, and the ease of movement out is high.

One of the major limitations of the Jackofsky model is the relatively small amount of empirical research that has tested it (Jackofsky, 1984; Jackofsky & Peters, 1987; Jackofsky & Slocum, 1987). Analysis of termination records in a large bank found evidence to suggest that dividing the sample into functional and dysfunctional turnover greatly reduced the overall turnover rate and calculation of costs associated with this turnover (Dalton, Krachardt & Porter, 1981). Research examining functional and dysfunctional turnover has found evidence to suggest a curvilinear relationship between job performance and voluntary turnover (Salamin & Hom, 2005; Trevor et al., 1997), as proposed by Jackofsky (1984).

To provide further support for the Jackofsky model (Jackofsky, 1984), Trevor et al. (1997) examined 5,143 employees from a large organisation that were hired over a five-year period. Of the sample, 23% had left voluntarily, 6% left involuntarily, and the remaining 71% were still employed when the research was conducted. This study expanded the scope of the performance-turnover relationship to examine the moderating effect of two additional variables: salary growth and promotions. In a similar study involving over 11,000 employees of a Swiss bank, Salamin and Hom (2005) sought to replicate and extend the study of Trevor and colleagues (1997).

Results of both studies (Salamin & Hom, 2005; Trevor et al., 1997) supported the curvilinear relationship between performance and turnover, finding that low and high performers showed greater turnover than average performers did. The findings also provided evidence to suggest the significant influence of high salary growth among

high-performing employees on considerably reducing turnover (Trevor et al., 1997). Further, bonus payments rather than salary increases were found to reduce turnover rates in the sample of banking employees (Salamin & Hom, 2005).

The correlations between intention to leave, turnover and performance are generally weaker than that of key work place attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffeth, 1992; Jackofsky, 1984; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). One explanation for this may be that the relationship between performance and intention to leave or turnover is moderated by factors such as attitudes, pay or time.

In a sample of insurance company employees, Nyberg (2010) found that pay growth moderated the relationship between performance and turnover such that the relationship was stronger when pay growth was high. Further, Iverson and Deery (2000) found that time moderated the relationship between performance and turnover. In a sample of banking employees, the results of the study indicated that low performers were more likely to leave in the short term while high-performing employees were more likely to leave in the longer term (Iverson & Deery, 2000). Further research could examine the nature of the performance-turnover or performance-intention to leave relationship.

### *Price Model of Turnover*

The initial model proposed by Price (1977) was developed as a result of a wide literature review of turnover research, and included four exogenous variables: pay, primary group, communication, and centralisation. In this model, pay was moderated by two conditions; for pay to have a significant effect on employees' decision to leave, it must be important to the employee and be considered high. Primary group referred to participation in formal networks within the workplace. Communication referred to the

transfer of information in the work system. The final exogenous variable, centralisation, was included to represent distributions of power within the organisation (Price, 1977). It was proposed that employee turnover was likely to be low if pay, primary group participation, and communication were high, and centralisation was low.

The initial model by Price (1977) also included job satisfaction and opportunity as intervening variables. Job satisfaction was defined as ‘a positive affective orientation towards the organisation’ (Price, 2004, p. 6) and was proposed to mediate the effect of the four exogenous variables on turnover. Opportunity referred to the number of jobs in the environment, and was a moderator between the four exogenous variables and turnover. The moderating influence of opportunity on turnover included two conditions: (1) the employees must know about the available jobs in the environment; and (2) be free to leave. Overall, the proposed initial model focussed on examining the balance of benefits and costs of leaving the organisation in terms of psychological and economic needs (Price, 1977).

At each stage of model development, variables were added or removed from the model; at the final phase, a detailed model of the turnover process was developed (Price, 2004). A later stage of the model included the four original exogenous variables as well as nine additional variables that influence turnover, and which are moderated by job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and intention to leave. The additional variables included factors such as training and promotional opportunities, organisation size, kinship responsibilities, and more role specific factors such as role overload and reutilisation of the role (Price, 2004).

The gradual development of the Price model (Price, 2004) based on empirical research allowed for detailed reviews of the components included and their validity in the model. However, the relatively large number of factors proposed to influence



turnover means that there are limited explanations of the processes operating within the model. More specifically, there was little understanding of how each of the factors influenced turnover and interacted with each other. A more recent review by Price (2004) explains in more detail some of the processes operating in turnover.

It was highlighted by Price that although some part-time employees were included in the research sample, the model was developed based primarily on the experiences of full-time employees (Price, 2004). More specifically, the influence of variables such as pay, job satisfaction, centralisation, opportunity and commitment, which are central to the Price model, may be more or less important for part-time employees in their decision to leave or remain in the organisation when comparing them with their full-time counterparts (Martin & Sinclair, 2007). For example, given globalisation and the rapidly changing workforce in recent years, the opportunity variable may need to be defined to indicate whether this includes job availability in the global labour market, in the industry or just in a specific location. The availability of full-time and part-time jobs may differ depending on the employees' location.

#### *Mobley Model of Turnover*

The Mobley model (Mobley, 1977; Mobley et al., 1979) differs from the model proposed by Price and colleagues (1977) because it follows an input-process-output sequence of steps whereas the Price model proposes a series of factors that are moderated by attitudes to influence a decision to leave. The models are similar because they both identify job satisfaction as an integral antecedent of the turnover process, as well as proposing that additional factors moderate this relationship.

Mobley and colleagues' model of turnover proposes that an individual progresses through a sequence of approximately eight steps before making the decision to leave the organisation (Mobley, Horner & Hollingsworth, 1978). The key initiating

step in this model is an evaluation of the current job resulting in feelings of dissatisfaction. The individual then moves to the next stages that involve thoughts of quitting, and searches for alternative job options. If numerous job alternatives are available, the comparison of these alternatives both among themselves and in relation to the current job is conducted. Finally, the intention to leave his or her job arises, which is followed by actually leaving the job.

A major criticism of the Mobley model is that it has been found to explain the turnover process only partially. A replication of the model found that it explained only 15% of the total variance in actual turnover (Hom, Griffeth & Sellaro, 1984). Despite its simplicity, the Mobley model has been emphasised as an important feature of the turnover process and the influence of intervening variables between initiating thoughts of dissatisfaction and actual turnover. It is still commonly used to explain employee turnover behaviour in current theory and practice.

#### *Bluedorn Model of Turnover*

The model of turnover developed by Bluedorn (1982) combines the key elements of both the Price and Mobley models to form one larger model. The Bluedorn model proposed a variety of exogenous variables that were job related (i.e. promotion opportunities, centralisation, pay and instrumental communication) and personal (i.e. age, education and marital status). Job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job search behaviour, and intention to leave were proposed as moderating variables. A distinguishing feature of the Bluedorn model is the emphasis on organisational commitment, which provided additional insight into the turnover process not previously included in turnover models.

*Unfolding Model of Turnover*

Relatively new to the turnover literature, the unfolding model provides an alternative approach to understanding the turnover process (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Lee and Mitchell (1994) proposed an approach that extended previous turnover models. It focussed on consistent trends in labour market factors or intrinsic individual factors. The underlying basis for the model is a generic decision-making theory and image theory.

Image theory posits that the decision-making process includes minimal evaluation of alternatives, pre-programmed behaviour, and choices that often have little association with the best available alternatives (Beach & Mitchell, 1987; Beach & Strom, 1989). In image theory, screening is proposed to play an important role in guiding an individual's behaviour. Screening allows individuals to assess the environment and behaviour, and determine which information becomes an option in the decision-making process. During screening, most information that would provide too much disruption to the status quo for the individual's life is screened out; however, in some cases this information is retained and becomes an option for behaviour. This is the basis by which the unfolding model of turnover is developed to reflect often-sudden influxes of information, subsequent decisions and behaviour.

The unfolding model of turnover proposes that information that survives the screening process is subjected to further scrutiny and consideration (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The model posits that turnover behaviour is generally the result of significant events in an individual's life that result in disruption to the individual's thoughts about his or her current job. Events that provide these changes may be directly or indirectly related to the work environment; however, they are always significant enough to the individual to result in at least contemplation of alternative working arrangements.

Specifically, the unfolding model outlines four decision paths by which individuals may interpret relevant information, and influence decisions and behavioural responses (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). A key component of the model is that of shocks. Shocks are the significant events that prompt the individual to consider leaving his or her current job (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Shocks are not always unexpected, and may be planned or unplanned, positive, neutral or negative, but all result in disruption to the individual's status quo and deliberation of job alternatives. Shocks may or may not result in the individual leaving his or her job; however, he or she starts a process of deliberation that involves consideration of alternatives and assessment of planned actions relevant to the current job.

In a qualitative examination of the unfolding model, Lee, Mitchell, Wise & Fireman (1996) interviewed 44 nurses about their decisions to quit their jobs; they found that 33 cases fitted into one of the four paths specified in the model. This provides some support for the model; however, the 11 nurses that did not fit into a specific path highlighted some ambiguities. Specifically, this research highlighted areas of ambiguity in relation to each path, and how shocks and planned actions may or may not interact in each case. In another study, Lee and colleagues (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, Hill, 1999) examined accountants, adding to the explanation of decision paths and planned actions. Also examining accountants, Donnelly and Quirin (2006) examined the decision paths of 46 accountants; they found that in 41 of the 46 cases, the decision path fitted the model.

Morrell, Loan-Clarke, Arnold & Wilkinson (2008) examined a larger sample of nurses (N = 352), finding evidence to suggest that the utility of the unfolding model in explaining decision paths may depend on the work context. They found substantially less cases that fit into specified paths (23% were unclassifiable) compared to 7.4% in previous studies by Lee et al. (1999) and 8.7% in the study by Donnelly and Quirin

(2006). The findings by Morrell et al. (2008) suggest that the generalisability of the unfolding model may be limited to some work contexts.

Despite the limitations discussed, the unfolding model provides an opportunity to explore further inconsistent findings in relationships between various factors and employee turnover by offering an alternative explanation for behaviour that does not fit with consistent attitudes or labour market trends. The model may also help to explain additional variance in employee turnover and intention to leave that traditional turnover models have not uncovered. This could help to provide a greater depth in understanding the links between attitudes, performance, intentions and employee turnover.

*Chapter Summary: Gaps in the Turnover Literature*

The first issue that emerged in this chapter was related to an important contextual issue for turnover research that is becoming increasingly pertinent to address in the current labour market-employment status. After reviewing the large amount of literature in this area, it became evident that there was a relatively limited amount of empirical research comparing the experiences of part-time and full-time employees, and only minor consideration to employment status in turnover models (Mobley, 1982; Price, 2004). Although some consideration has been given to the different experiences of part-time and full-time employees in previous research, there are very few studies that have specifically investigated these differences in recent years, particularly in specific organisational contexts outside the United States (U.S) (Jackofsky & Peters, 1987; Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Rotchford & Roberts, 1982a). In addition, most empirical studies that have examined employment studies have done so using a small sample of part-time employees.

The second main gap identified in the research literature relates to developing a more detailed understanding of the effect of indirect influences such as perceived

organisational support, branch identification, and perceptions of the availability of career and development opportunities on intention to leave and turnover. These variables have received only minimal attention in empirical research, particularly in studies using analysis such as structural equation modelling, which allows for a more detailed understanding of the influence of indirect predictors on both intention to leave and turnover, and the relationship between these predictors.

This review also included a discussion of empirical research theory in relation to regulatory focus, an area that is relatively new to organisational behaviour research, particularly employee turnover research. Broadly, regulatory focus emphasises two different motivational forms of behaviour in which individuals may engage to achieve goals (Higgins, 1997; Higgins, Shah & Friedman, 1997). Most research has focussed on the effect of these two motivation types in relation to productivity and extra-role behaviours. As far as could be identified in this review, limited research has investigated the effect that different regulatory foci have on negative behaviours such as intention to leave.

The nature of the relationship between performance and intention to leave or turnover emerged as an issue that could be examined further. Performance has been found to have varying relationships with turnover and intention to leave. Some research suggests a direct relationship (Jackofsky, 1984), while other research indicates a curvilinear relationship (Salamin & Hom, 2005). Further research has indicated the relationship may be moderated by factors such as pay or time (Iverson & Deery, 2000; Nyberg, 2010). The nature of the performance-turnover or performance-intention to leave relationship could be further examined in a variety of settings such as retail banking.

Finally, an issue that emerged from this review surrounds the relationship between intention to leave and turnover. The theory of reasoned action proposes that intention to perform a particular behaviour is a direct determinant of the behaviour itself (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Intention to leave and turnover research are often discussed together, and findings used to inform our understanding of the turnover process (Mobley, 1982; Price, 2004). Furthermore, intention to leave is included as a precursor to turnover in dominant turnover models (Mobley et al., 1978; Price & Mueller, 1981). Despite these assumptions that intention to leave and turnover share antecedents, limited research has specifically compared the two constructs (Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 2002; Mueller, Boyer, Price, & Iverson, 1994; Vandenberg & Barnes-Nelson, 1999). Comparisons of the key antecedents of both intention to leave and employee turnover could further explore the relationship.

This chapter has provided an evaluation of research examining the key antecedents of employee turnover and intention to leave relevant to this thesis. Throughout this discussion, the relevant turnover models and theories were discussed, highlighting the key differences between the models. As a result of this review, five key issues that would benefit from further research have been identified.

## Declaration for Thesis Chapter Three

### Declaration by candidate

In the case of Chapter 3, the nature and extent of my contribution to the work was the following:

| Nature of contribution               | Extent of contribution |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Principal researcher and main author | 80%                    |

The following co-authors contributed to the work.

| Name          | Nature of contribution |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Sally Carless | Editor                 |
| Giles Hirst   | Editor                 |


| Candidate's Signature | Date     |
|-----------------------|----------|
|                       | 02/12/10 |

### Declaration by co-authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- (1) the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors.
- (2) they meet the criteria for authorship in that they have participated in the conception, execution, or interpretation, of at least that part of the publication in their field of expertise;
- (3) they take public responsibility for their part of the publication, except for the responsible author who accepts overall responsibility for the publication;
- (4) there are no other authors of the publication according to these criteria;
- (5) potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed to (a) granting bodies, (b) the editor or publisher of journals or other publications, and (c) the head of the responsible academic unit; and
- (6) the original data are stored at the following location(s) and will be held for at least five years from the date indicated below:

| Location(s)                  |
|------------------------------|
| Monash University, Caulfield |

| Signature 1   | Date     |
|---|----------|
|   | 02/12/10 |
|  | 02/12/10 |



### **Chapter 3. A Comparison of Part-time and Full-time Employees: Direct and Indirect Relationships between Workplace Attitudes and Intention to leave**

*Under consideration at Applied Psychology: An International Review*

#### Abstract

This study compared the relationships between work attitudes and intention to leave for part-time and full-time employees. A sample of 782 retail banking employees (part-time = 485, full-time = 297) completed an online questionnaire assessing intention to leave, job satisfaction, affective commitment, relationship with the manager, career development opportunities, branch identification, and perceived organisational support. Structural equation modelling was used to analyse the data. Results supported Hypothesis 1 that job satisfaction would have a stronger negative relationship with intention to leave for full-time compared to part-time employees. Hypothesis 2 that affective commitment would have a stronger negative relationship with intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees was also supported. The results suggest that job satisfaction is more important to consider in retention strategies for full-time employees and affective commitment is more important to consider for part-time employees. In relation to Research Question 1, relationship with the manager, career development opportunities, branch identification, and perceived organisational support had indirect relationships with intention to leave for both full-time and part-time employees.

Employee turnover is one of the most financially draining phenomena faced by organisations globally (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Phillips, 1990). This large cost coupled with a continually evolving labour market provides opportunities to build on our understanding of the employee turnover process (Price, 2004). Once such opportunity relates to the increasing flexibility of the workforce, in which part-time employees occupy a larger percentage of roles each year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Polivka, Cohany & Hipple, 2000). Further, research indicates higher turnover rates for part-time employees compared to those working full-time (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005; Sager, Varadarajan & Futrell, 1988). In a competitive labour market, it is important that we do not neglect the experiences of part-time employees and the factors that help to keep them satisfied and fulfilled at work.

Most research examining the experiences and needs of employees in the workplace has focussed on full-time employees (Price, 2004). While this is useful for understanding the experiences of full-time employees, part-time employees have been found to differ from their full-time colleagues in relation to reasons for working, work arrangements and time devoted to their workplace (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Shockey & Mueller, 1994). Hence, part-time employees may also have different experiences and attitudes at work. The findings from research comparing mean attitudes of part-time and full-time employees have been inconsistent (Logan, O'Reilly & Roberts, 1973; Maynard, Joseph & Maynard, 2006; Thorsteinson, 2003). Some studies have found part-time employees have higher levels of factors such as job satisfaction (Sinclair, Martin & Michel, 1999), whereas others have found less favourable attitudes in part-time employees (Shockey & Mueller, 1994). In contrast, some research has found little difference between the two groups of employees in relation to job attitudes (Hom, 1979; Krausz, Sagie & Bidermann, 2000; Thorsteinson, 2003).

Although considerably less prevalent multivariate analyses have been conducted to compare the influence of work attitudes on intention to leave for part-time and full-time employees (Blau & Boal, 1989; Martin & Hafer, 1995; Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Maynard, Joseph et al., 2006; Senter & Martin, 2007). These studies have found some differences and similarities in relationships between attitudes and intention to leave or turnover for part-time and full-time employees; however, consistent trends have not emerged. Additionally, these multivariate studies have focused on the direct relationships between attitudes and intention to leave, without considering the wider network of antecedents (Blau & Boal, 1989; Martin & Hafer, 1995; Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Maynard, Joseph et al., 2006; Senter & Martin, 2007). An understanding of both the direct and indirect relationships between attitudes and intention to leave is likely to provide a more in-depth understanding and assist in uncovering reasons for inconsistent findings.

The aim of this study was to examine the direct and indirect relationships between work attitudes and intention to leave. This study compared the direct influence of the two most commonly researched predictors of intention to leave: job satisfaction and organisational commitment. We also extend previous research by examining the indirect relationships between attitudes and intention to leave for part-time and full-time employees.

Utilising partial inclusion theory, our research expands understanding of how the experiences of part-time employees can lead to differing relationships between attitudes and intention to leave when compared to their full-time colleagues. A specific focus on differences in the direct relationships between job satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to leave provides deeper insights into these relationships in the modern day workforce for both full-time and part-time employees.

Using the structural equation model, we examined the relationships between attitudes and intention to leave in a sample of retail banking employees from a large, global, Australian-based financial institution. To our knowledge, limited studies have examined this specific organisational context using structural equation modelling (Allen et al., 2009; Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffeth, 1992; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). By conducting structural equation modelling analysis, we were able to examine both the direct and indirect effects on intention to leave. Results will assist human resource (HR) professionals and managers to develop more specific and targeted retention strategies.

#### *Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave*

Job satisfaction occupies a central place in traditional models of turnover (Gaertner & Robinson, 1999; Mobley, 1977; Price, 1977). However, research that has validated traditional turnover models has relied almost exclusively on the opinions of full-time employees (Price, 2004). Recent meta-analytic reviews support the inclusion of job satisfaction as one of the most important predictors of intention to leave, explaining up to 19% of variance of intention to leave (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). In a meta-analysis comparing attitudes of part-time and full-time employees, Thorsteinson (2003) concluded that job satisfaction did not differ significantly across groups. In contrast, other research found a significant correlation between job satisfaction and intention to leave for full-time, but not for part-time employees (Peters, Jackofsky & Salter, 1981).

