PROFILES IN QUITTING: INTEGRATING PROCESS AND CONTENT TURNOVER THEORY

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Process models of turnover focus on *how* people quit; content models focus on *why*. To integrate these approaches and test whether motives relate systematically to decision processes, we classified 159 leavers using four process types and measured eight content motives for leaving. One key finding was that those who quit with no job alternative had more negative affect than users of other decision types, suggesting affect-driven, impulsive quitting. Results suggest that process-content integration is a fruitful direction for turnover research.

"Voluntary employee turnover" is one of the most studied behaviors in management research (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Kinicki, 2001; March & Simon, 1958). The many multivariate models and empirical tests within this research stream have greatly enhanced knowledge about quitting. Process models focus on *how* individuals arrive at their final decisions to quit, while content models focus on *why* individuals quit organizations. Although there has been some inevitable overlap (e.g., Lee & Mitchell, 1994), current multivariate models focus primarily on explicating either the hows or the whys of turnover, but not on both simultaneously. Process researchers admit that although employees follow specific turnover paths, "Individuals experience unique circumstances when they leave," (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999: 450). Failing to explicate the motivations behind these circumstances and link them with decision processes leaves a blind spot in researchers' view of turnover (e.g., Griffeth & Hom, 1995).

Specifically, little research has focused on whether different motives systematically relate to different types of decision processes. Because "turnover motives" initiate "turnover decision processes" (e.g., Mobley, 1977), certain motives may cause certain types of processes to occur more frequently than others. For instance, attraction to another job could stimulate a rational, comparative process, while strong anger toward an abusive supervisor could cause a reflexive, nonrational process. If research shows that motives and processes are systematically related, researchers could build "motive by process" models that would provide more precise and accurate descriptions and that would stimulate integrative empirical research.

The purpose of this study was to further such process-content integration by proposing and testing hypotheses that relate turnover motives to turnover decision processes. As a precursor to such process-content integration, though, researchers must have a complete view of what motives and decision processes should be integrated. However, important constructs have been overlooked in content and process models (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001; Steel, 2002). Thus, to try to avoid deficiency, we first summarize or synthesize parameters from both process and content turnover models more fully than previous studies have done.

TURNOVER MODELS

Turnover Process Research: The Hows

Despite the existence of other important contributions (e.g., Rosse & Hulin, 1985; Sheridan & Abelson, 1983), variations on Mobley's (1977) intermediate linkage model dominated early process research (e.g., Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992; Hom, Griffeth, & Sellaro, 1984). Empirical tests using survey measures have indirectly supported the decision sequence specified by these models, whereby employees become dissatisfied

with their jobs, then think about quitting and search for better jobs, and then form intentions to quit, which are followed by actual quitting (Hom et al., 1992). In an extension, Steers and Mowday (1981) proposed a dual sequence, in which intentions to quit may lead directly to quitting or may activate a search for and consideration of alternatives. Despite their achieving some support, all these variants of Mobley's (1977) model imply a linear, rational decision sequence that does not describe all turnover decisions (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

In a major advance, Lee and Mitchell's (1994) "unfolding model of voluntary turnover" expanded the scope and depth of theory on turnover processes. Lee and Mitchell introduced decision-making concepts from "image theory," according to which employees conserve mental resources by deliberating less extensively than is implied in earlier turnover models. For instance, employees may automatically screen out job alternatives that produce "image violations," or lack fit with the employees' value, strategic, or trajectory images. That is, if an aspect of a job is inconsistent with an employee's values, central goals, or methods of achieving those goals, it is eliminated from consideration. Also, employees may automatically enact preformed behavioral scripts for quitting an organization that have been "stored in memory." (For instance, "If this company is bought, I will quit immediately.") Lee and Mitchell also introduced the concept of a *shock,* which is an event that leads employees to deliberate about turnover. Lee and Mitchell proposed five specific decision paths. *Path 1* follows this course: no negative affect is present, but there is a shock matching a preformed behavioral script for quitting, which is then automatically enacted. *Path 2* follows this course: no necessary negative affect, a shock and an image violation, and no alternative job considered. In *path 3,* there is relative dissatisfaction, a shock and image violation, and a consideration of alternatives. In *path 4a,* there is dissatisfaction, no shock, and no consideration of alternatives. The course of *path 4b* is essentially identical to Mobley's (1977) intermediate linkage model and to path 4a, except that path 4b includes job search and consideration of alternatives. For more detail on the five paths, see Lee and Mitchell (1994) or Lee et al. (1999).

Lee and his colleagues (1996) conducted a qualitative study in which they analyzed interviews with nurses about quitting in order to classify their decision processes into the five proposed paths (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). These paths were judged to classify the sample's cases of turnover reasonably well, with notable exceptions. Specifically, 32 percent of the cases classified into one of the paths

contained inconsistencies with model specifications for that path. For example, a case classified into a path with a hypothesized shock may not have included a shock experience.

In a quantitative study with more exact questions and less subjectivity, Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, Mc-Daniel, and Hill (1999) improved classification over Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman (1996), reaching a level of 92.6 percent classifiable cases. The 1999 authors refined the unfolding model, recognizing (1) that scripts can be part of more than the first path only, (2) that evaluating job alternatives may involve specific offers or general beliefs, (3) that unsolicited job offers can be part of more paths than just path 3, and (4) that job search and offer evaluation should be theoretically decoupled and allowed to vary independently.

Clearly, the refined unfolding model is theoretically appealing and has received some empirical support. Elements of this model should certainly provide primary process inputs for integration with content models. However, several aspects of the model may need to be reconsidered if different turnover decisions are to be captured more fully.