Although job satisfaction is considered an important factor in understanding intention to leave, the strength of this relationship may be different for part-time and full-time employees. Although partial inclusion theory has been used to support differences in part-time and full-time employees *post hoc*, few studies have empirically examined this distinction (Clinebell & Clinebell, 2007). Partial inclusion theory (Katz &

Kahn, 1978) refers to a divided involvement of individuals in different social systems, and assumes that individuals are likely to be involved in a variety of social systems (work, home, hobby or interest groups). The different combinations of social systems an individual is part of, results in different experiences in each system (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The amount of time an individual spends in their 'work system' may be one such difference that results in different priorities and experiences for the individual at work.

According to partial inclusion theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), part-time employees are likely to spend less time in their work social system, resulting in different experiences at work compared to full-time employees. As part-time employees spend less time at work, it occupies a less dominant part of their lives when compared to full-time employees (Martin & Hafer, 1995). An individual's job satisfaction reflects his or her satisfaction with his or her work social system; a system in which part-time employees are less involved compared to their full-time colleagues. As a result, job satisfaction is likely to be a less influential factor in defining part-time employees' work experience compared to full-time employees.

A difference in the importance of involvement in the job role itself for part-time and full-time employee intention to leave is supported by Blau and Boal's (1987, 1989) model of job involvement and organisational commitment. Their model proposes that the optimal level of job involvement for full-time and part-time employees is different, as part-time employees show lower intention to leave when they have low job involvement, whereas full-time employees tend to prefer high job involvement. In an empirical examination of Blau and Boal's (1987) model with a sample of telemarketers, Martin and Hafer (1995) found that part-time employees had the lowest intention to leave when organisational commitment was high and job involvement was low. In contrast, full-time employees had the lowest intention to leave when

organisational commitment and job involvement were both high. These results provide support for the proposition that job attitudes vary according to employment status.

Previous research found that part-time employees are less satisfied than their full-time colleagues (Miller & Terborg, 1979). Miller and Terborg (1979) explained this finding to be a result of less involvement in the wider work social system from part-time employees. Research by Peters et al. (1981) also found evidence to support a weaker relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees. The results of the study by Peters and colleagues (1981) indicated a significant relationship between job satisfaction, thoughts of quitting, and turnover for full-time but not part-time employees. Based on previous research and theory, the following hypothesis was proposed:

*Hypothesis 1: Job satisfaction will have weaker negative relationship with intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees.*

#### *Affective Commitment and Intention to Leave*

Affective organisational commitment refers to the emotional attachment to, involvement in, and identification with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Pratt, 1998). Considerable empirical evidence supports a strong link between organisational commitment and intention to leave (Cohen & Hudecek, 1993; Mobley, 1982; Price & Mueller, 1981). In a meta-analytic review, Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner (2000) found organisational commitment had a strong relationship with intention to leave. Similar to job satisfaction however, most research has focussed on the experiences of full-time employees (Price, 2004).

Research has found inconsistent results when comparing organisation commitment for part-time and full-time employees (Clinebell & Clinebell, 2007; Logan et al., 1973; Maynard, Joseph et al., 2006; Thorsteinson, 2003). Thorsteinson (2003)

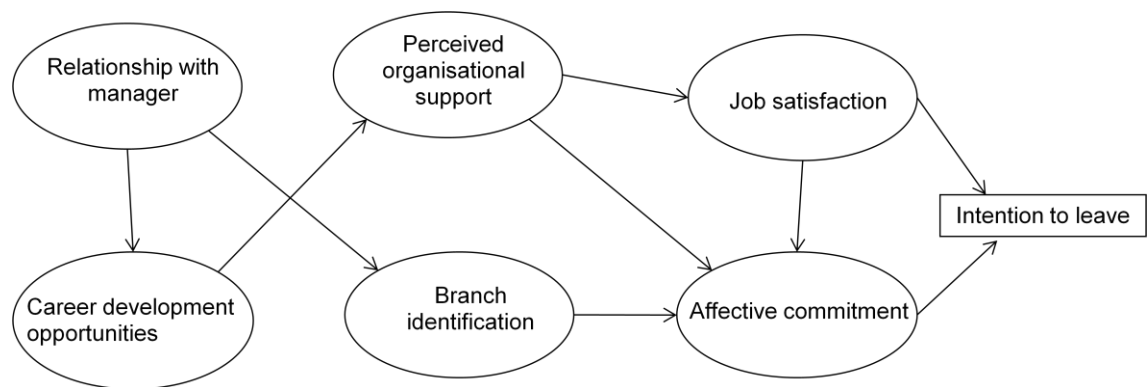
found no significant difference between organisational commitment for part-time and full-time employees in a meta-analysis. In a retail banking sample, Clinebell and Clinebell (2007) found part-time employees had lower job involvement but similar levels of organisational commitment compared to their full-time colleagues. In contrast, other studies have found full-time employees have higher commitment when compared to their part-time colleagues (Logan et al., 1973; Maynard, Joseph et al., 2006).

Work facilitates a sense of belonging and value to a larger group or helps to develop networks of support through colleagues (Maynard, Thorsteinson & Parfyonova, 2006). When considering the affective commitment-intention to leave relationship in the context of partial inclusion theory, affective commitment, which relates to emotional attachment, may be more important than job satisfaction to a range of social systems, such as work, home, interest, or sporting groups. Work for part-time employees offers income and access to networks of support that help to facilitate involvement in these various social systems. Thus, work for part-time employees could be less about the satisfaction of the work itself and more about facilitating involvement and satisfaction in other social systems. In contrast, although some full-time employees may be drawn to work for similar reasons, they are also likely to place strong emphasis on the satisfaction they gain from work as their work is occupying a more central place in their lives (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003). As such, part-time employees' affective commitment is likely to have a stronger relationship with intention to leave when compared to full-time employees. Hence, the following hypothesis was posed:

*Hypothesis 2: Affective commitment will have a stronger negative relationship with intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees.*

*Examining Relationships among Antecedents of Intention to Leave*

Most research has tended to focus on direct predictors of intention to leave, demonstrating a strong negative relationship with job satisfaction and organisational commitment. However, indirect relationships with intention to leave and relationships among antecedents have received less attention (Allen et al., 2009; Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffeth, 1992; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Consideration of these indirect influences could help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the predictors of intention to leave. In the current study, the research model proposed includes both direct and indirect predictors of intention to leave (see Figure 3.1).



*Figure 3.1:* Research model: Workplace attitudes and intention to leave.

*Relationship with the Manager*

According to leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Scandura & Graen, 1984; Scandura, Graen & Novak, 1986), each interaction between a manager and his or her employee shapes the perception that the employee will hold about the quality of relationship with his or her manager. Research indicates that high quality LMX relationships are positively related to higher job satisfaction (Hom & Griffeth, 1995), reduced intention to leave (Gerstner & Day, 1997), and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000).



An individual's relationship with his or her manager is likely to be particularly important in the retail banking environment. Consistent with LMX theory, it is proposed that the quality of employees' relationship with their manager will influence perceptions of their sense of belonging and identification with the branch. Further, employee perceptions of their relationship with the manager are predicted to influence perceptions of the availability of career development opportunities, as these kinds of opportunities generally require support from the manager. These relationships are expected to be particularly important in the retail banking environment as the branches are geographically separated. Therefore, it may be more likely that employees perceive the branch manager to be their main source of access to opportunities and development in the wider organisation. Consistent with previous research, the current research proposed an indirect relationship between LMX and intention to leave, via the other intervening variables in the model (see Figure 3.1).

#### *Career Development Opportunities*

Career development opportunities refer to perceived accessibility of formal or on-the-job training, and temporary or permanent promotional opportunities for the purpose of increasing the employees' skills, knowledge and experience (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999). Maurer, Pierce and Shore (2002) proposed that allocating time for employees to engage in career development opportunities has positive outcomes for the individual, manager and organisation. Further, graduates' perceptions of career development opportunities have been found to have a significant negative relationship with intention to leave (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999; Morris, Lydka & Fenton O'Creevey, 1993).

Research has examined the effect that rewards and recognition have on employee turnover, including the opportunity for career development opportunities (Irving & Meyer, 1994; Price, 2004). Including development opportunities as a 'reward

variable' with various other aspects such as pay, promotion, leave and bonuses may have limited scholars' ability to gain an understanding of the relationship between career development opportunities and intention to leave.

In the current study, it was expected that employee perceptions of career development opportunities will have a negative indirect relationship with intention to leave. Individuals' perceptions of the career development opportunities available to them is proposed to influence perceived organisational support, as employees who perceive career development opportunities as accessible may also be likely to feel supported and valued by the organisation.

#### *Branch Identification*

Branch identification reflects the degree to which individuals view themselves as being similar to and identifying with the branch and its members (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Identification has been linked with organisational commitment and intention to leave (Scott et al., 1999; van Knippenberg, van Dick & Tavares, 2007). Research suggests that commitment and identification are distinct, yet related constructs (Cole & Bruch, 2006; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). The 'psychological oneness' that individuals feel if they identify with a particular group is likely to increase feelings of job satisfaction or affective commitment, hence reducing intention to leave (Johnson & Bernhagen, 1996).

Consistent with previous research, it was expected that an employees' identification with their branch will positively influence their level of affective commitment (Cole & Bruch, 2006; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Employees' feelings of connection and identification to the branch are likely to be related to the extent to which they feel attached to the organisation. The current study proposed an

indirect influence of branch identification on intention to leave via affective commitment.

#### *Perceived Organisational Support*

Perceived organisational support refers to the extent to which employees feel supported and valued by the organisation (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986). Perceived organisational support has been linked to attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997), and leader-member exchange (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson & Wayne, 2008). Recent research has found a negative relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave (Harris, Harris & Harvey, 2007). There is also evidence to suggest the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave is mediated by attitudes such as organisational commitment or job satisfaction (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Loi, Ngo & Foley, 2006; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007).

In the current study, it was expected that employees who feel their efforts are valued and appreciated by the organisation are more likely to feel a sense of attachment, and gain more satisfaction from the work that they perform. Based on previous research, we also expect perceived organisational support to have an indirect relationship with intention to leave through the effect on job satisfaction. As there is no solid basis to form hypotheses for the indirect relationships, the following research question is proposed:

*Research Question 1: To what extent do leader-member exchange, career development opportunities, branch identification, and perceived organisational support have an indirect relationship with intention to leave for both full-time and part-time employees?*

## Method

*Sample and Procedure*

Data was collected using an online questionnaire over a six-month period from employees of geographically separated retail branches in a large Australian-based global financial institution. Approximately 4,500 employees from retail branches throughout Australia were able to complete the questionnaire online. Employees were invited to complete the survey via two methods. All employees were able to request the survey via an internal website and managers of the branch or region were able to request that the survey link be sent to members of their branch inviting them to participate. Of the employees invited to complete the survey, the response rate was 17.4%.

Of the 782 respondents, the majority were female (88%). The age of respondents was 17 to 65 years old ( $M = 41.9$  years). Employee tenure at the organisation ranged between 27 days to 40 years ( $M = 4.2$  years). Respondents were from 181 different branches across Australia. Branches were generally located in metropolitan areas, or belonged to a region managed from a metropolitan base.

Forty-six per cent of respondents were tellers (providing service on general transactions and referring customers to sales representatives), 41% were in sales roles (introducing and selling products to suit individual customer needs), 10.9% of respondents were branch managers (managing the running of the branch overall, and in some cases also perform a sales role) and less than 3% were in various other financial advice roles.

Employees were classified as full-time (FT) or part-time (PT) employees based on the standard number of working hours each week. Employees that worked between 38 and 40 hours a week were classified as full-time. Employees that worked less than 37 hours were classified as part-time employees. Part-time employees made up 62% of

the total sample (n = 485), the remainder were full-time employees (n = 295). Based on the divisional employee demographics, these percentages of employment status are similar to the total population of employees: 60% part-time and 40% full-time. The employment contract, conditions and employee benefits are the same for both full-time and part-time employees.

### *Measures*

All responses were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A full list of scales and items is shown in Appendix A.

*Relationship with the manager* was measured using six items from a scale developed by Scandura & Graen (1984). An example item in the scale is ‘My working relationship with my manager is effective’. The original wording of one item ‘Regardless of how much power my manager has built into his or her position, my manager would be personally inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work’ was edited as it was identified as a double-barrelled item (Bauer & Green, 1996). The alpha coefficient for the six-item scale was .95.

*Affective organisational commitment* was measured using the four-item affective commitment scale developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). One item was removed as it had a low inter-item correlation coefficient, and did not fit well in the measurement model. With the item removed the reliability of the scale was .92 (Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2008).

*Career development opportunities* available in the organisation were measured using four items designed specifically for a retail branch environment. The alpha coefficient was .85. This was a newly developed scale for this study; items and factor loadings are provided in Appendix B.

*Job satisfaction* was measured by a four item scale used by Quinn and Shepard (1974). An example of an item is 'If a good friend told me that they were interested in working in a job like mine, I would strongly recommend it'. The alpha coefficient was .90.

*Branch identification* was assessed using four items from the scale developed by Doosje, Ellemers and Spears (1995) An example of an item is 'I see myself as a member of my branch'. The alpha coefficient was .92.

*Perceived organisational support* was measured using four items from the scale developed Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa (1986). An example item is 'The organisation cares about my opinions'. The alpha coefficient was .95.

*Intention to leave.* Following Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) intention to leave was assessed by three items from a scale developed by Landau & Hammer (1986) and one item 'I often think about quitting my job' from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Nadler, Jenkins, Cammann & Lawler, 1975). The alpha coefficient was .94.

### *Analyses*

Means, standard deviations (see Table 3.1), and correlations (see Table 3.2) were calculated. The data was analysed using AMOS 17.0, maximum likelihood estimation procedure. Using the two-step approach to structural equation modelling (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the first step, a confirmatory factor analysis was computed for each factor to assess the measurement of the latent constructs using the specified observed variables. Some minor modifications were made to the factor structure according to fit indices, modification indices and significant factor loadings.

Table 3.1

*Descriptive statistics and t-test to indicate difference between means.*

|                                     | ALL N= 782 |           | FULL-TIME<br>N = 297 |           | PART-TIME<br>N = 485 |           | Difference         | between<br>Means                 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                     | <i>M</i>   | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>             | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>             | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-statistic</i> | <i>Cohen's D<br/>Effect size</i> |
| 1. Age                              | 41.92      | 11.90     | 40.33                | 11.87     | 42.89                | 11.83     | 2.93**             | -0.22                            |
| 2. Tenure (years)                   | 4.17       | 5.89      | 2.95                 | 5.85      | 4.92                 | 5.79      | 4.59**             | -0.33                            |
| 3. Career development opportunities | 5.63       | 1.06      | 5.80                 | 1.02      | 5.53                 | 1.07      | 3.54**             | 0.26                             |
| 4. Relationship with the manager    | 5.99       | 1.05      | 6.07                 | 1.11      | 5.94                 | 1.01      | 1.71               | -                                |
| 5. Affective commitment             | 5.55       | 1.09      | 5.76                 | 1.04      | 5.43                 | 1.10      | 4.27**             | 0.31                             |
| 6. Job satisfaction                 | 5.41       | 1.22      | 5.57                 | 1.14      | 5.32                 | 1.25      | 2.84**             | 0.21                             |
| 7. Perceived organisational support | 5.16       | 1.27      | 5.27                 | 1.27      | 5.08                 | 1.26      | 2.02*              | 0.15                             |
| 8. Branch identification            | 6.19       | 0.85      | 6.30                 | 0.82      | 6.12                 | 0.87      | 2.90**             | 0.21                             |
| 9. Intention to leave               | 2.47       | 1.42      | 2.33                 | 1.42      | 2.56                 | 1.42      | 2.12**             | -0.16                            |

\*\* indicates significant difference between means of part-time and full-time groups

Table 3.2

*Correlations between variables.*

|                                     | 1             | 2              | 3              | 4             | 5             | 6             | 7             | 8             | 9       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------|
| 1. Age                              |               | .31**          | 0.13*          | -0.01         | -0.01         | 0.1           | 0.03          | 0.02          | 0.03    |
| 2. Tenure (days)                    | <b>.46**</b>  |                | -0.1           | 0.06          | 0.03          | 0.07          | 0.06          | 0.02          | 0.1     |
| 3. Intention to leave               | <b>-0.08</b>  | <b>0.03</b>    |                | -0.43**       | -0.41**       | -0.67**       | -0.68**       | -0.60**       | -0.44** |
| 4. Career development opportunities | <b>-0.05</b>  | <b>-0.08</b>   | <b>-0.37**</b> |               | 0.76**        | 0.50**        | 0.56**        | 0.53**        | 0.52**  |
| 5. Relationship with the manager    | <b>-0.04</b>  | <b>-0.10*</b>  | <b>-0.35**</b> | <b>0.71**</b> |               | 0.51**        | 0.54**        | 0.54**        | 0.64**  |
| 6. Affective commitment             | <b>0.03</b>   | <b>-0.05</b>   | <b>-0.68**</b> | <b>0.52**</b> | <b>0.49**</b> |               | 0.71**        | 0.68**        | 0.59**  |
| 7. Job satisfaction                 | <b>-0.10*</b> | <b>-0.22**</b> | <b>-0.60**</b> | <b>0.54**</b> | <b>0.53**</b> | <b>0.69**</b> |               | 0.66**        | 0.51**  |
| 8. Perceived organisational support | <b>-0.08</b>  | <b>-0.08</b>   | <b>-0.51**</b> | <b>0.58**</b> | <b>0.55**</b> | <b>0.64**</b> | <b>0.67**</b> |               | 0.49**  |
| 9. Branch identification            | <b>-0.03</b>  | <b>-0.05</b>   | <b>-0.42**</b> | <b>0.56**</b> | <b>0.56**</b> | <b>0.55**</b> | <b>0.47**</b> | <b>0.51**</b> |         |

**Below diagonal: Part-time N = 485**

Above diagonal: Full-time N = 297



In the second step of analysis, the structural model, including specified directional relationships between latent constructs was assessed for fit to the sample data. The outcome variable (intention to leave) is displayed in the right of Figure 3.2, and the work attitude factors are on the left of the diagram. The pathway between perceived organisational support and affective commitment was removed because the standardised regression weight was comparatively small and not significant ( $\beta = .23$ ). Removing the pathway between perceived organisational support and affective commitment produced a more parsimonious model. A covariance between error terms on the items for intention to leave and branch identification were added based on modification indices.

Next, we tested whether the model was identical for those working part-time and full-time. This was achieved by constraining all regression paths to be equal in both groups and testing whether the fit of the constrained model was significantly worse than the fit of the unconstrained model. Following this, equality of individual parameters was tested by constraining one parameter at a time to be equal between the groups. (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1978, 1979; Neff, 1985). If the constrained model was not a significantly better fit than the unconstrained model, the path coefficient was considered the same for both groups. In order to assess model fit, several indices were considered. For the path coefficients, the significance level was set at 0.01 (Rensvold & Cheung, 2000). A good fit was defined by a non-significant  $\chi^2$  test ( $p > .05$ ), indicating the model was not significantly different from the data. However, the  $\chi^2$  test is overly sensitive to sample size and should not be used as a major indicator of model fit for large samples sizes (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Therefore, the following key indices of good model fit were used: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of  $> .95$ , a Root-Mean Square Approximation (RMSEA)  $< .5$ , the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of  $\geq .95$ , and Normed Fit Index (NFI) between  $.90$  and  $.95$  were assessed (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

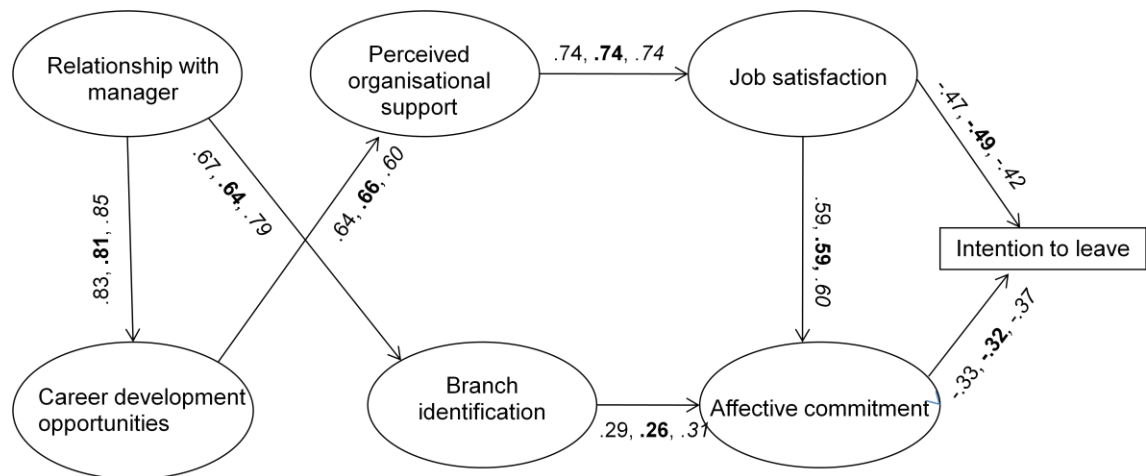
The indirect, direct and total effects were calculated for the relationships between factors in the model. The total effects indicate the effect that one variable has on another, and equal the sum of the direct and indirect effects. The direct effects indicate the influence of one variable on another directly, that is the two variables are connected by a single-headed arrow in the model. The indirect effects indicate the influence that one variable has on another through the impact of other variables. The effects indicate the increase in one variable based on an increase of one standard deviation in the predictor variable.

### Results

Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 3.1. The correlation matrix for full-time and part-time employees is displayed in Table 3.2. Discriminant validity for the model was good, indicating that multicollinearity should not be a problem in this model (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1982). The means and comparison of means for part and full-time employee attitudes are reported in Table 3.1. Results of the t-test indicate that full-time employees have significantly more favourable attitudes than the part-time group. Part-time employees were older, had been at the organisation longer and more likely to consider leaving compared to the full-time group. There were no significant differences in relation to the quality of relationship with the manager for part-time and full-time employees. The effect size for all variables was  $\leq .3$  indicating that mean differences between part-time and full-time groups are small (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to establish if the items measured each construct. The retained model was significantly different from the fully saturated model. The retained model was then evaluated to assess the fit of the predicted model for all employees compared to the data-based model. After minor modifications, and removable of one path, an acceptable fit for the model was found:  $CFI = .95$ ;  $RMSEA = .06$ ;  $TLI = .95$ ;  $NFI = .94$ ;  $\chi^2 = 1432.08$ ,  $p < .001$ . The final model and parameter

estimates are shown in Figure 3.2. Overall, the model explained 54% of variance in intention to leave.



Note: Standardised regression weights displayed for each pathway in following order: All, **Part-time**, *Full-time*

Figure 3.2: Final model including standardised regression weights.

After the overall model was confirmed as a good fit to the full sample, the model was tested for invariance across part-time and full-time groups. All paths were tested for invariance between groups, however only two paths were found to be significantly different. The path between job satisfaction and intention to leave was constrained to be equal for part-time and full-time groups to test Hypothesis 1. The model comparison indicated that the constrained model was a significantly better fit than the unconstrained model  $\chi^2 = 14.71, p < .001$ . This indicates that the path between job satisfaction and intention to leave is significantly different for part-time and full-time groups. Specifically, the parameter estimates indicate that job satisfaction is a stronger indicator of intention to leave for full-time compared to part-time employees. Thus Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Next, the path between affective commitment and intention to leave was constrained to be equal for part-time and full-time groups to test Hypothesis 2. The

model comparison indicated that the constrained model was a significantly better fit than the unconstrained model  $\chi^2 = 4.88, p < .001$ . This significant result indicates that the path between affective commitment and intention to leave is significantly different for part-time and full-time groups. Specifically, the parameter estimates indicate that affective commitment is a stronger indicator of intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees. Hence, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

The indirect, direct and total effects were analysed in relation to Research Question 1. For the remaining factors in the model, there were no significant differences between the effects for full-time compared to part-time employees. The model indicated that perceived organisational support had a moderately strong indirect effect on intention to leave (PT =  $-.50$ ; FT =  $-.47$ ) and affective commitment (PT =  $.44$ ; FT =  $.44$ ) and a strong direct effect on job satisfaction (PT =  $.74$ ; FT =  $.74$ ). This indicates that the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave is predominantly indirect via the relationship with job satisfaction and affective commitment. The strong total effects of perceived organisational support on job satisfaction indicates that most of the impact of perceived organisational support on intention to leave is through the relationship with job satisfaction, and to a lesser extent indirectly through affective commitment.

Relationship with manager had a moderate indirect effect on intention to leave (PT =  $-.32$ ; FT =  $-.32$ ). Results indicated a moderate indirect effect on affective commitment (PT =  $.40$ ; FT =  $.45$ ) and job satisfaction (PT =  $.39$ ; FT =  $.38$ ). The indirect effects on affective commitment are via career and development opportunities (PT =  $.81$ ; FT =  $0.85$ ) and perceived organisational support (PT =  $.53$ ; FT =  $.51$ ). The effects on job satisfaction are via branch identification (PT =  $.64$ ; FT =  $.70$ ), and the indirect effect on perceived organisational support. These results indicate that the relationship with their manager has an indirect effect on intention to leave through the impact on career

development opportunities, branch identification, perceived organisational support, job satisfaction and affective commitment.

Branch identification had a weak total effect on intention to leave (PT = -.08; FT = -.12), and a modest total effect on affective commitment (PT = .26; FT = .31). The relationship between branch identification and intention to leave is via affective commitment; thus suggesting that after taking out the effects of affective commitment, branch identification has minimal effect on intention to leave.

Career development opportunities had a moderate indirect effect on intention to leave (PT = -.33; FT = -.28). This indirect effect was through a strong direct effect on perceived organisational support (PT = .66; FT = .60) and indirect effect on job satisfaction (PT = .48; FT = .45), and a moderate indirect effect on affective commitment (PT = .29; FT = .27). These results indicate that the relationship between career development opportunities and both job satisfaction and affective commitment is via perceived organisational support.

### Discussion

This study examined the direct and indirect relationships between work attitudes and intention to leave comparing part-time and full-time employees. The findings supported Hypothesis 1 that job satisfaction would have weaker negative relationship with intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees. Hypothesis 2 that affective commitment would have a stronger negative relationship with intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees was also supported. Analysis in relation to Research Question 1 indicated that as proposed in the research model, leader-member exchange, career development opportunities, branch identification, and perceived organisational support had an indirect relationship with intention to leave for both full-time and part-time employees.

The results in relation to Hypothesis 1 indicate that full-time employees, who are satisfied in their job, are less likely to consider leaving the organisation when compared to their part-time colleagues. Our findings provide evidence to indicate that job satisfaction plays a less important role in part-time employees' decision to leave compared to full-time employees. Based on partial inclusion theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), our findings in relation to Hypothesis 1 can be explained by a lower emphasis on job satisfaction and the role work plays as a social system for the part-time group (Miller & Terborg, 1979). The results of our study are consistent with the findings of Martin and Hafer (1995) which suggest that specific job-related aspects of the work environment are less important for part-time compared to full-time employees' intention to leave.

Affective commitment had a stronger relationship with intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees, as proposed in Hypothesis 2. This suggests that for part-time employees, emotional attachment to the organisation is a more influential factor in determining intention to leave when compared to their full-time colleagues. These results are consistent with research by Senter and Martin (2007) that also found affective commitment to be a stronger predictor of intention to leave for part-time compared to full-time employees. The findings suggest that for part-time employees, the decision to leave is likely to involve consideration of the effect this decision would have on work and other social systems that are facilitated by the individual being able to work. In contrast, for full-time employees, their attachment to the organisation is not as strongly related to intention to leave. For full-time employees, their decision to leave was more strongly influenced by their job satisfaction.

Overall, results support the relationships in the research model proposed for both full-time and part-time employees. In relation to Research Question 1, results indicated that the strongest indirect effects on intention to leave were from perceived

organisational support, followed by relationship with manager, career development opportunities and branch identification respectively. Findings support the indirect relationships these antecedents have with intention to leave through the influence on job satisfaction and affective commitment.

Employees' perception of the quality of the relationship they had with their manager had a direct positive relationship with perception of availability of career development opportunities. This suggests that employees who perceive their relationship with their manager to be of a high quality are more likely to be positive about the availability of career development opportunities as accessible. Further to this, we found that career development opportunities had a strong influence on perceived organisational support. This suggests that employees who perceive career development opportunities as accessible, also tend to perceive a higher degree of support from the wider organisation. Together, these findings provide insights in the network of relationships that link to intention to leave, highlighting the important influence of the manager.

The significant indirect impact of perceived organisational support was particularly evident in the current study. As supported by previous research, the relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave was via job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2003). This suggests that individuals' who felt supported and valued by the organisation were more satisfied and reported lower intention to leave.

The findings of a larger direct effect of perceived organisational support on job satisfaction compared to a quite minimal effect on affective commitment suggests that perceived organisational support affects employee job satisfaction more than their attachment to the organisation. As such, employees are likely to gain a greater sense of satisfaction from their job if they perceive the organisation to support them in their role.

Further, job satisfaction and intention to leave had a stronger relationship for full-time employees, suggesting that perceived organisational support is particularly important to reducing intention to leave for full-time employees.

### *Implications*

The results of our study are important in that they relate to the strength of relationship between attitudes and intention to leave, rather than differences in mean levels. Our findings support the application of partial inclusion theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) to explain differences in the relationship between job satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to leave between part-time and full-time employees. The findings support theoretical propositions that employment status influences an individuals' experience in their work social system.

Overall, our findings support the use of specific retention strategies for part-time and full-time employees, particularly in a retail banking context. More specifically our results suggest it is important to focus on keeping full-time employees satisfied in the task-related aspects of their role. In contrast, it is more beneficial to implement initiatives that keep part-time employees feeling involved in, attached to and valued by the organisation. Regular monitoring of individual employee attitudes and experiences at work should assist managers in understanding these differences.

Human resource professionals can use these findings to advise recruitment and selection strategies. For example, information presented to potential employees could be more job-focused for full-time employees. For part-time employees, the emphasis could be more on how they can feel emotionally involved and supported by the organisation. Further research examining the influence of these key variables would be beneficial to develop our understanding of whether this pattern of influence also exists in different organisational settings.



The findings of this study provide support for the vital role of the manager and the relationship they have with their employees in retention. This relationship is particularly important in the retail banking context in which employees are located in branches that are often quite isolated from organisational headquarters. Efforts by both the organisation and the manager to help employees feel that career development opportunities are accessible was found to be vital to increasing perceptions of support and value from the organisation overall.

The relationship between perceived organisational support and job satisfaction suggests that efforts to help both part-time and full-time employees feel supported and valued by the organisation assists in increasing job satisfaction, and reducing intention to leave. Given the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave was stronger for full-time employees, our study suggests that high perceived organisational support is particularly important for reducing full-time employee intention to leave.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

The potential to generalise the findings is somewhat limited by the high percentage of female respondents, as well as the sample being limited to employees in the retail banking industry. Although these factors may limit the generalisability of the findings, a high proportion of the part-time workforce is female and work in customer service settings (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Nkomo & Fields, 1994). Therefore, the results of the current study most probably provide an indication of the trends in a key group of the retail workforce.

Secondly, employment status was categorised quite broadly, where all employees working greater than 38 hours were classified as full-time, and employees working 37 hours or less were classified as part-time workers. Future research could include actual hours worked by employees to understand whether this influences

findings. Including number of hours worked would also facilitate more accurate comparisons to other research, particularly for studies that define part-time and full-time employees by a different numbers of hours worked (Nardone, 1995).

Finally, while we refer to similarities between job involvement and job satisfaction, it would be beneficial to measure both constructs. Job involvement refers to the extent the individual identifies with his or her job role, and has been found to be related to turnover (Blau & Boal, 1989). Given the central importance of job satisfaction in turnover research, and the findings of this study, a measure of job involvement could offer additional explanation as to why job satisfaction appears less important to part-time employees' decision to leave.

### *Conclusion*

The current study provides further support for the notion of different work experiences for part-time and full-time employees (Rotchford & Roberts, 1982). Our results emphasise the importance of distinguishing between full-time and part-time employees when designing retention initiatives. In particular, the effect of job satisfaction and affective commitment on employee intention to leave was found to be different for the part-time and full-time employee groups. The use of structural equation modelling provided insights into the indirect relationships, particularly the effect of employee interactions with their manager, and perceived organisational support in the turnover process. Further research in different work contexts would enable generalisation of these findings.

## Declaration for Thesis Chapter Four

### Declaration by candidate

In the case of Chapter 4, the nature and extent of my contribution to the work was the following:

| Nature of contribution               | Extent of contribution |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Principal researcher and main author | 85%                    |

The following co-authors contributed to the work.

| Name          | Nature of contribution |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Sally Carless | Editor                 |

|                              |  |                         |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Candidate's Signature</b> |  | <b>Date</b><br>02/12/10 |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|

### Declaration by co-authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- (7) the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors.
- (8) they meet the criteria for authorship in that they have participated in the conception, execution, or interpretation, of at least that part of the publication in their field of expertise;
- (9) they take public responsibility for their part of the publication, except for the responsible author who accepts overall responsibility for the publication;
- (10) there are no other authors of the publication according to these criteria;
- (11) potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed to (a) granting bodies, (b) the editor or publisher of journals or other publications, and (c) the head of the responsible academic unit; and
- (12) the original data are stored at the following location(s) and will be held for at least five years from the date indicated below:

|                 |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Location</b> | Monash University, Caulfield |
|-----------------|------------------------------|

|                    |  |                         |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Signature 1</b> |  | <b>Date</b><br>02/12/10 |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------|

## **Chapter 4. Intentions and Behaviour: Comparing Antecedents of Intention to Leave and Employee Turnover**

*Under consideration at European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*

### **Abstract**

A strong link between intention and behaviour is the basis of many turnover models. In a sample of retail banking employees from an Australian-based financial organisation (N = 781), performance and workplace attitudes were examined in relation to intention to leave and actual turnover. Different factors were found to predict intention to leave and turnover. Results indicated that affective commitment, job satisfaction, perceived organisational support and age predicted intention to leave, but that performance, continuance commitment and intention to leave predicted actual turnover. Findings challenge assumptions that predictors of intention to leave and turnover are the same. Implications for our understanding of the turnover process including development of effective retention initiatives; the inclusion of affective commitment and continuance commitment to understand different outcomes; and the contribution of manager-rated performance are discussed.

In the Australian retail banking industry, employees require extensive training before they can perform many of the key tasks in their role. This training means that financial organisations invest considerable time and money into employees before they can commence. High employee turnover has the potential to result in these upfront investments in training not being returned in employee service (Phillips, 1990). While intention to leave can provide an indication of an employee's subsequent turnover plans, this is only one source of information about an individual's work experiences.

Although intention to leave is a common precursor of employee turnover, the strength of the relationship between the two constructs tends to vary across the literature (Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 2002; Mueller, Boyer, Price, & Iverson, 1994; Vandenberg & Barnes-Nelson, 1999). The complex nature of attitudes, intentions, performance ratings and behaviour combined with the implications of leaving a job, means the link between intention to leave and turnover can be complicated (Iverson & Deery, 2000; Vandenberg & Barnes-Nelson, 1999). Moreover, due to this complexity of process and environment, the workplace factors that most strongly influence intention to leave and turnover may not be the same.

General intention-behaviour research findings provide a solid link between attitude, intention and behaviour (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Meta-analytic findings indicated that attitudes account for approximately 30% of variance in intentions, and intentions explain 28% of variance in behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Sheeran & Taylor, 1999). However, when considering intention-turnover research specifically, the variance explained is considerably less. In intention-turnover research, attitudes generally account for approximately 5% of variance in turnover, while intentions explain between 5–10% (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). This comparatively small amount of variance explained suggests that dynamics unique to the intention-turnover relationship may complicate this link. While we know that

intention to leave is related to employee turnover, the key antecedents of intention to leave and turnover for specific sectors of the workforce could be considered more closely (Allen, 2004; Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999).

The aim of this study is to extend previous intention-behaviour research by comparing key antecedents of intention to leave and turnover. The underlying components of intention and the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) are applied to examine the extent to which factors predicting intention and actual behaviour are similar or different. Specifically, hierarchical regression and logistic regression are conducted to compare the influence of workplace attitudes and manager-rated performance on intention to leave and turnover in a sample of retail banking employees. By including demographic variables, common antecedents, and manager-rated performance in the analysis, the main antecedents for intention to leave and employee turnover above the prior influence of these factors can be identified. Findings from this study can be used to inform the intention- turnover relationship and help create more effective retention initiatives that focus on specific factors relevant to the work context.

### *Intention and Behaviour*

Intention to perform a particular behaviour occurs when an individual makes a decision to move from considering the available options to actually performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Gollwitzer, 1993). To form an intention, the individual's cognition moves from initial thoughts about what they might do, to a considered intention to perform a specific action. The theory of reasoned action posits that an individual's intention to perform a particular behaviour is the best indicator of his or her future behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, Czasch, & Flood, 2009). By forming an intention, the individual is thought to be motivated and prepared to exert the required

effort to perform the behaviour. However, there are components of both intention and behaviour that may complicate this transition.

Intention to leave refers to an employee's willingness to withdraw from an organisation, characterised by cognitive withdrawal from work (Mobley, 1982; Price, 1977; Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). Previous research supports a solid link between intention to leave and employee turnover (Griffeth, et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Price & Mueller, 1981). In a meta-analytic review, Steele and Ovalle (1984) found the average correlation between intention to leave and actual turnover was moderate ( $r = .5$ ), but diminished overtime. In another meta-analysis, Griffeth and colleagues (Griffeth, et al., 2000) found a moderate correlation between intention and actual turnover ( $r = .4$ ). Overall research suggests intention to leave provides an indication of subsequent turnover. However, this does not negate the possibility that the main antecedents of intention to leave and turnover are different (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999; Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990).

Employee turnover refers to the behaviour of actually leaving the organisation. While many researchers agree that intention to leave is a good surrogate for turnover (Albrecht, 2006; Allen, et al., 2009), relying only on intentions to understand antecedents of turnover could be problematic for two main reasons. Firstly, intention and behaviour are composed of elements that can be differentially affected by workplace attitudes and experiences (Ajzen, et al., 2009; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994). Secondly, empirical research comparing antecedents of employee turnover and intention to leave has indicated some distinct differences in significant predictors of the two constructs (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999; Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990).

*Components of Intention and Behaviour*

An intention comprises two main components: attitude and subjective norm (Ajzen, et al., 2009; Landridge, Sheeran, & Connolly, 2007). The attitude component refers to an individual's perception of how he or she views the situation and what it would be like to perform the behaviour, for example, 'leaving my current job would be good/bad'. The subjective norm component refers to an individual's perception of the social forces to perform or not perform the behaviour, for example, 'most people who know about my situation think it is important for me to leave/remain in my current job'. When considering their future in their current job, individuals are likely to consider both their own and others' perception of the situation.

The theory of reasoned action was originally proposed to explain complex decision making and subsequent behaviour over which an individual has a reasonable degree of control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Subsequently, Ajzen (1991) revised this theory to include *perceived behaviour control* to account for differing levels of control individuals may have over performing the intended behaviour. In the case of leaving one's job, factors such as the perception of available alternatives, financial pressures, or family circumstances may influence the extent of perceived control one has over a decision to perform the intended behaviour. Regardless of the individual's intention, the level of control an individual feels he or she has over the decision to leave or remain in the job may lead to differences in antecedents of intention to leave and turnover.

Research has distinguished between affective and cognitive elements of attitudes. The affective element of an attitude was found to be related to intention to perform the behaviour, whereas the cognitive element is proposed to be linked to the costs and benefits of performing the behaviour (Eagly, et al., 1994; Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998). In a sample of undergraduate university students, Trafimow and



Sheeran (1998) found evidence to distinguish between affect and cognitive beliefs, and the relationship with subsequent intentions and behaviour of smoking cigarettes. Specifically, it was found that affect accounted for significant variance in intentions; however, cognition did not. This suggests that attitudes that include a larger affective component could be more predictive of intentions whereas attitudes based more on cognition could better predict behaviour.

*Empirical Evidence for Varying Antecedents of Intention and Behaviour*

As far as could be identified, research that specifically compares the main antecedents of the two constructs is quite scarce (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1999; Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990). Of the studies that have compared the main predictors, findings have varied. In a sample of textile employees in Israel, Kirschenbaum and Weisberg (1990) found differences in predictors of intention to leave and turnover. Specifically, it was found that importance of improvement, work repetitiveness, and perceptions of colleagues' intentions predicted intention to leave. In contrast, a different set of predictors, namely age, tenure, wage level and perceived chances for improvement at work, were related to actual turnover.

In a sample of lawyers, Cohen (1999) examined personal characteristics, work-related and non-work-related variables as predictors of intention to leave and turnover. Overall findings suggested that non-work factors, such as spouse's employment, had a significantly greater effect on turnover compared to intention to leave. Personal characteristics and job-related characteristics showed similar relationships with both intention and turnover. However, the findings in this study were limited by the reliance on secondary data, and self-report performance results.

In a longitudinal study, Arnold and Mackenzie-Davey (1999) examined a sample of graduates from eight organisations in the United Kingdom (UK) ( $N = 474$ ).

They found differences in the key predictors of intention to leave and actual turnover. In a regression analysis, career development opportunities was the strongest predictor of intention to leave, followed by organisational dependability, relationships with colleagues, and pay/benefits. Results indicated that career development opportunities and intention to leave had the strongest relationship with employee turnover. However, Arnold and Mackenzie-Davey (1999) noted that the findings in relation to turnover may be limited due to some inaccuracy of turnover data.

Based on previous research, consideration of the different components influencing intention and behaviour, and components of the theory of reasoned action, the following research question was proposed:

*Research question 1: To what extent are workplace antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover different or similar?*

## Method

### *Sample and Procedure*

Data was collected using an online questionnaire from employees of geographically separated retail branches in a large Australian-based global financial institution over a six-month period. Approximately 4,500 employees from retail branches throughout Australia were able to complete the questionnaire online. Employees were invited to complete the survey via two methods. All employees were able to request the survey via an internal website and managers of the branch or region were able to request that the survey link be sent to members of their branch inviting them to participate. Of the employees invited to complete the survey, the response rate was 17.4%.

Of the 781 respondents, the majority were female (88%). The age of respondents was 17 to 65 years old ( $M = 41.9$  years). Employee tenure at the organisation ranged between 27 days to 40 years ( $M = 4.2$  years). Respondents were from 181 different branches across Australia. Branches were generally located in metropolitan areas, or belonged to a region managed from a metropolitan base.

Forty-six per cent of respondents were tellers (providing service on general transactions and referring customers to sales representatives), 41% were in sales roles (introducing and selling products to suit individual customer needs), 10.9% of respondents were branch managers (managing the running of the branch overall, and in some cases also perform a sales role) and less than 3% were in various other financial advice roles.

Employees were classified as full-time (FT) or part-time (PT) employees based on the standard number of working hours each week. Employees that worked between 38 and 40 hours a week were classified as full-time. Employees that worked 37 hours or less were classified as part-time employees. Part-time employees made up 62% of the total sample ( $n = 485$ ), the remainder were full-time employees ( $n = 295$ ). The employment contract, conditions and employee benefits are the same for both full-time and part-time employees.

### *Measures*

All responses were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A full list of scales and items is shown in Appendix A.

*Relationship with the manager* was measured using six items from a scale developed by (Scandura & Graen, 1984). An example item in the scale is 'My working relationship with my manager is effective'. The original wording of one item

‘Regardless of how much power my manager has built into his or her position, my manger would be personally inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work’ was edited as it was identified as a double-barrelled item (Bauer & Green, 1996). The alpha coefficient for the six-item scale was .95.

*Affective organisational commitment* was measured using the four-item affective commitment scale developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). One item was removed as it had a low inter-item correlation coefficient, and did not fit well in the measurement model. With the item removed the reliability of the scale was .92 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2008).

*Continuance organisational commitment* was measured using the four-item continuance commitment scale by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). An example of an item is ‘Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave (organisation name) now.’ The alpha coefficient for the scale was .84.

*Normative organisational commitment* was measured using the four-item normative commitment scale by Meyer et al. (1993). An example of an item is ‘I would feel guilty if I left (organisation name) now.’ The alpha coefficient for the scale was .81.

*Career development opportunities* available in the organisation were measured using four items designed specifically for a retail branch environment. The alpha coefficient was .85. This was a newly developed scale for this study; items and factor loadings are provided in Appendix B.

*Job satisfaction* was measured by a four item scale used by Quinn and Shepard (1974). An example of an item is ‘If a good friend told me that they were interested in working in a job like mine, I would strongly recommend it’. The alpha coefficient was .90.

*Branch identification* was assessed using four items from the scale developed by Doosje, Ellemers and Spears (1995) An example of an item is ‘I see myself as a member of my branch’. The alpha coefficient was .92.

*Perceived organisational support* was measured using four items from the scale developed Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa (1986). An example item is ‘The organisation cares about my opinions’. The alpha coefficient was .95.

*Intention to leave.* Following Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) intention to leave was assessed by three items from a scale developed by (Landau & Hammer, 1986) and one item ‘I often think about quitting my job’ from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Nadler, Jenkins, Cammann, & Lawler, 1975). The alpha coefficient was .94.

*Performance* was assessed by the branch manager within six months of the employee completing the attitudinal questionnaire. Performance was rated from 1 (*lowest performance*) to 5 (*highest performance*) ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). Performance was rated based on the employee’s behaviour in relation to the key task areas specific to his or her role.

*Employee turnover* was measured a maximum of 12 months after the questionnaire was completed. There was a 9% turnover rate during this period, which is comparable with recent studies that have collected employee turnover data (Griffeth, et al., 2000; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2008). Employees were recorded as either staying or leaving based on company turnover reports. A total of 94% of the turnover was voluntary and the remaining 6% was involuntary.

## Results

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency estimates, and correlations were calculated. The descriptive statistics for the variables are in Table 4.1 and

correlations are in Table 4.2. The predictor data were centred before conducting the regression analyses to reduce possible multi-collinearity (Aiken & West, 1991).

Table 4.1

*Means and standard deviations for all variables.*

| Variables                                 | Full sample<br>(N = 782) |       | Stayers<br>(n = 716) |       | Leavers<br>(n = 66) |       |
|---|--------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
|   | M                        | SD    | M                    | SD    | M                   | SD    |
| 1. Age                                    | 41.94                    | 11.92 | 42.28                | 11.72 | 38.02               | 13.23 |
| 2. Gender (GEND)                          | 1.88                     | 0.33  | 1.88                 | 0.32  | 1.85                | 0.36  |
| 3. Role                                   | 2.01                     | 1.25  | 2.03                 | 1.27  | 1.74                | 1.06  |
| 4. Tenure (days)                          | 1525                     | 2151  | 1557                 | 2138  | 1147                | 2244  |
| 5. Employment status (EMPST)              | 1.38                     | 0.49  | 1.39                 | 0.49  | 1.32                | 0.47  |
| 6. Career development opportunities (CLD) | 5.64                     | 1.06  | 5.65                 | 1.05  | 5.37                | 1.11  |
| 7. Relationship with the manager (MGR)    | 5.99                     | 1.05  | 6.01                 | 1.02  | 5.77                | 1.33  |
| 8. Perceived organisational support (POS) | 5.16                     | 1.27  | 5.21                 | 1.23  | 4.59                | 1.53  |
| 9. Branch identification (BID)            | 6.19                     | 0.85  | 6.20                 | 0.85  | 6.08                | 0.89  |
| 10. Continuance commitment (COC)          | 4.58                     | 1.36  | 4.65                 | 1.34  | 3.83                | 1.31  |
| 11. Normative commitment (NOC)            | 4.73                     | 1.26  | 4.77                 | 1.25  | 4.25                | 1.30  |
| 12. Affective commitment (AFC)            | 5.55                     | 1.09  | 5.61                 | 1.05  | 4.96                | 1.27  |
| 13. Job satisfaction (JBS)                | 5.42                     | 1.22  | 5.45                 | 1.20  | 5.01                | 1.37  |
| 14. Intention to leave (ITL)              | 2.48                     | 1.43  | 2.39                 | 1.35  | 3.39                | 1.81  |
| 15. Performance (PERF)                    | 2.88                     | 0.76  | 2.91                 | 0.75  | 2.51                | 0.77  |

Table 4.2

*Correlations for all variables.*

| Variables | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5      | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 10      | 11      | 12      | 13      | 14      | 15      |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. AGE    |         |         |         |         |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 2. GEND   | 0.27**  |         |         |         |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 3. ROLE   | -0.02   | -0.15** |         |         |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 4. TENURE | 0.41**  | 0.05    | -0.15** |         |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 5. EMPST  | -.11**  | -0.21** | 0.66**  | -0.17** |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 6. CLD    | -0.04   | -0.06   | 0.15**  | -0.05   | 0.13** |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 7. MGR    | -0.04   | -0.05   | 0.11**  | -0.06   | 0.06   | 0.73**  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 8. POS    | -0.05   | -0.08*  | 0.11**  | -0.06   | 0.07*  | 0.56**  | 0.55**  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 9. BID    | -0.02   | -0.06   | 0.14**  | -0.01   | 0.10** | 0.55**  | 0.59**  | 0.51**  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 10. COC   | 0.13**  | 0.01    | 0.05    | 0.14**  | 0.10** | 0.27**  | 0.21**  | 0.34**  | 0.28**  |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 11. NOC   | -0.01   | -0.07*  | 0.10*   | -0.01   | 0.12** | 0.44**  | 0.38**  | 0.60**  | 0.44**  | 0.57**  |         |         |         |         |         |
| 12. AFC   | 0.04    | -0.05   | 0.17**  | -0.03   | 0.15** | 0.52**  | 0.50**  | 0.65**  | 0.57**  | 0.44**  | 0.68**  |         |         |         |         |
| 13. JBS   | -0.07   | -0.08*  | 0.15**  | -0.13** | 0.10** | 0.55**  | 0.54**  | 0.67**  | 0.49**  | 0.29**  | 0.57**  | 0.70**  |         |         |         |
| 14. ITL   | -0.10** | 0.00    | -0.12** | -0.01   | -0.07* | -0.39** | -0.37** | -0.54** | -0.43** | -0.30** | -0.51** | -0.67** | -0.62** |         |         |
| 15. PERF  | 0.13**  | 0.07*   | 0.21**  | 0.05    | 0.14** | 0.17**  | 0.13**  | 0.13**  | 0.10**  | 0.08*   | -0.13** | 0.19**  | 0.13**  | -0.14** |         |
| 16. TOVER | -0.10** | -0.03   | -0.06   | -0.05   | -0.04  | -0.08*  | -0.06   | -0.14** | -0.04   | -0.17** | -0.12** | -0.17** | -0.10** | 0.19**  | -0.15** |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

N = 782

TOVER = Employee turnover



Variables were entered in three steps. In the first step, the control variables, namely age, gender, employment status, tenure and role, were entered. In the second step of the analysis, the individual variables continuance commitment, normative commitment, career development opportunities, relationship with manager, perceived organisational support, branch identification, and manager-rated performance were entered. In the third step, affective commitment and job satisfaction, were entered into the analysis. For the logistic regression, intention to leave was entered into a fourth step to ensure the predictors in step three remained significant after intention to leave was added.

A hierarchical linear regression analysis was also conducted to examine the key predictor variables in relation to intention to leave. The B values, standard error, and t statistics are presented in Table 4.3. The results indicate that age, perceived organisational support, job satisfaction, and affective commitment significantly predicted intention to leave, such that as the predictors increased, intention to leave decreased. None of the other predictors achieved significance.

Table 4.3

*Results of regression analysis predicting intention to leave.*

| Variables                        | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Step 1                           |          |           |          |
| Constant                         | 2.7      | 0.27      | 10.22**  |
| Age                              | -0.11    | 0.04      | -2.72**  |
| Gender                           | -0.14    | 0.12      | -1.17    |
| Role                             | -0.03    | 0.04      | -0.8     |
| Tenure (days)                    | -0.04    | 0.04      | -1.06    |
| Step 2                           |          |           |          |
| Employment status                | 0.06     | 0.10      | 0.62     |
| Career development opportunities | 0.05     | 0.06      | 0.83     |
| Relationship with the manager    | 0.07     | 0.06      | 1.22     |
| Perceived organisational support | -0.13    | 0.05      | -2.35**  |
| Branch identification            | -0.06    | 0.05      | -1.34    |
| Continuance commitment           | 0.03     | 0.04      | 0.61     |
| Normative commitment             | -0.07    | 0.06      | -1.25    |
| Performance                      | 0.00     | 0.04      | -0.04    |
| Step 3                           |          |           |          |
| Affective commitment             | -0.56    | 0.61      | -9.16**  |
| Job satisfaction                 | -0.44    | 0.06      | -7.75**  |

\*\* =  $p < .01$

N= 781

A hierarchical logistic regression was conducted to examine the key predictors of employee turnover. The B, standard error, and Wald values that emerged are presented in Table 4.4. After controlling for all the other variables in the model, the results indicated that employees who left the organisation tended to have lower performance and lower continuance commitment than those who remained did. To test whether the variance explained by performance and continuance commitment was unique, intention to leave was also entered in the final step of the logistic regression equation. Results indicated that intention to leave was a significant predictor of

turnover; however, performance and continuance commitment also remained significant after intention to leave was included. None of the other predictors achieved significance.

Table 4.4

*Results of logistic regression analysis predicting employee turnover.*

|        | Variables                        | B     | SE   | Wald   |
|--------|----------------------------------|-------|------|--------|
| Step 1 |                                  |       |      |        |
|        | Constant                         | -2.46 | 0.99 | 6.13** |
|        | Age                              | -0.17 | 0.16 | 1.08   |
|        | Gender                           | -0.03 | 0.42 | 0      |
|        | Role                             | -0.1  | 0.17 | 0.36   |
|        | Tenure (days)                    | -0.05 | 0.19 | 0.06   |
|        | Employment status                | -0.16 | 0.38 | 0      |
| Step 2 |                                  |       |      |        |
|        | Career development opportunities | 0.02  | 0.2  | 0.01   |
|        | Leader-member exchange           | -0.02 | 0.19 | 0.01   |
|        | Perceived organisational support | -0.25 | 0.19 | 1.74   |
|        | Branch identification            | 0.27  | 0.17 | 2.5    |
|        | Continuance commitment           | -0.43 | 0.16 | 6.89** |
|        | Normative commitment             | 0.19  | 0.21 | 0.77   |
|        | Performance                      | -0.38 | 0.15 | 6.81** |
| Step 3 |                                  |       |      |        |
|        | Affective commitment             | -0.16 | 0.22 | 0.54   |
|        | Job satisfaction                 | 0.22  | 0.21 | 1.09   |
| Step 4 |                                  |       |      |        |
|        | Intention to leave               | 0.48  | 0.17 | 7.78** |

\*\* p < .01

Note:  $\chi^2(15) = 55.81$  p < .01

N = 781

Individuals who left the organisation were designated as 1, and individuals who remained at the organisation were designated as 0.

## Discussion

This study addresses a gap in the current literature by investigating whether the predictors of intention to leave and employee turnover are similar or different. The results indicated that key workplace antecedents of intention to leave and turnover were different. Job satisfaction, affective commitment, perceived organisational support, and age had a negative relationship with intention to leave. In contrast, performance, continuance commitment and intention to leave negatively predicted actual turnover.

Consistent with previous research, job satisfaction and affective commitment significantly predicted intention to leave (Griffeth, et al., 2000; Price, 2004; van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). This finding suggests that as individuals' satisfaction with their job decreases, they are likely to show increased intention to leave. Further, as individuals' attachment to and involvement in the organisation decreased, they were more likely to express high intention to leave.

In relation to turnover, neither job satisfaction nor affective commitment had a significant relationship with turnover behaviour. This suggests that job satisfaction and affective commitment are important in understanding intention to leave; however, other antecedents are better predictors of turnover. Job satisfaction or affective commitment may separately influence employees to report high intention to leave, yet individuals may not actually leave without additional negative experiences that provide a greater push out (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999; Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996).

Previous research suggests that individuals can be dissatisfied in their job but remain due to strong commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Furthermore, individuals may not be attached to the organisation in which they work, however remain due to factors such as the social networks they have built with colleagues or the

satisfaction they gain from performing the tasks in their job (Maynard, Joseph & Maynard, 2006; Lawrence and Corwin, 2003).

Findings also indicate perceived organisational support was a negative predictor of intention to leave such that as employee perceptions of support from the organisation diminished, intention to leave increased. Consistent with previous research, this finding suggests that efforts to help employees feel supported and valued by the wider organisation are likely to result in reduced intention to leave (Harris, Harris, & Harvey, 2007). However, perceived organisational support was not a key predictor of actual turnover. This suggests that perceptions of low support from the overall organisation are likely to influence employees to form leaving intentions; however, it may not be as important as other factors when making the next step to actually leaving.

We also found that younger employees were more likely to report higher intention to leave compared to older workers (Blomme, van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010; Cohen, 1993; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Younger people may be more likely to consider leaving the organisation because they have had less experience in the workforce and therefore fewer prior opportunities to explore a range of roles and organisations to which they are suited. This lack of work experience may mean that if younger employees perceive a role to have elements that are not exactly as they would like, they are more likely to believe that they could find something better outside the organisation. Moreover, younger employees are likely to have less family and economic commitments when compared with older employees. This may mean that forming an intention to leave requires less emotional investment, and less consideration of the social pressures to remain (subjective norm). Age was not found to be a key predictor of actual turnover, suggesting that higher intention to leave for these younger employees does not necessarily result in them actually leaving the organisation. This may also be

influenced by younger employees' lack of experience, which could mean they are not as attractive in the external labour market as they may initially perceive.

As expected, when added in the final step of the analysis, intention to leave was a significant predictor of employee turnover. Previous research supports the inclusion of intention to leave as an indicator of actual turnover (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Our results are consistent with this previous research however also indicate the key influence of two other factors in predicting turnover. This suggests that although intention to leave provided an indication of subsequent employee turnover, performance ratings and the individuals' assessment of the benefits and costs of leaving or staying were also significantly related to turnover.

The results demonstrated a negative relationship between performance and turnover. This suggests that as employee performance decreased, individuals were more likely to leave the organisation (Bycio, Hackett, & Alvares, 1990; Cohen, 1999; McEvoy & Cascio, 1987; Williams & Livingstone, 1994). The strength of this study is that performance was rated by a second source: the manager. We propose two alternate explanations for this finding.

When considering the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), if an employee has formed an intention to leave their job, a low performance rating may provide the final push that leads them to make the decision to leave. An alternative explanation is consistent with the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, et al., 1999), which posits that turnover behaviour is the result of shocks that encourage individuals to re-evaluate their current job situation. A low performance rating could be one such shock that initiates an employee to leave even in the absence of intention to leave. Longitudinal research would assist in exploring the validity of these explanations.

Continuance commitment was also found to predict turnover behaviour. This suggests that individuals who assess the costs of staying to outweighing the benefits of leaving, are likely to leave. This finding indicates that continuance commitment most strongly predicts turnover behaviour, whereas affective commitment most strongly predicts intention to leave. This difference is supported by previous findings indicating that *affect* better predicts intentions, whereas *cognition* is a better predictor of actual behaviour (Eagly, et al., 1994; Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998a). Our results suggest that forming an intention to leave may be more strongly influenced by emotional attachment and involvement in the organisation (affective commitment-affect), whereas actually leaving a job may be more strongly related to the analysis of costs and benefits of leaving the organisation (continuance commitment-cognition). Thus supporting the unique influence of different components of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Luchak & Gellatly, 2007).

### *Implications*

This study provides evidence to support the conceptualisation of intention to leave and turnover as separate yet related constructs, challenging assumptions that key antecedents will be the same for each. Results suggest our strong reliance on intention to leave as a surrogate for actual turnover may be limiting our ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of specific antecedents of turnover. Based on the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), our results suggest that in some contexts the attitude and subjective norm components that influence individuals to form intentions to leave may not be of sufficient strength to lead to turnover behaviour. Depending on what makes up the individuals intention, either the attitudinal or subjective, or degree of perceived behaviour control may change the course of the decision to carry-out the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

The finding that intention to leave and turnover have different antecedents has implications for designing retention initiatives. The results suggest that organisations who only focus on understanding and improving key antecedents of intention to leave may neglect crucial factors that are important to reducing actual turnover. As a result, the effectiveness of retention initiatives is likely to be reduced. Organisations that monitor both intention to leave and employee turnover data, as well as the key antecedents of each, are likely to develop more targeted and efficient retention strategies, thus having a greater chance of improving specific antecedents and reducing the costs associated with high employee turnover (Phillips, 1990).

Our findings suggest that performance is a key predictor of turnover, but not as important in predicting intention to leave. To inform practice, the findings highlight the importance of providing constructive feedback to employees who are performing poorly. This may be facilitated by ensuring that a specific performance improvement plan is implemented to support the employee in improving his or her performance. From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), suggesting that a low performance rating may be one type of unexpected event that can influence an individual to leave.

The findings support the use of different types of commitment to further understand the turnover process. Previously, research has indicated that affective commitment is the most influential type of commitment in the turnover process (Griffeth & Hom, 2001). The current study extends previous research suggesting that continuance commitment provides a valuable indication of subsequent employee turnover, particularly in the retail banking context. Including measures of both continuance and affective commitment would be recommended in future research, particularly when the goal is to predict actual turnover.



*Limitations and Future Research*

A reliance on quantitative data limits our capacity to understand specific reasons for employee intention to leave and/or turnover behaviour. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the links between reasons for intention to leave and actual turnover, qualitative data that offer explanations for employee intentions and decisions to leave or remain could be included in future research. Specifically, in addition to quantitative analysis, future research could focus on understanding reasons for employees forming intentions to leave compared to their reasons for actually leaving.

The finding that intention to leave predicts turnover when all other variables are included could be further strengthened by support from longitudinal research. Previous research has highlighted that the predictive validity of intention to leave for actual employee turnover can be influenced by the time-span between measurement of intentions and subsequent decisions to leave (Cohen, 1999). A shorter time frame allows greater similarity in circumstances and attitudes before a decision to leave or not leave is made. In contrast, longer time frames allow more opportunity for individuals to perform their intended behaviour but also provide increased chance of changing attitudes (Cohen, 1999; Marsh & Mannari, 1977; Morita, Lee, & Mowday, 1993). It would be beneficial for future research to examine relationships between attitudes and behaviour at different time periods to further expand our understanding.

*Conclusion*

This study found factors that relate to an individual forming an intention to leave are different to those that relate to an individual actually leaving the organisation. We extend previous intention-behaviour research by providing unique insights into the antecedents of intention to leave and turnover; a more detailed understanding of the

relationships between different types of affective and continuance commitment in the turnover process; and the important contribution of performance as rated by the manager in understanding employee turnover. Future longitudinal research that also includes qualitative data to support reasons for leaving would be beneficial to provide further insights into the intention to leave-turnover relationship.

## Declaration for Thesis Chapter Five

### Declaration by candidate

In the case of Chapter 5, the nature and extent of my contribution to the work was the following:

| Nature of contribution               | Extent of contribution |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Principal researcher and main author | 70%                    |

The following co-authors contributed to the work.

| Name        | Nature of contribution |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Giles Hirst | Co-author              |

| Candidate's Signature | Date     |
|-----------------------|----------|
|                       | 02/12/10 |

### Declaration by co-authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- (13) the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors.
- (14) they meet the criteria for authorship in that they have participated in the conception, execution, or interpretation, of at least that part of the publication in their field of expertise;
- (15) they take public responsibility for their part of the publication, except for the responsible author who accepts overall responsibility for the publication;
- (16) there are no other authors of the publication according to these criteria;
- (17) potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed to (a) granting bodies, (b) the editor or publisher of journals or other publications, and (c) the head of the responsible academic unit; and
- (18) the original data are stored at the following location(s) and will be held for at least five years from the date indicated below:

| Location(s)                  |
|------------------------------|
| Monash University, Caulfield |

| Signature 1 | Date     |
|-------------|----------|
|             | 02/12/10 |

## **Chapter 5. Why Are High Performers Leaving Your Office? The Interactive Influence of Performance, Commitment and Motivation on Intention to Leave**

*Under consideration at Journal of Organizational Behavior*

### **Abstract**

By studying intrinsic sources of motivation, the current research extends theory development in the motivation and commitment field to examine when employees of varying performance intend to leave their organisation. Based upon a nation-wide study of retail banking employees in one of the largest Australian financial institutions (N = 784), we found that for high performing employees with either a promotion focus or affective commitment, there was significantly reduced intention to leave. The relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave was not significantly strengthened by increases in promotion focus. Implications for development of theories focussed on intrinsic sources of motivation and commitment as well as the practical implications for talent retention are discussed.

Although most turnover incurs substantial costs (Phillips, 1990; Corporate leadership council, 2005), the costs associated with high performing employees leaving are clearly the most significant (Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997). Such turnover leads not only to the loss of those most capable but also incurs costs in recruitment and training (Cascio, 2006), as well as both current and potential organisational leadership (Nyberg, 2010; Sturman, 2003).

Research examining the relationship between employee performance and turnover have observed varied and often inconsistent findings (Bycio, Hackett, & Alvares, 1990b; Iverson & Deery, 2000; Salamin & Hom, 2005; Schwab, 1991). Most consistently, research has found a negative relationship between performance and intention to leave or turnover, indicating that as performance decreases employees are more likely to consider leaving (Bycio, Hackett, & Alvares, 1990a; McEvoy & Cascio, 1987; Williams & Livingstone, 1994). Others have found a curvilinear relationship, in which exceptional performers and the poorest performers are most likely to leave (Jackofsky, Ferris, & Breckenridge, 1986; Salamin & Hom, 2005; Trevor, et al., 1997). Yet some have observed a positive-linear relationship, illustrating that highest performers are the most likely to leave (Schwab, 1991).

The inconsistent findings in performance-intention to leave research suggest that this relationship may be better explained by examining moderating factors.

Accordingly, studies have examined performance in conjunction with organisational factors such as salary growth, promotional opportunities, or bonus incentives (Salamin & Hom, 2005; Trevor, et al., 1997). While these studies demonstrate that promotions and remuneration practices may influence the retention of high performers, not all organisations have the capacity to provide greater career benefits for employees, or the latitude to pay higher bonuses. These approaches are invariably costly, and work as extrinsic sources of motivation that are effective only as long as resources can be

invested in sustaining them. Most recently, in a sample of insurance employees, Nyberg (2010) examined how employee satisfaction influences high performers' decisions to stay. While this is an important step forward, job satisfaction is a product of a range of conditions in one's work environment; thus, unlike employee motivation and commitment, is less sensitive to management intervention. Other research has studied employee commitment (Cohen, 1993; Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, & Sincich, 1993) and motivation (Maertz Jr & Griffeth, 2004; Richer, Blanchard, & Vallerand, 2002) finding these to be malleable to both organisational development and employee retention initiatives. Unfortunately, to our knowledge none of these studies have examined how these variables interact with employee performance. Consequently, while we know both commitment and motivation are important with respect to an individual's decision to stay or leave, it is unclear how significant they are for employees of varying performance.

This study extends theory development in the motivation and commitment field to examine their influence on why employees of varying performance may consider leaving. In a novel approach, we apply and extend goal-regulating theory (Locke & Latham, 1991; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004) to assess its utility in predicting turnover decisions according to employee performance. Our emphasis is to examine positive, intrinsic sources of motivation that are likely to sustain an individual's enthusiasm and intention to stay within his or her organisation. Thus, we examine individual motivational orientations towards achieving their desired goals: a promotion focus. Further, we study the function of an individual's affective commitment to his or her organisation, as well as the extent to which employees enjoy their work context and feel attached to their organisation (Meyer, et al., 2004). More specifically, we examine the interaction effects of affective commitment, promotion focus, and individual performance on intention to leave in a nation-wide survey of retail banking employees.

The current study provides a unique approach to understanding the combined influence of performance ratings and attitudinal factors in understanding intention to leave in a practical environment. This approach differs from prior research studying intrinsic and self-derived sources of motivation, which are less costly and arguably easier to sustain than extrinsic motivational resources. Moreover, by controlling for job satisfaction we show the retention benefits of motivation and commitment beyond the prior influence of satisfaction. This study also builds on previous performance-turnover research, informing our understanding of performance and a combination of psychological related factors that are commonly included in selection processes, organisational development interventions, and talent development programs.

#### *Regulatory Focus of Promotion and Performance*

Regulatory focus theory describes different ways that individuals can be motivated to meet set goals (Higgins, 1997). This theory proposes two different foci that motivate individuals to engage in behaviour towards goal attainment. When striving to achieve a goal, a promotion focus acts to motivate individuals based on the presence or absence of rewards. In contrast, a prevention focus may be equally motivating but the focus is on reaching a goal to avoid negative consequences; therefore, the focus of the individual is on presence or absence of punishment (Higgins, 1997). According to regulatory focus theory, the two systems (prevention and promotion focus) act to regulate an individual's behaviour based on which system is most salient in his or her mindset and interactions in the environment. A close fit between the most salient regulation focus (prevention or promotion) and the nature of the consequences for reaching or not reaching set goals leads to increased motivation (Higgins, 1997; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998).

Throughout their journey to achieve set goals, employees generally receive feedback on their performance. Research examining positive and negative feedback

found that when under a promotion focus, individuals are more motivated to perform well if they received positive feedback on their performance (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Further, in a sample of undergraduate university students, Idson and Higgins (2000) found that individuals with a promotion focus showed increased performance over time following feedback that focussed on success rather than failures. Promotion focused employees are oriented towards success, focusing on their ideal desired state. As such, the receipt of positive performance feedback reinforces their sense that they will achieve these goals. Reinforcement of this positive striving motivation leads these employees to view their context favourably, as one that is conducive to achieving their goals, thereby reducing their intention to leave.

In the current study, it is predicted that for individuals with a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes, as their performance increases, they are likely to feel increased congruency between their motivational focus and actual performance. This congruence of striving to and reaching set goals is expected to leave employees feeling satisfied and fulfilled, and unlikely to consider leaving the organisation. Employees low on promotion focus will place less emphasis on the achievement of desired goals. For these employees, although positive performance evaluations will provide a clear message of their effectiveness in the organisation and the potential benefits of staying, this information is expected to have a weaker negative influence on intention to leave.

*Hypothesis 1: Performance will moderate the relationship between promotion focus and intention to leave so that promotion focus and intention to leave will have a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers.*

#### *Affective Commitment and Performance*

Just as Higgins distinguishes between promotion and prevention focus of motivation, Meyer and Allen's model of organisational commitment distinguishes



between different types of commitment. Affective commitment reflects an individual's attachment to and feelings of connection to the organisation (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). A meta-analytic review by Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found relatively strong correlations between organisational commitment, intention to leave ( $r = -.46$ ), and turnover ( $r = -.28$ ). In more recent research using regression analysis, organisational commitment ( $r = -.23$ ) was found to a strong predictor of employee turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Further, Allen and Griffeth (1999) proposed a model of performance and turnover whereby the relationship is moderated by attitudes such as commitment.

We theorise that as affective commitment increases, employees with high performance are likely to feel that their commitment to the organisation and the recognition they receive for their efforts are more strongly aligned. Thus, the alignment of high levels of commitment and high performance evaluations will result in a positive and fulfilling experience at work, and lower intention to leave. In contrast, for individuals with low performance ratings as affective commitment improves, they may feel more committed to the goals and values of their current organisation however unlikely to develop a strong sense of their ability to perform well. For these individuals, increases in affective commitment are not accompanied by an ongoing increase in their ability to perform well and thus do not necessarily naturally translate to reduced intention to leave. Consequently, compared to high performing employees, employees with low performance ratings are not expected to show as strong a decrease in intention to leave as their affective commitment increases.

*Hypothesis 2: Performance will moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave will have a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers.*

*Regulatory Focus of Promotion and Affective Commitment*

Commitment and motivation are distinct yet related concepts that individually, have made significant contributions to our understanding of organisational behaviour (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke & Latham, 1991; Locke & Latham, 2004; Meyer, et al., 1993). As highlighted by Meyer and colleagues (Meyer, et al., 2004), motivation is traditionally viewed as a broader concept, ‘a set of energising forces’, and is examined in relation to the effect on consequences of specific behaviour such as task performance (Pinder, 1998). In contrast, commitment is referred to as ‘one of the energising forces’ that is often directed specifically to a particular entity (for example, an individual, team or organisation) and examined in relation to its influence on intentional behaviour, such as turnover (Cohen, 1993). In the current context, affective commitment is an emotional attachment formed with a specific focus, most commonly researched in relation to attachment to the organisation. Promotion focus is one type of self-regulatory process in which individuals work towards goals to fulfil their hopes and aspirations.

In the current study, it is proposed that the combination of affective commitment and promotion focus will result in the strongest negative association with intention to turnover. A focus on ones ideal goals and strong emotional tie to the organization bolster the individuals’ promotion focus indicating they are fulfilling their desired goals at the least by working in an organization that they are strongly positively attached to. For individuals low on promotion focus an increase in affective commitment while promoting a desire to reside in the organization will have a lesser impact on these processes. For these individuals affective commitment has less relevance to their motivational orientation and so has a lesser capacity to enhance employee’s decisions to stay. Thus we make the following predictions.

*Hypothesis 3: Promotion focus will moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave will have a stronger negative relationship for individuals with high promotion focus compared to those with low promotion focus.*

## Method

### *Procedure*

We conducted a national survey of one of Australia's largest financial institutions. The finance context reflects an ideal location to test our hypotheses as bank institutions are often rely on extrinsic sources of motivation (for example, higher remuneration and bonuses) to retain employees. Moreover, our study of retail bank employees performing customer liaison and teller positions encompasses a job role in which high rates of alternate employment were available. Questionnaire data was collected over a six-month period from a national survey of employees of 181 retail branches in a large global financial institution. A total of 4,500 employees working in retail branches throughout Australia were invited to complete the questionnaire online, 784 useable responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 17.4%.

### *Sample*

A total of 784 respondents participated. Respondents were 17 and 65 years old ( $M = 41.9$  years) and 88% were female. Average tenure at the organisation was 4.2 years. Respondents were from 181 different branches across all seven states of Australia. Branches were generally located in metropolitan areas, or belonged to a region managed from a metropolitan base.

Of the respondents, 46% were tellers (providing service in relation to general transactions and referring to sales representatives), 41.5% were in sales roles (introduce and sell products to suit individual customer needs), 11% of respondents were branch

managers (manage the running of the branch overall, and in some cases also perform a sales role). Less than 2% of the sample was in various other financial advice roles.

Employees were classified as full-time or part-time employees based on the standard number of working hours each week. Employees that worked between 38 and 40 hours a week were classified as full-time, 48% of respondents were working full-time (n=299) Employees that worked 37 hours or less were classified as part-time employees, 62% of respondents were working part-time.

### *Measures*

Responses to the four scales included to assess affective commitment, promotion focus, job satisfaction, and intention to leave were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A full list of scales and items is shown in Appendix A.

*Affective organisational commitment* was measured using the four-item affective commitment scale by Meyer et al. (1993). An example of an item from this scale is 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation'. The reliability of the scale was .87.

*Promotion focus* was measured using five items adapted from the scale developed by Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda (2002). The items are as follows 'I often imagine myself experiencing good things that I hope will happen to me', 'In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life', 'I typically focus on the successes I hope to achieve in the future', 'I often think about how I will achieve my work goals' And 'Overall, I am more orientated towards achieving success than preventing failure.' The five-item scale produced a reliability of .91.

*Job satisfaction* measured using four items from a job satisfaction scale developed by Quinn and Shepard (1974), and also used by Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli and Lynch (1997). An example of an item is ‘In general, my job measures up to the sort of job I wanted when I took it’. The alpha coefficient was .90.

*Performance.* The performance of each employee was assessed by their manager within six months of the employee completing the attitudinal questionnaire. Performance was coded from 1 (lowest performance) to 5 (highest performance) ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). Performance was rated based on the employees’ performance in their key task areas and set targets specific to their role. For tellers, targets were set for sales referrals, for employees in sales roles, targets were for sales, and for branch managers, targets related to overall branch performance. Performance ratings were used to inform remuneration level, promotion potential, and development opportunities.

*Intention to leave.* Following Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) intention to leave was assessed by three items such as ‘As soon as I can find a better job, I’ll leave *current organisation*’ from a scale developed by Landau and Hammer (1986). Like Wayne and colleagues (1997) to enhance reliability an item ‘I often think about quitting my job’ from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire was also included in this scale (Nadler, Jenkins, Cammann, & Lawler, 1975). The alpha coefficient was .94. To provide criterion validation we examined whether intention to leave differentiated subsequent turnover rates. A one-way ANOVA indicated a significantly higher intention to leave for participants who actually left the organisation ( $M = 3.39$ ) compared to those that remained ( $M = 2.39$ ),  $F = (1, 780) = 31.32$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 5.1. To test the hypotheses, three hierarchical moderated regression analyses were conducted. The predictor data was centred before conducting the regression analyses to reduce possible

multicollinearity with variables that may have inflated the interaction coefficients (Aiken & West, 1991). Variance inflation factors for all variables were in the acceptable range (1.1 to 2.1). Variables were entered in three steps; firstly, control variables age, gender, employment status, tenure and job satisfaction were entered. In the second step of the analysis, the individual variables either promotion focus, affective commitment, and performance were entered. In the final step of the analyses the interaction variable of was entered.

Table 5.1

*Correlations, means and standard deviations for all variables*

| Variable                | M       | SD      | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4        | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Age                  | 41.94   | 11.92   |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |         |
| 2. Tenure               | 1522.82 | 2149.35 | 0.41**  |         |         |          |         |         |         |         |
| 3. Gender               | 1.88    | 0.33    | 0.27**  | 0.05    |         |          |         |         |         |         |
| 4. Employment status    | 1.38    | 0.49    | -0.10** | -0.16** | -0.21** |          |         |         |         |         |
| 5. Job satisfaction     | 5.42    | 1.22    | -0.06   | -0.13** | -.08*   | .10**    |         |         |         |         |
| 6. Performance          | 2.88    | 0.76    | 0.13**  | 0.05    | 0.07*   | 0.14**   | 0.14**  |         |         |         |
| 7. Affective commitment | 5.55    | 1.09    | 0.04    | -0.03   | -0.05   | 0.15**   | 0.70**  | 0.19**  |         |         |
| 8. Promotion focus      | 6.12    | 0.72    | -0.14** | -0.12** | -0.06   | 0.12**   | 0.35**  | 0.11**  | 0.35**  |         |
| 9. Intention to leave   | 2.48    | 1.43    | -0.09   | -0.01   | -0.001  | -0.213** | -0.63** | -0.14** | -0.68** | -0.17** |

N = 784

\*\* Correlation significant at .01 level

Hypothesis 1 predicted that performance would moderate the relationship between promotion focus and intention to leave such that promotion focus and intention to leave would have a stronger relationship for high performers compared to low performers. Results are reported in Table 5.2. Of the control variables age ( $\beta = -.11, p < .05$ ) and job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.65, p < .05$ ) were significantly negatively related to intention to leave. None of the main effects were significantly related to intention to leave. In the final step, the interaction term was entered. The interaction coefficient was significant ( $\beta = -.07, p < .05$ ) and the interaction term explained an additional 1% of the variance. This interaction is plotted in Figure 5.1.

Using the procedures described by Aiken and West (1991), simple slopes for respondents with high promotion focus (one standard deviation above the mean) and respondents with lower promotion focus (one standard deviation below the mean) were tested to further examine the performance x promotion focus interaction. In line with the hypothesis for employees with high promotion focus increasing performance was significantly negatively related to intention to leave,  $t = 7.23, p < .01$ . For low promotion focus increasing performance was negatively but not significantly related to intention to leave,  $t = 1.90, p = .06$ . Thus, results supported Hypothesis 1.



Table 5.2

*Summary of moderated regression analysis for variables predicting intention to leave.*

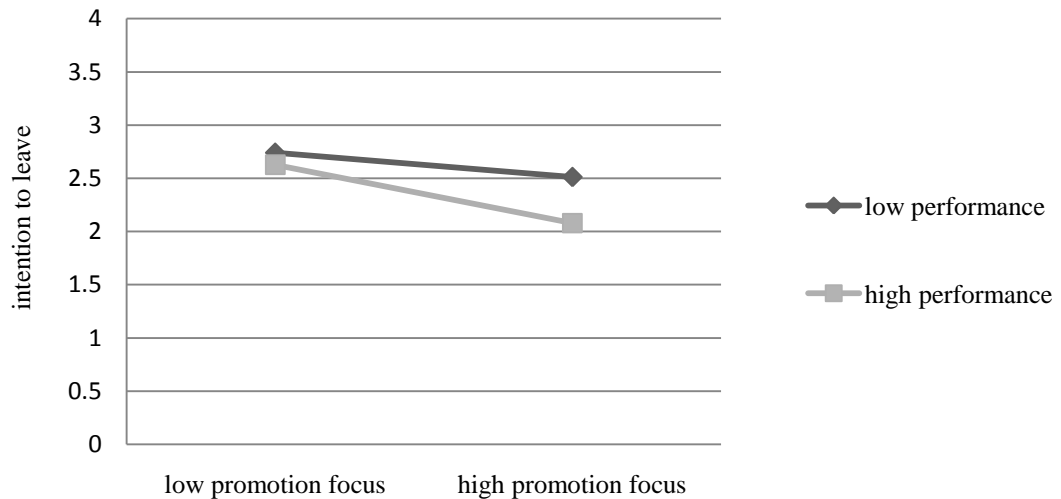
| Variable     |                               | $\beta$   |            |                    |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------|
| Step 1       | Age                           | -0.11**   |            |                    |
|              | Tenure                        | -0.05     |            |                    |
|              | Gender                        | -0.03     |            |                    |
|              | Employment status             | -0.04     |            |                    |
|              | Job satisfaction              | -0.65**   |            |                    |
| $R^2$        | 0.422                         |           |            |                    |
| $\Delta R^2$ | 0.422                         |           |            |                    |
| F            | 113.28**                      |           |            |                    |
|              |                               | PM x Perf | AFC x Perf | AFC x PM           |
| Step 2       | Promotion focus<br>(PM)       | 0.04      |            | 0.1**              |
|              | Performance (Perf)            | -0.04     | 0.00       |                    |
|              | Affective<br>commitment (AFC) |           | -0.45*     | -0.47*             |
| $R^2$        |                               | 0.424     | 0.519      | 0.527              |
| $\Delta R^2$ |                               | 0.002     | 0.097      | 0.105              |
| F            |                               | 81.53**   | 119.39**   | 123.31**           |
| Step 3       | PM x Perf                     | -0.07*    |            |                    |
|              | PM X AFC                      |           |            | -1.84 <sup>a</sup> |
|              | AFC x Perf                    |           | -0.05*     |                    |
| $R^2$        |                               | 0.429     | 0.522      | 0.529              |
| $\Delta R^2$ |                               | 0.005     | 0.003      | 0.002              |
| F            |                               | 75.58**   | 105.43**   | 108.65**           |

N = 781-784

\*\* Significant at .01

\* Significant at .05

<sup>a</sup> Significance level = .07



*Figure 5.1:* Interaction between performance and promotion focus on intention to leave.

Hypothesis 2 that performance would moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave would have a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers was supported. These results are reported in Table 5.2.

The main effect was significant for affective commitment ( $\beta = -.46, p < .05$ ). In the final step, the interaction term was entered. The interaction coefficient was significant ( $\beta = -.05, p < .05$ ), and the interaction term explained an additional 1% of the variance. This interaction is plotted in Figure 5.2. As for Hypothesis 1, using the procedures described by Aiken and West (1991), the simple slopes for respondents with high performance and respondents with lower performance were tested to further examine the performance x affective commitment interaction. In line with the hypothesis for high performing employees increasing affective commitment was significantly negatively related to intention to leave,  $t = 34.82, p < .01$ . For low performing employees, increasing affective commitment was significantly negatively

related to intention to leave,  $t = 13.77, p < .01$ ; however, as shown in Figure 5.2, the slope was not as steep for low performance. Thus, the results supported Hypothesis 2.

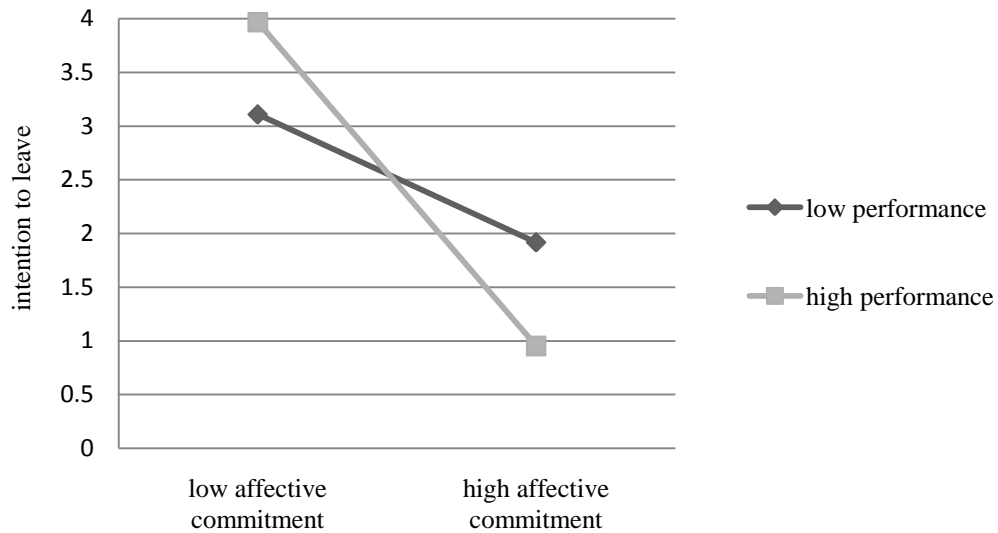
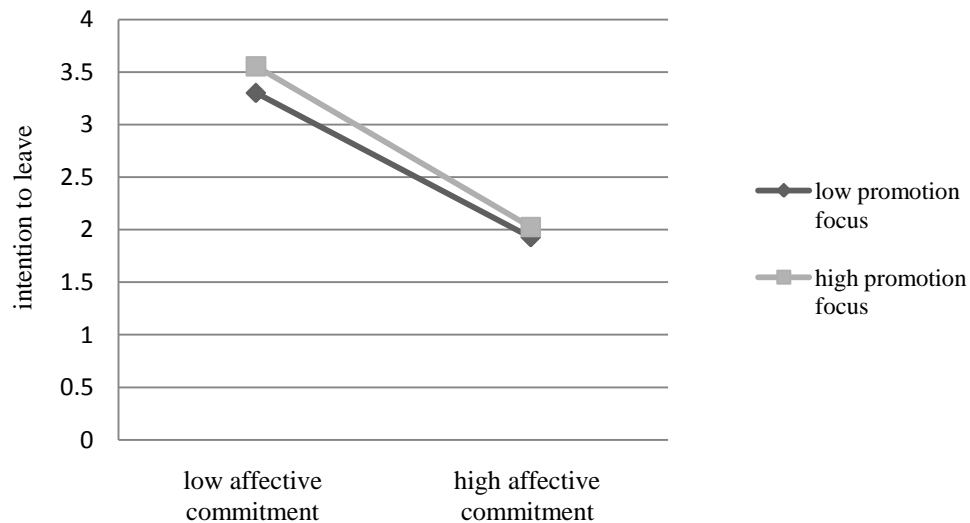


Figure 5.2: Interaction between affective commitment and performance on intention to leave.

Hypothesis 3 proposed promotion focus would moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave would have a stronger negative relationship for individuals with high promotion focus compared to those with low promotion focus. These results are reported in Table 5.2. The main effect was significant for both affective commitment ( $\beta = -.47, p < .05$ ) and promotion focus ( $\beta = .10, p < .01$ ). In the final step, the interaction term was entered. The interaction coefficient approached but was not significant ( $\beta = -.05, p = .07$ ). This interaction is plotted in Figure 5.3. A three-way interaction between affective commitment, promotion focus, and performance was also tested for but was not significant.



*Figure 5.3:* Interaction between promotion focus and affective commitment on intention to leave.

#### Discussion

This research sheds new light on why people of varying performance develop intentions to leave an organisation. The study examined whether intrinsic sources such as motivation and commitment influence high or low performers in their decisions to leave. We found that high performers were less likely to consider leaving as either their promotion focus or affective commitment increased. Further, while our interaction approached significance we found that the combination of a promotion focus and affective commitment provided additive effects, which together reduced individual's intention to leave. In concert, these findings derived from a large nation-wide study provide evidence of the benefits of examining intrinsic sources of motivation and commitment that are less costly to implement, amenable to management intervention and retained once external rewards are removed.

Our findings supported the first hypothesis that performance would moderate the relationship between promotion focus and intention to leave so that promotion focus

and intention to leave would have a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers. Results found that individuals with high performance reported lower intention to leave as promotion focus increased. This supports expectations that as employees with a promotion focus are motivated by working towards their ideal state, positive reinforcement through performance feedback leads employees to view their work context favourably, reducing their intent to leave. Further, the findings support our expectations that a congruency between striving towards goals with a focus on positive outcomes and being rewarded with positive outcomes, resulted in employees feeling fulfilled and less likely to consider leaving. The relationship was not significant for individuals with a low performance, suggesting that the influence of promotion focus on intention to leave has less influence for employees that are not receiving positive reinforcement through high performance ratings.

As far as we are aware, this study was the first to examine specifically the relationship between promotion focus and performance predicting intention to leave in an organisational context. However, research examining similar relationships such as the influence of feedback on performance when individuals have a strong promotion focus supports the findings in the current study (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004; Wallace, Little, & Shull, 2008). Our findings add to this previous research, suggesting that a strong promotion focus helps to reduce intention to leave as performance increases particularly for higher performing employees.

Hypothesis 2 that performance would moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave would have a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers was supported. While results indicated that both high and low performers were less likely to consider leaving as affective commitment increased, the relationship was stronger for high performers (See Figure 5.2). The current research

supports the proposed model by Allen and Griffeth (1999), that attitudinal factors such as affective commitment moderate the relationship between performance and intention to leave.

Our findings indicated that employees with both high commitment and performance reported the lowest intention to leave. Congruency between attachment to the organisation and high performance ratings left the employee feeling fulfilled in their workplace, leaving them less likely to consider leaving. However, the highest intention to leave was reported by high performers that indicated low attachment to the organisation. Incongruence between attachment and performance, left employees feeling that they could be more fulfilled in another organisation, and confident that their high performance would be attractive in the external labour market.

Hypothesis 3 that promotion focus would moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave would have a stronger negative relationship for individuals with high promotion focus compared to those with low promotion focus was not supported. Although the interaction was not significant, results indicated a trend towards the predicted relationship. Increased affective commitment was significantly related to lower intention to leave. Further, with increased promotion focus, this commitment-intention to leave relationship became stronger, but not to significance.

The non-significant finding in relation to Hypothesis 3 could be explained by difference in focus for the motivation and commitment. Employees with a strong promotion focus are motivated towards achieving their ideal state (focus on hopes and aspirations), whereas strong affective commitment reflects attachment to a more specific context: the organisation. It is possible that an individual will be strongly committed to an organisation, but unconvinced that their broader hopes and aspirations

will be fulfilled by remaining at the organisation in the long term. Hence, the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave may not be consistently strengthened by increasing promotion focus, unless the individual's hopes and aspirations are aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation.

### *Implications*

The current study provides an empirical examination of the broader model of Meyer and colleagues (Meyer, et al., 2004) in an organisational context. Our findings support the proposition that a combination of one's motivational focus, commitment and feedback on performance have important implications for subsequent behavioural intentions. Specifically, this study supports the inclusion of motivation and commitment as multi-dimensional constructs, having different relationships and different effects on behavioural intentions.

The findings of this study also provide empirical evidence to support the inclusion of moderating attitudinal factors to develop a more consistent understanding of the effect of performance in the turnover process (Allen & Griffeth, 1999). The current research provides empirical evidence to support the role of affective commitment in understanding intention to leave when job satisfaction is also entered into the analysis. This finding suggests that regardless of the level of job satisfaction, high performing employees who are strongly attached to the organisation are least likely to consider leaving, however high performing employees that have low attachment are at the greatest risk of high intention to leave.

From a practical perspective, our findings offer strategic alternatives for organisations wanting to retain top performers without needing to rely primarily on extrinsic sources such as increased salary or large bonuses. Firstly, the findings highlight a significant opportunity to retain talent by designing initiatives to help

develop strong emotional attachment to the organisation in high performers. The results suggest it is crucial to consider both employee performance and emotional attachment to the organisation, and how the combination of these factors may influence subsequent behaviour.

The findings also highlight an opportunity to retain top performers through building a strong focus on working to achieve individuals' hopes and aspirations. This focus may be introduced by incorporating the development of these hopes and aspirations into employees' training and development plans. A strong promotion focus could also be reinforced by goal setting focussed on presence of rewards, as well as management support to facilitate individual's progress towards achieving their ideals. Developing this strong focus on fulfilling employees' goals and aspirations should help to strengthen the relationship between increased performance and reduced intention to leave.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

This study focussed on only one of two components of regulatory focus theory. Future research examining the interaction of a prevention regulatory focus, commitment, performance and intention to leave may help to expand understanding in this area. Regulatory focus of prevention refers to an individual being motivated to perform based on avoidance of negative outcomes, and alignment with the 'ought self'. As such, it may be useful to examine a link between prevention focus, and continuance commitment, which focuses on individual's feelings of obligation to the organisation, themselves, and others (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Markovits, Ullrich, van Dick, & Davis, 2008).

Further research that explores the relationship between an individual's dominant regulatory focus and the extent to which he or she meets or exceeds performance targets



over time may add to our knowledge of this area. This would extend previous research that found individuals with a promotion focus were more likely to excel with respect to the main goal of the activity, whereas individuals with a dominant prevention focus were more likely to outperform others in relation to the safety or compliance focus of the activity (Wallace, et al., 2008).

Performance as rated by the manager was collected in only one six-month time period. In the dynamic retail banking environment, performance ratings over this six-month period may have been influenced by factors such as market demands, personal circumstances, or frequency of interactions between the manager and employee during this time (Iverson & Deery, 2000). Additionally, the nature of the feedback managers provide to employees about their performance may influence their future performance. It would be useful for future research to conduct a longitudinal analysis of these factors to understand the causal effect of these relationships on intention to leave and employee turnover. Further, it may be beneficial to consider including an assessment of individuals' self-efficacy to help understand whether this has an effect on their future performance and intention to leave.

### *Conclusion*

This study provides unique empirical evidence to suggest that congruence between performance rating, affective commitment, and promotion focus has a positive effect on an employee's intention to remain in an organisation. The findings indicate that high performers who are emotionally attachment and adopt a strong focus on working to achieve their hopes and aspirations show the lowest intention to leave. Results suggest that by building emotional attachment to the organisation and a focus achievement of hopes and aspirations in top performers, organisations are likely to increase the effectiveness of talent programs, reducing a reliance on large salary increases and bonuses. This strategic focus should also help to reduce costs associated

with turnover of high performing employees, such as training (Cascio, 2006), loss of leadership (Nyberg, 2010), and efficiency (Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone, 2006).

## **Chapter 6. Considerations for Retaining Valuable Employees: Discussion and Conclusion**

The employee-employer relationship is far more complex than a monetary exchange. There is still much to be discovered about the complexity of factors that contribute to an employee leaving his or her workplace. Factors that may influence individuals to cognitively withdraw or actually leave could be related to demographic characteristics, work-related factors, or non-work related factors. It is both the individual contribution and combination of these different factors that make understanding the employee turnover process an evolving challenge. This thesis focuses on the demographic characteristics, work-related attitudes and performance in the turnover process.

Employee turnover poses a consistently puzzling and costly problem for organisations globally (Phillips, 1990). As organisations adopt new technologies and processes that require specific training, and employees' expectations of the level of training and development they should receive increases, the financial implications of high turnover become even greater (Corporate leadership council, 2005). Further, while the introduction of psychometric testing and more rigorous selection processes offer opportunities to employ individuals that align with both the role and values of the organisation, these processes also require sizeable upfront investment. While selecting suitable candidates assists in retention, employee experiences at work play a large role in guiding their long-term future at an organisation.

Expanding our understanding of ways to improve employee experiences in today's workforce assists people to make the most of how they spend a large percentage of their lives. By developing deeper insights into how organisations can manage, monitor and develop employees, we can help provide the most productive and fulfilling

work environment to benefit individuals and organisations. Employees who enjoy a positive experience at work are more likely to remain in their jobs, and contribute to the organisation and overall economy.

The aim of this thesis was to expand understanding about the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover. The study scope was limited to examining work-related attitudes, perceptions, manager-rated performance, and turnover behaviour of employees working in retail branches of an Australia financial institution. In this chapter, the gaps in the research literature described in Chapter 2 will be summarised. This chapter will then address the key findings of Chapters 3, 4 and 5, demonstrating how the findings respond to the stated aim. The limitations of this research will be reviewed, and areas for future research will be proposed in relation to each chapter. The contribution of these findings in relation to theoretical and practical advancement in the intention to leave and employee turnover literature will then be discussed. Finally, the conclusions of this thesis will be presented.

#### *Gaps in Understanding of Turnover*

Chapter 2 identified gaps in intention to leave and employee turnover research that became the areas of focus in this thesis. After describing the key features of intention to leave and turnover, Chapter 2 examined the key antecedents, highlighting gaps for future research. The relevant theories and dominant models of turnover were reviewed. The four key issues that emerged from Chapter 2 were examined further in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Although a substantial amount of research has examined antecedents of intention to leave and turnover, much of this previous research has focussed predominantly on the experiences of full-time employees (Mobley, 1982; Price, 2004). Chapter 2 examined studies that have compared experiences of part-time and full-time

employees, finding inconsistent results (Jackofsky & Peters, 1987; Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Rotchford & Roberts, 1982). As part-time employees begin to constitute a larger percentage of the workforce (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Polivka, Cohany, & Hipple, 2000; Workforce statistics, 2008), understanding and comparing antecedents of intention to leave and turnover was identified as an area that would benefit from further research.

The review in Chapter 2 identified a trend in previous research to focus on the direct predictors of intention to leave and turnover. Examining the direct predictors provides an understanding of one way that antecedents can affect intention to leave or turnover. As a result of the literature review, it was proposed that investigating indirect relationships and relationships between predictors would help to expand our understanding of the turnover process. The review highlighted that factors such as perceived organisational support, branch identification, and perceptions of career development opportunities may offer considerable insight into indirect influences in the turnover process.

Another gap in the literature identified in Chapter 2 was related to the limited number of studies that specifically compared intention to leave and turnover. Research generally discusses antecedents of both intention to leave and turnover together, and intention to leave is often used as a proxy for turnover (Albrecht, 2006; Allen, et al., 2009). Despite these links, limited studies have specifically compared antecedents of each (Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 2002; Mueller, Boyer, Price, & Iverson, 1994; Vandenberg & Barnes-Nelson, 1999). By exploring similarities and differences of antecedents of both intention to leave and turnover, we can expand our overall understanding of the turnover process.

Regulatory focus emphasises two different motivational forms for which individuals may engage in behaviour to achieve goals (Higgins, 1997; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997). While previous research has examined both commitment (Cohen, 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) and regulatory focus (Markovits, Ullrich, van Dick, & Davis, 2008; Wallace, Little, & Shull, 2008) separately, no *empirical* research examining the combined influence of these factors on intention to leave could be identified. Uncovering the nature of the relationship between motivational focus, commitment, and intention to leave would help to expand our understanding of the turnover process (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004).

Historically, performance has been found to have inconsistent relationships with intention to leave and turnover. Research findings have revealed a direct negative relationship (Jackofsky, 1984), curvilinear relationship (Salamin & Hom, 2005), or indicated that the relationship may be moderated by factors such as pay or time (Iverson & Deery, 2000; Nyberg, 2010). Given that performance is an important focus for organisations, further research examining the nature of the performance-turnover or performance-intention to leave relationship with attitudinal moderators would help to expand our understanding of the turnover process (Allen & Griffeth, 1999).

#### *Antecedents of Part-time and Full-time Employee Intention to Leave*

The aim of Chapter 3 was to examine the direct and indirect relationships between work attitudes and intention to leave. To achieve this aim, the chapter compared the direct influence of the two most commonly researched predictors of intention to leave: job satisfaction and organisational commitment, for part-time and full-time employees. Utilising structural equation modelling, this chapter also extended previous research by examining the indirect relationships between attitudes and intention to leave.

Results indicated a stronger relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave for full-time employees compared to their part-time colleagues. This finding suggests that full-time employees' satisfaction with the work role and tasks that they complete had greater effect on their intent to stay compared to part-time employees. This relationship is supported by partial inclusion theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), suggesting that as part-time employees spend less time in the work social system, and job satisfaction reflects satisfaction at work, their job satisfaction is less influential in their decision to leave compared to full-time employees. Empirical research based on Blau and Boal's (1987) model of job involvement and organisational commitment also supports the finding of the current research, indicating that the effect of job attitudes on intention to leave can vary between part-time and full-time employees (Martin & Hafer, 1995).

When considering part-time employees' intention to leave or remain, the results suggest that they may be less influenced by the work role and tasks, and more influenced by their emotional attachment to and alignment of values within the organisation. This finding is consistent with partial inclusion theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), which suggests part-time and full-time employees have different experiences in their social systems resulting in a different effect of job attitudes on intention for each group. A stronger relationship between part-time employee affective commitment and intention to leave may also be linked to part-time employees' reasons for wanting to work—attachment to a supportive environment—rather than purely for the work itself. The relationship between reasons for engaging in work and factors influencing intention to leave or turnover is an area that would benefit from future research.

In summary, the results in Chapter 3 suggest that part-time and full-time employees are likely to be influenced most strongly by different work place attitudes when deciding whether to leave their current organisation. For example, full-time

employees are likely to assess the job-related benefits and limitations of leaving the job itself as a priority, and as a secondary consideration, compare their attachment to and the effect of losing the organisation as a social system. However, part-time employees may be more inclined to consider the effect of losing a social system to which they have strong attachment as a primary concern, and to a lesser extent think about the loss of the satisfaction they receive from the job itself if they are considering leaving the organisation.

#### *Indirect Relationships between Antecedents*

Chapter 3 also examined the indirect relationships between job attitudes and intention to leave. Results indicated that the strongest indirect effects on intention to leave were from perceived organisational support, relationship with the manager, career development opportunities, and branch identification, respectively. These findings support the indirect relationships proposed in the research model in Chapter 3.

The results suggested that relationship with the manager, perceptions of accessibility to career development opportunities, and perceived organisational support have an important role in understanding intention to leave through their effect on job satisfaction and affective commitment. Although branch identification had a moderate effect on affective commitment, after taking into account the effect of all variables in the model, branch identification explained little unique variance in intention to leave. This suggests that the extent to which individuals identified with their branch influenced affective commitment. However, it had a limited effect on intention to leave compared to other factors in the research model. This indirect effect of branch identification on intention to leave supports previous research examining organisational identification (Johnson & Bernhagen, 1996).



Findings indicated that employees who perceived the relationship with their manager to be of a high quality tended to see career development opportunities as accessible. Further, if employees perceive career development opportunities as accessible, they were more likely to feel supported and valued by the wider organisation. Employees who felt supported and valued by the organisation were more satisfied and emotionally attached to the organisation which resulted in lower intention to leave. The findings suggest that to help employees feel valued and supported in their role, it is important to ensure they are aware of and able to participate in training and development programs or promotional opportunities. These findings also highlight the influential role of the manager-employee relationship in the workplace (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004).

There were no significant differences in the indirect effects on intention to leave between part-time and full-time groups, indicating that the indirect relationships did not differ according to employment status. However, perceived organisational support had a stronger direct effect on job satisfaction compared to affective commitment. Combined with the finding that job satisfaction and intention to leave had a stronger relationship for full-time employees, this suggests that perceived organisational support was particularly important for reducing intention to leave for full-time employees.

Understanding of employee turnover and intention to leave could be further extended by focusing future research on uncovering indirect predictors, and the relationships between factors such as the influence of the leader, team and organisation in the turnover process. Further, multi-level research would help advance understanding of the individual, team and organisational effect of key antecedents of turnover. Structural equation modelling analyses would be one way to enable researchers to incorporate analysis of indirect predictors and relationships between these variables in the turnover literature.

*Antecedents of Intention and Behaviour*

The aim of Chapter 4 was to compare the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover. The study examined demographic and attitudinal data, as well as manager-rated performance in relation to intention to leave and employee turnover. Decreasing affective commitment, job satisfaction, and perceived organisational support were the key predictors of intention to leave. In contrast, decreasing performance ratings and continuance commitment, as well as increasing intention to leave predicted employee turnover. These results suggest that although intention to leave and employee turnover were related, there were no similarities in the key antecedents of the two constructs.

Consistent with previous research, the results in Chapter 4 supported the important influence of job satisfaction in understanding intention to leave (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Price, 2004). Decreasing job satisfaction was found to be related to increased intention to leave; however, job satisfaction was not significantly related to actual turnover. These results suggest that although decreased job satisfaction may relate to stronger intentions to leave one's job, this alone may not be enough to lead employees to leave. In addition to low job satisfaction, individuals may need an additional push factor to follow through with turnover behaviour (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999; Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996). An additional push factor may be related to the type of organisational commitment.

Affective commitment was found to influence intention to leave, whereas continuance commitment was found to be a key influencing factor of employee turnover. These findings suggest that low attachment to the organisation's values and goals is likely to increase employees' intention to leave. However, leaving may be more likely for individuals who perceive the costs and benefits of leaving to outweigh the costs and benefits of staying. These findings provide evidence to support the differential

contribution of components of commitment in predicting outcomes (Firth, et al., 2004; Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Whitener & Walz, 1993).

Perceived organisational support was also found to be one of the main predictors of intention to leave. This finding supports previous research indicating that in addition to the effect of well-established predictors such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment, reduced perceived organisational support contributes to one's desire to leave (Harris, Harris, & Harvey, 2007). This suggests that employees' intentions to leave the organisation are influenced by their perceptions of how valued and supported they are by the organisation. Employees who perceive organisational support to be low, are more likely to consider leaving compared to those employees who perceive high levels of support.

The findings in this chapter also indicate that younger employees are more likely to consider leaving (Blomme, van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010; Cohen, 1993; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). This finding suggests that in the retail banking sector, age is a significant factor to consider in relation to predicting intention to leave. This finding could be explained by a shift in generational attitudes about employment, and reflect the idea that younger people in today's society are more transient in their work choices. Younger people may be more open to the idea of leaving their current work place if a better option was to arise compared to older employees. Younger employees were not significantly more likely to actually leave, indicating that high intention to leave for younger employees does not necessarily translate into higher employee turnover.

Previous research examining the relationship between performance and turnover has been inconsistent (Bycio, Hackett, & Alvares, 1990; Iverson & Deery, 2000; Salamin & Hom, 2005; Schwab, 1991). In the current study, it was found that employees who received negative performance ratings from their manager were more

likely to leave. This finding supports previous research indicating an inverse relationship between performance and turnover (Bycio, Hackett, & Alvares, 1990; Cohen, 1999; McEvoy & Cascio, 1987; Williams & Livingstone, 1994).

The unfolding model of turnover could also help to explain the performance turnover relationship (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, et al., 1999). This model proposes that shocks are responsible for employees deciding to leave. Based on the current findings, a low performance rating may provide a shock that causes an individual to leave, particularly if he or she has previously considered leaving. Alternatively, as suggested in Chapter 5, a low performance rating from the manager may serve as an indication to the employee of the value of his or her effort. If the performance rating is not congruent with employees' self-evaluation of their performance and effort, this could lead to feelings that they are not valued, and their efforts are not recognised. Therefore, they may be more likely to leave if they find alternative options.

To develop a more detailed understanding of causal relationships between predictors of intention to leave and turnover behaviour, future research could consider the use of longitudinal research designs. Gathering longitudinal attitude and turnover data would help to uncover the causal links between intention to leave and actual turnover, particularly in relation to the effect of different types of commitment, performance and perceived organisational support.

### *Retaining High Performing Employees*

The aim of Chapter 5 was to extend theory development in the motivation and commitment field and to examine their influence on why employees of varying performance may consider leaving. To achieve this aim, the interactive effects of regulatory focus of promotion, affective commitment, and performance in predicting intention to leave were examined. The inclusion of performance as rated by the manager

provided insights into intrinsic sources of motivation and commitment relevant to the retention of high performers.

Results indicated that performance moderated the relationship between promotion focus and intention to leave so that promotion focus and intention to leave had a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers. This finding suggests that when individuals strive towards goals with a focus on positive outcomes and are rewarded with positive outcomes (high performance ratings), they feel fulfilled and report reduced intention to leave. As expected, for low performers, increased focus on achieving goals to receive positive outcomes did not have a significant relationship with intention to leave. This suggests that the influence of promotion focus on intention to leave has a weaker influence for employees who do not receive high performance ratings. As far as can be identified, these results are unique; however similar trends were found in research examining the relationship between promotion focus and performance (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004; Wallace, et al., 2008).

Chapter 5 found that that performance moderated the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave so that affective commitment and intention to leave had a stronger negative relationship for high performers compared to low performers. This finding suggests that alignment between performance and commitment is important for reducing intention to leave, particularly for high performers. A misalignment between attachment and performance (low attachment and high performance) resulted in the *highest* intention to leave. This misalignment left top performers feeling as though their capabilities would be attractive in the external labour market. Overall, these results support the model proposed by Allen and Griffeth (1999) that the relationship between performance and intention to leave could be best explained by including moderating attitudinal factors such as affective commitment.

Promotion focus did not moderate the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave. The results indicated a trend towards the hypothesis; however, the finding was not significant. This non-significant result may be influenced by the broad scope of a promotion focus compared to the more specific focus of affective commitment. Affective commitment refers to attachment to the specific organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991), whereas a focus on hopes and aspirations could include a broader view of one's life (Higgins, 1997). This difference in scope may have led to a less consistent relationship between affective commitment and promotion focus influencing intention to leave.

As far as could be identified, the analysis of the interaction between regulatory focus of promotion, affective commitment and performance was the first empirical test of this combination of factors on predicting intention to leave. Further analysis of these factors, as well as inclusion of interactions between regulatory focus of prevention, continuance commitment, and manager-rated performance, could offer further understanding as to the nature of these relationships. This could help to ascertain whether a similar combination of relationships operate for prevention focus, commitment and performance. The current research did examine these factors; however, no significant relationships were found. As an extension to the current findings, empirical examination of whether training in an organisational setting helps to significantly improve a promotion focus or affective commitment would be useful.

### Implications

#### *Employment Status in Organisations*

Traditionally, research has focused on understanding factors influencing intention to leave and turnover of full-time employees (Higgins, 1997; Mobley, 1982; Price, 2004; Price, 1977). In more recent years, the nature of the workforce has changed

to include more flexible working options, involving an increased number of employees choosing to work part-time (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Polivka, et al., 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The findings in Chapter 3 indicate that job satisfaction and affective commitment differentially influence intention to leave for part-time and full-time employees. These results align with the proposition of partial inclusion theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) that part-time employees spend less time in their work ‘social system’, resulting in different experiences in that system compared to full-time employees.

This finding supports previous research suggesting that part-time and full-time employees have different experiences at work (Rotchford & Roberts, 1982; Senter & Martin, 2007). Finding differences between part-time and full-time employees in the modern workforce in this study challenges recent assumptions that there are no differences between these groups (Hom, 1979; Krausz, Sagie, & Bidermann, 2000; Thorsteinson, 2003). Considering differences between experiences at work based on employment status can help both full-time and part-time employees to have better experiences at work. This is because organisations can help to improve the work environment based on the specific factors that are most relevant to each group, rather than combining approaches to suit the broader group.

#### *Employment Status in Turnover Models*

The dominant models of turnover were developed during a time when part-time employees constituted only a small part of the overall workforce (Bluedorn, 1982; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Price, 1977). As highlighted by Price (Price, 2004), ‘during most of the time that research has been done on turnover-from the early 1900s-nearly all of the employees had worked full-time, so the models developed would naturally be constructed to explain turnover for full-time employees’ (p. 25). As part-

time employees now occupy many more roles in the workforce (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Polivka, et al., 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), traditional models of employee turnover should include the influence on employment status in the turnover process.

The Price (Price, 1977; Price & Mueller, 1981), Mobley (Mobley, 1977) and Bluedorn (Bluedorn, 1982) models of turnover each propose a link between job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and withdrawal intentions to varying degrees. This thesis suggests that the relationships between job satisfaction, organisation commitment and intention to leave are moderated by employment status. Specifically, the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave would be strengthened for full-time employees and weakened for part-time employees. In contrast, the relationship between organisational commitment and intention to leave would be strengthened for part-time employees and weakened for full-time employees.

In relation to the Price model of turnover, the findings of this thesis suggest that a re-conceptualisation of the model's components to consider differences in part-time and full-time employee experiences would help to expand our understanding. Extending upon the meta-analytic study by Hom and colleagues (1992) that found a moderating influence of factors such as type of sample, turnover base rate, and unemployment rates, this thesis found evidence for the moderating influence of employment status on the turnover process.

More detailed definitions for the categorisation of employees could be developed to improve the accuracy of comparisons between part-time and full-time employees, as well as the specification of differences in turnover models. In this research, employees were categorised as full-time or part-time based on regular number of hours worked each week. Part-time employees worked 37 hours or less, and full-time



employees worked between 38 and 40 hours per week. It was also noted that conditions of employment were the same for both part-time and full-time employees. In previous research, part-time employees have been classified in varying ways ranging from those who worked less than 38 hours per week (Nardone, 1995), to those working fewer than 32 hours per week (Senter & Martin, 2007). While it may be unrealistic to expect agreement on a standard number of hours for each group globally, providing a detailed overview of the sample of both full-time and part-time employees when comparing these groups would help to make fairer and more informed comparisons between studies.

The research findings also show similar relationships for part-time and full-time employees. Similar trends in relationships between antecedents of intention to leave, predictors of intention to leave and turnover, and interactions between commitment, motivational focus and performance in predicting intention to leave were found. These relationships help to inform and expand understanding of factors to help reduce intention to leave and turnover for both full-time and part-time employees. This thesis does not suggest that everything about the part-time and full-time employee work experience is different; rather it proposes that identifying differences between the two groups is beneficial for both employees and the organisation.

#### *Perceived Support from the Organisation*

In Chapter 3, structural equation modelling analysis indicated that perceived organisational support indirectly affected intention to leave through the relationship with job satisfaction. Similarly, this indirect relationship has been found by previous structural equation modelling research (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, & Allen, 2007). In Chapter 4, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted and a direct effect of perceived organisational support on intention to leave

was found. This finding also supports previous research that has conducted multiple regression analysis or structural equation modelling without including organisational commitment or job satisfaction (Harris, et al., 2007; Hui, Wong, & Tjosvold, 2007). Findings in previous research examining perceived organisational support and intention to leave follow a similar trend to the current study according to the method of data analysis.

The trend in results relating to the perceived organisational support-intention to leave relationship could be explained by distinguishing between each type of analytic technique. Firstly, structural equation modelling allows the simultaneous evaluation of model construct relationships, whereas in multiple regression, each path is analysed separately in sequential steps (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1982; Kline, 2004; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, increased power to uncover indirect relationships is available when conducting structural equation modelling. This allows measurement of both direct and indirect paths between perceived organisation support, satisfaction, and intention to leave.

Secondly, in multiple regression analysis, the measurement items that constitute each construct are generally assumed to have equal error associated with each of them (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1982; Kline, 2004; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). However, in structural equation modelling, individual error terms are associated with each item and therefore can be different. This allows for a more accurate equation in which both predictor and outcome variables have more specific error measurement. Hence, in regression, perceived organisation support and intention to leave may seem more related than they actually are due to common error terms associated with all variables. To assess these explanations, the direct or indirect relationship between perceived organisational support and intention to leave could be further explored in different settings using both regression and structural equation modelling analyses.

The results suggest that a measure of employee perceptions of support from the organisation adds to our understanding of the turnover process. Despite differences in the nature of the relationship, this thesis supports previous findings that perceptions of high levels of support from the organisation lead to lower intention to leave (Harris, et al., 2007; Hui, et al., 2007; Maertz, et al., 2007). Perceptions of support from the organisation help employees to feel valued, which also increased their sense of satisfaction they have in their role. A combination of these factors reduces consideration of alternative employment.

#### *Performance, Commitment and Motivation*

The performance-intention to leave and performance-turnover relationship has been a widely debated issue in the literature (Allen & Griffeth, 1999; Griffeth, et al., 2000; Jackofsky & Slocum, 1987). This thesis provides evidence to suggest that performance as rated by the manager is a useful factor to consider, particularly in combination with other attitudinal factors. The inclusion of performance as rated by the manager in this research adds to our understanding of factors that help reduce intention to leave of high-performing employees. Further, performance was found to be a key predictor of employee turnover.

In Chapter 5, this thesis provided evidence to suggest that an individual's motivational focus combined with his or her level of performance have implications for intention to leave. Regulatory focus theory describes two ways that individuals can be motivated to meet set goals: prevention and promotion focus (Higgins, 1997). Performance ratings from the manager indicate to the individual whether his or her set goals are being achieved. The current research supported the integrated model of commitment and motivation (Meyer, et al., 2004) by showing an interactive effect of performance and promotion focus on intention to leave.

The findings in this thesis indicate that individuals with high performance were less likely to consider leaving as their promotion focus increased. This congruency between focus on ideals, aspirations and positive outcomes associated with achieving set goals, combined with positive performance ratings from the manager, resulted in reduced intention to leave (Meyer, et al., 2004). Although the outcome of this research is intention and not behaviour, the intention is directed to a discretionary behaviour (voluntary turnover). Thus, the findings provide some support for the link between promotion focus and discretionary behaviour as proposed by Meyer and colleagues (2004). Further, this thesis extends previous research examining promotion focus and performance feedback (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004; Wallace, et al., 2008) by including the influence on intention to leave.

The findings in Chapter 5 support the integrated model of performance, attitudes and turnover proposed by Allen and Griffeth (1999). This model proposes three different routes to explain the relationship between performance and turnover. In one route, a combination of performance and attitudinal factors affecting desirability of movement (job satisfaction and commitment) is proposed to influence intention to leave and subsequent turnover. The current research provides empirical evidence to support the role of affective commitment in understanding intention to leave when job satisfaction is also entered into the analysis. The results indicated that both high and low performers were less likely to consider leaving as affective commitment increased, however that the relationship was stronger for high performers. This suggests it would be beneficial for talent retention to have targeted strategies that help to increase the emotional attachment of high performers to the organisation.

The findings suggest that specific factors, such as a focus on achieving ideals and aspirations, and on building emotional attachment to the organisation, will help to retain top performers. Studies have demonstrated that extrinsic rewards and sources of

motivation can help to retain high performers (Salamin & Hom, 2005; Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997). The findings in this research offer insights into building high performers' motivation and commitment intrinsically, without having to rely on extrinsic sources such as large bonuses, salary increases or promotion. The implications of using a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic sources to retain top performers could be examined more specifically in future research.

#### *Intention to Leave and Turnover Behaviour*

The findings in Chapter 4 provide support for the use of intention to leave as an indication of turnover; however, they also highlight that intention and turnover behaviour can have different predictors. The theory of reasoned action posits that an individual's intention to perform a particular behaviour is the best indicator of his or her future behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, Czasch, & Flood, 2009). This was supported by the current findings that intention to leave was one predictor of turnover behaviour. However, the theory of reasoned action suggests that a decision to act is also influenced by a belief and attitude component (Fishbein, 1980). This thesis showed that attitudes predicting intention and turnover are different.

The findings in Chapter 4 have implications for the Mobley model of turnover (Mobley, 1977; Mobley, 1982), which proposes an eight-step turnover process. The findings provide evidence to question the simplicity of the Mobley model, given that in this thesis different factors were found to predict intention to leave and turnover. The current research indicated that reductions in satisfaction, attachment, and perceptions of support from the organisation influence individuals to form an intention. In addition to intention to leave, decreased performance ratings and continuance commitment predicted actual turnover. Overall, the findings suggest that a reliance on intention to leave as a proxy for turnover is limiting our scope to understand turnover, as there may

be different factors that predict intention and turnover (Cohen, 1999; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990; Mueller, et al., 1994).

The finding of different predictors for intention and turnover highlights the value of a detailed approach to understanding the turnover process. As emphasised by Kirschenbaum and Weisberg (1990), similarities in correlations in predictors of intention to leave and turnover, do not necessarily translate into similarities in predictors of each. Hence, for a more accurate understanding of the turnover process, organisations should measure and compare attitudinal and performance data with both intentions and turnover.

Further evidence for the value of understanding predictors of both intention to leave and turnover are demonstrated by considering the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, et al., 1996). Based on image theory (Beach & Mitchell, 1987), the unfolding model proposes that people leave their job when a significant job-related or unrelated event triggers the individual to reconsider his or her current working situation. The results in Chapter 4 indicating that decreasing performance is related to actual turnover but not intention to leave are supported by the unfolding model of turnover.

Based on the unfolding model (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, et al., 1996), a low performance rating is an example of a shock that may lead an individual to leave his or her job. According to the unfolding model, in some cases, a shock alone may be enough to lead an individual to leave, in other cases the shock may be followed by feelings of dissatisfaction and searching for job alternatives, which lead to turnover. This thesis suggests that a low performance rating may be associated with an individual considering the costs and benefits of remaining in the organisation, which could provide an additional push factor, influencing turnover. Although it cannot be concluded from

this thesis, the time between the shock and turnover could provide an indication of which path was followed (Lee, et al., 1996). Future research could further examine whether there is a relationship between the length of time between the shock and turnover, and the decision path taken.

### *Components of Commitment*

The findings support the usefulness of two different components of organisational commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Affective commitment is proposed to reflect employees' emotional attachment to and involvement in the organisation; continuance commitment refers to individuals' analysis of the costs and benefits associated with leaving the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Some previous research has found empirical evidence to distinguish between these two types of commitment, suggesting different behavioural outcomes for each (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

The current findings suggest affective commitment predicts intention to leave, and continuance commitment is a better predictor of actual turnover. The proposition that affect is a better predictor of intention, whereas cognition is a better predictor of actual behaviour was supported in the current research (Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994; Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998). This thesis provides further support for the theoretical proposition that affective commitment and continuance commitment have different motivational influences on employees (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Meyer, et al., 2004).

### *Role of the Manager*

The role of the manager in shaping employees' work experiences is generally regarded as crucial (Griffeth & Hom, 2001). The findings provide a more specific understanding about the role managers can play in reducing intention to leave. In Chapter 3, findings indicated that employee perceptions of the quality of the

relationship with their manager have important implications for intention to leave. Results indicate that by promoting and discussing career development opportunities with their employees, managers can help individuals feel more valued and supported by the organisation. These factors were found to have a strong effect on job satisfaction and ultimately employee intention to leave. These findings support previous research suggesting that high-quality leader-member exchange relationships have a positive effect on job satisfaction (Hom & Griffeth, 1991) and reduce intention to leave (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

The influential role of the manager is also highlighted in findings from Chapters 4 and 5. The finding that low manager-rated performance can serve as a shock to influence employees to leave highlights the importance of structured and well-executed performance discussions to help minimise the effect of potential shocks. Previous research suggests that individuals with a promotion focus show increased motivation after they receive positive feedback, and those with a prevention focus show increased motivation after receiving negative feedback (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). If low performance ratings are perceived by the employee as 'negative' feedback, then the findings in this research indicate that congruence between strong promotion focus and positive feedback (high performance ratings) result in feelings of satisfaction, and reduced intention to leave. The way in which managers frame the performance feedback and the promotion or prevention focus of the individual may influence the effect that a low performance rating has on subsequent behaviour (Forster, Higgins, & Chen Idson, 1998; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). This research emphasises the importance of equipping managers with strategies for managing performance discussions with low performers effectively.

Managers can assist in retention of high-performing employees by encouraging a focus on achieving set goals to reach positive outcomes, ideals and aspirations, as well



as attachment to the organisation. Findings of this thesis support theoretical propositions that affective commitment and promotion focus are more aligned to intrinsic sources of motivation and self-regulation, thus resulting in increased internal drive (Meyer, et al., 2004). Although this research did not find a significant relationship between affective commitment and promotion focus in predicting intention to leave, results did indicate a trend towards the proposed relationship. However, this thesis did find evidence to suggest that high promotion focus and performance significantly reduce intention to leave. This research highlights the importance of managers maintaining high quality formal and informal interactions with every employee so as to help reduce intention to leave and turnover. Future research could examine the specific effect that managers can have on employee regulatory focus and performance development.

#### *Reducing Turnover Costs*

The financial implications of high turnover are a concern for many organisations (Phillips, 1990). By expanding understanding of factors influencing turnover and intention to leave, this thesis demonstrated different ways that organisations can reduce costs associated with turnover. Differentiating between factors that can most strongly influence part-time and full-time employees to remain helps to target retention initiatives. Consideration of part-time employees in retention initiatives means that organisations are not spending time, resources and money on broad initiatives that only serve to retain full-time employees. This is particularly important in recent years, given the increase in part-time employees in the workforce, and higher turnover of part-time employees (Sager, Varadarajan, & Futrell, 1988; Corporate leadership council, 2005).

The results of this thesis can be utilised to create more effective retention initiatives for high-performing employees. The results provide insights into intrinsic sources of motivation, such as affective commitment and promotion regulatory focus,

that are likely to result in a stronger internal drive (Meyer, et al., 2004). Including these factors in talent retention initiatives may result in more cost-effective retention initiatives for organisations because it offers more specific strategies for retaining talent in the organisation. This focus helps to support large financial investments that are made in training and development, as well as reducing the reliance on monetary forms of reward and recognition.

The importance of managing performance conversations well is also highlighted by findings in this thesis. The results indicate that while low performance may not strongly relate to reduced intention to leave, it predicts actual turnover. This suggests that even if employees have low intention to leave, a low performance rating that is not effectively managed may result in the employee leaving. This may be particularly costly for organisations if high-performing employees are promoted into challenging positions that receive lower performance ratings than normal due to greater challenges and additional adjustment time required for the promotion. However, if reasons for this are not clearly communicated, the low performance rating may be a shock that results in talented employees leaving (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Future research could examine further the influence of the manager's approach to performance conversations and the effect this has on subsequent employee decisions.

### Limitations

As discussed in each chapter, there are several limitations to this thesis. The four main limitations that apply to all chapters will be summarised in this section. A limitation of this thesis is the inability to make causal assumptions as most data were cross-sectional. Cross-sectional data are collected at the same time, and therefore cannot be used to accurately inform the sequence of attitudes that predict employee turnover. Therefore, although some hypothetical sequences of causality were proposed in this research, the sequence of influence would need to be measured using longitudinal data.

Nevertheless, an advantage of this study was that actual employee turnover data were able to be collected and matched to attitudinal data; therefore, the influence of attitudes and intention to leave could be reliably compared to actual turnover.

The poor economic climate at the time of data collection may have reduced the amount of employee turnover compared to what would normally be observed in a 12-month period. The data were collected over the time when the global financial crisis was having a significant effect; thus, many people who may have been considering leaving may not have been able to due to the serious reduction in availability of alternative jobs. The turnover rate in the data for this thesis was 9%. In previous years, the turnover rate had been around 17% in the division of the organisation in which the data were collected. Although not as high as expected, a turnover rate of 9% for the sample in this study was still adequate and comparable to that of recent research (Griffeth, et al., 2000).

The ability to generalise from the findings may be somewhat limited due to the large percentage of female employees (86.8%) in the sample. Female employees may have particular characteristics, such as family responsibilities or work preferences, that differ from those of males. To make comparisons to other industry sectors, further research would need to include a more even split of males and females in the sample. While the gender-split of 80-20 is not desirable, this percentage of females is reflective of the retail sector demographics (Australian Bureau of statistics, 2008; Nkomo & Fields, 1994). Hence, the findings can be used to inform retail banking sectors, which are likely to have similar characteristics to the sample in this thesis.

Finally, this research was limited by a reliance on analysis of quantitative data. Future research analysing qualitative data may assist in developing a deeper understanding of the conclusions drawn from this thesis. Qualitative data addressing

why different groups of employees, such as part-time and full-time, or high and low performers decide to leave would be particularly useful for adding to the results of the current thesis. The qualitative data examining reasons for engaging in work, perceptions of value, reasons for intending to leave or leaving, and motivational focus would help to uncover further evidence to support conclusions and predictions made from the quantitative data analysis in this thesis.

### Summary of Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to expand understanding of the key antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover. This aim was addressed by examining different combinations of demographic and workplace factors, uncovering new factors, and expanding existing understanding of these relationships. The findings expand understanding of antecedents, contributing to a more fulfilling work experience for employees and employers.

Firstly, this thesis showed that the relationship between two key predictors of intention to leave, namely job satisfaction and affective commitment, varied according to employment status. Job satisfaction was found to be more important in full-time employees' intention to leave, whereas affective commitment was a more important factor for part-time employees. These findings challenge previous research that indicates no distinct differences in relationships between work attitudes and intention to leave based on employment status. This thesis demonstrated that workplace dynamics can be better understood if employment status is considered.

Indirect relationships and relationships between antecedents provide a more detailed understanding of the turnover process. This thesis uncovered relationships between workplace attitudes that affect intention to leave indirectly through the influence on job satisfaction and affective commitment. Specifically, the important role of the manager, perceptions of available career development opportunities, and

perceptions of support from the organisation were identified as key indirect influences on intention to leave. There were no differences in importance of these indirect relationships based on employment status. Findings highlight there are some similarities and differences in relationships between antecedents and intention to leave.

Intention to leave and employee turnover are two related yet distinct constructs, each with different antecedents. Intention to perform a particular behaviour provides an indication of what an individual is likely to do. However, in relation to complex decisions such as leaving one's job there may be factors that complicate the step from intention to behaviour. This thesis added to our understanding of the turnover process, finding different predictors of intention to leave and turnover. Specifically, deeper insights into the antecedents of intention to leave and turnover were uncovered, highlighting the differential influence of affective and continuance commitment. Further, the effect of low performance ratings from the manager was found to be significantly related to employee turnover. These findings add to the relatively small body of research that has specifically compared antecedents of intention to leave and employee turnover.

Goals for performance are set at all levels of organisations with the aim of motivating employees to perform to a standard that is believed to be optimal to move the overall organisation towards its broader goals. Even when goals are clear and specific, it is often difficult for managers to articulate exactly how the employee can reach these goals, which is where the mindset of the employee becomes important to consider. This thesis investigated the work experiences of employees with varying levels of performance, uncovering some novel findings that contribute to expanding our understanding of the effect of commitment, motivation and performance on intention to leave.

High-performing employees who had a strong attachment to the organisation and a strong focus on achieving goals to receive positive outcomes were the least likely to consider leaving. While overall, low-performing employees were more likely to consider leaving, high-performing employees who had low affective commitment reported the highest intention to leave. These findings offer new insights into the influence of a combination of employee commitment and performance as rated by the manager on predicting intention to leave. This is an area yet to be thoroughly investigated. The results demonstrated the key role of both attachment to the organisation and a focus on reaching goals to achieve one's ideals in influencing intention to leave.

For many people in this world, work is an inevitable pursuit in their life. Many people spend a lifetime trying to understand their passion at work, and different ways they can feel happy and satisfied in what they do. For some, work is a full-time occupation; others may combine part-time work with family commitments or pursuing hobbies or volunteer work. From a different perspective, organisations spend millions of dollars each year recruiting and training employees in an attempt to gain even the smallest advantage over their competitors, create a more productive work environment, and serve their customers more effectively. A large part of this relates to increasing retention of the best performers in the organisation.

Given the substantial role work plays in most people's lives, the importance of understanding the complexity of factors that affect experiences at work should not be underestimated. Leaving a place of employment can have a substantial impact on one's life. In the dynamic modern workforce, expanding our understanding of the factors that shape experiences at work has a positive impact for both employees and employers. This research has provided unique insights into today's workforce by examining the influence of key work-related factors on intention to leave and turnover.

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## Appendix A

### Scales and Items for Attitude Measures

*Intention to Leave.* Adapted by Wayne, Shore and Liden, (1997); 3 items used by Landau and Hammer (1986):

1. I am actively looking for a job outside (*organisation name*)
2. As soon as I can find a better job, I'll leave (*organisation name*)
3. I am seriously thinking about quitting my job
4. I often think about quitting my job

*Relationship with the Manager.* Adapted from leader-member exchange (LMX)-Scandura and Graen (1984):

1. I know where I stand with my manager.
2. My manager has enough confidence in me that he/she would defend and justify my decisions if I was not present to do so.
3. My manager understands my problems and needs
4. I can count on my manager to "bail me out," when I really need it.
5. My manager recognizes my potential
6. My manger would be inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work.

*Affective Commitment.* Adapted from Meyer, Allen and Smith (1997)

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with (*organisation name*)
2. I feel a strong sense of belonging to (*organisation name*)

3. I feel personally attached to (*organisation name*)
4. I do not feel like part of the family at (*organisation name*) (R)

*Continuance Commitment.* Adapted from Meyer, Allen and Smith (1997)

1. It would be very hard for me to leave (*organisation name*) right now, even if I wanted to
2. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave (*organisation name*) now
3. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving (*organisation name*)
4. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives

*Normative Commitment.* Adapted from Meyer, Allen and Smith (1997)

1. I do not feel any obligation to remain with (*organisation name*) (R)
2. I would feel guilty if I left (*organisation name*) now
3. (*organisation name*) deserves my loyalty
4. I owe a great deal to (*organisation name*)

*Career Development Opportunities.* Newly developed scale for this thesis

1. I am provided with adequate training and development
2. I am fully informed about new products and services
3. I am provided with time to undertake training and development
4. I am encouraged by my manager to make the most of opportunities to take on new roles

*Job Satisfaction.* 4 items from Quinn & Shepard (1974) used by Eisenberger, Cummings Armeli & Lynch (1997):

1. If a good friend told me that they were interested in working in a job like mine, I would strongly recommend it.
2. All in all, I am very satisfied with my current job
3. In general, my job measures up to the sort of job I wanted when I took it
4. Knowing what I know now, if I had to decide all over again whether to take my job, I would.

*Regulatory Focus- Promotion.* Adapted from Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda (2002):

1. In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life.
2. I typically focus on the successes I hope to achieve in the future.
3. I often think about how I will achieve my work goals.
4. I often imagine myself experiencing good things that I hope will happen to me.
5. Overall, I am more orientated towards achieving success than preventing failure.

*Regulatory Focus- Prevention.* Adapted from Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda (2002):

1. In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life.
2. I am anxious that I will fall short of my responsibilities and obligations.
3. I often worry that I will fail to accomplish my work goals.
4. I am more orientated towards preventing losses than I am towards achieving gains.

*Branch identification.* Doojse (1995):

1. I see myself as a member of my branch
2. I am pleased to be a member of my branch
3. I feel strong ties with members of my branch
4. I identify with other members of my branch

*Perceived Organisational Support.* Eisenberger, Huntington, Huchinson, & Sowa (1986)

1. *(organisation name)* values my contribution to its well-being
2. *(organisation name)* strongly considers my goals and values
3. *(organisation name)* really cares about my well-being
4. *(organisation name)* cares about my opinions

## Appendix B

### Career Development Opportunities Scale Factor Loadings

| <b>Scale items</b>  | <b>Factor Loadings</b> |
|---|------------------------|
| I am provided with adequate training and development                                    | .88                    |
| I am fully informed about new products and services                                     | .83                    |
| I am provided with time to undertake training and development                           | .83                    |
| I am encouraged by my manager to make the most of opportunities<br>to take on new roles | .83                    |