First, in Lee et al. (1996), a number of nurses were classified as path 1 script-driven "quits," when they had simply planned to quit their organizations at specific points in the future (for instance, "when my spouse retires"). This type of plan does not depend on shocks matching a behavioral script stored in memory and may involve controlled (rather than automatic) decision processing. In this scripted quitting, an employee believes that he or she *would* quit *if* a condition were fulfilled at some *unknown* time in the future. This formulation suggests that Lee and Mitchell's (1994) path 1 may encompass two distinct processes that should be distinguished: (1) quitting planned in advance for a definite time in the future, and (2) quitting based on a conditional plan that may be activated by an uncertain future event.

Second, Lee and Mitchell (1994) held that negative affect is not applicable to the decisions in paths 1 and 2, but later variations of the unfolding model suggest that negative affect may be a part of path 2 (Lee et al., 1999; Mitchell & Lee, 2001). We contend that path 1 decisions could also include an affective response at the time a *negative* shock occurs. Also, in path 3, where an alternative is compared with the current job, negative affect is hypothesized to occur. However, no negative affect need be present for an employee to conclude that a better job alternative is available (Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994; Steel, 2002). With the many significant empirical relationships between affect-loaded variables and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000), models

should probably allow that affect can influence any decision, but that it may be more or less important to certain decision types.

Third, Lee and Mitchell's (1994) model hints at impulsive quitting, but it is not named and identified as a separate path. Mobley (1977) stated that impulsive quitting may occur in an entirely different way than his proposed decision process but failed to go into more detail. Also, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that some people quit their jobs impulsively, with no planning. To better address impulsive quitting, future modeling efforts should allow a level of "no planning" (versus definite and conditional planning) for classifying decisions.

Finally, shocks have been defined as jarring external events (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) and as potentially internal (Lee et al., 1996). Taking the broadest definition, it seems logical that all decisions have some shock (for instance, an event, memory, cognition, or emotion) that proximally causes controlled turnover deliberations. Logically, such deliberations must be caused by something. In paths 4a and 4b, which contain no shock, decreasing job satisfaction is assumed to be gradual, but Lee and colleagues made no argument for this gradualness (cf. Sheridan & Abelson, 1983), or for why "no shock" would be associated with gradually increasing withdrawal cognitions. In fact, many shocks could occur over a long time, culminating in *final* deliberations about quitting. In describing path 2, Lee and colleagues made no argument as to why an image violation could not *be* the shock that reduces job satisfaction. Moreover, Lee et al. (1999) used the same classifying question for identifying shocks, scripts, and job offers. Thus, these variables were not measured independently. Shock classification questions also limited a respondent to remembering "a single particular event" (Lee et al., 1999: 461), when a series of related events may have prompted turnover deliberations. Without better clarification about why a shock would or *would not* occur and better measurement of shocks, "shock versus no shock" should probably not be used as a definitive process parameter. Greater or lesser shocks could prompt cognitions about quitting in any path. This argument implies that paths 4a and 4b could be collapsed into paths 2 and 3, respectively.

Conclusions for Process Research

From this review, we draw some conclusions for process research that suggest somewhat different criteria for classifying decision process types than Lee and Mitchell's.

Conclusion 1. Whether an employee has another job in hand has long been considered an important factor in a decision to quit (Michaels & Spector, 1982). Having an actual alternative job offer "on the table" when a final decision is made puts the employee in the situation of rationally choosing between jobs (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This case implies some comparison between the alternative position(s) and the current job (that is, expectancy calculations). Having no other job offer when quitting implies a period of unemployment, however short, and no definite comparison job. Thus, decisions should be classified by whether the employees making them have alternative job offers in hand at the time of the final decisions to quit.

Conclusion 2. Some employees make specific plans to quit and then follow through with those plans as expected (e.g., Lee et al., 1996). Employees may make a definite decisions or plans to leave well in advance of departure, utilizing controlled deliberations. Employees may even enter organizations with plans to quit that specify a time (for instance, "when school starts") or a situation (for instance, "when I earn $5,000 dollars"). Then the employees wait, often for considerable periods, until the preappointed times or situations arise and they quit according to plan. Having such an advance plan to quit and following through on it is a distinct type of decision process.

Conclusion 3. Other employees make advance plans to quit that are not definite, but contingent on uncertain future events, like path 1 in Lee and Mitchell (1994). Such employees hold conditional plans to quit, but they do not form final decisions until they perceive that the specified conditions have been satisfied, presumably by shocks. For example, an employee may specify "If my supervisor ever talks to me like that again, I will quit!" When the supervisor does it, the employee makes a final decision to leave. This type of conditional plan is indeed a distinct decision type because it is far less certain employee will carry out these plans than it is that they will carry out the definite advance plans described in the previous paragraph.

Conclusion 4. The definitive aspects of impulsive quitting are little or no planning and a short decision process. We reason that this lack of preplanning precludes an individual's having searched for or previously obtained another job offer. If an alternative has been obtained, the employee has clearly envisioned alternative employment, and the decision can no longer be considered impulsive. Thus, we conclude that a characteristic of impulsive quitting is the absence of an alternative job offer at the time the decision is made.

From these conclusions and from the work of Lee

and Mitchell and their colleagues, we distilled four generic turnover decision types, shown in Table 1, to represent a process framework. Although people may switch process types (Lee et al., 1996), we propose that every quitter uses one of these four generic processes in making his or her final decision to quit. While not as detailed as Lee and Mitchell's five paths, our process types have the advantage that they can be measured with relative ease and reliability using yes/no questions. This characteristic reduces the subjectivity involved in empirical classification. That is, quitters can reliably and easily report whether or not they had job offers and whether or not they had definite plans for specific times, conditional plans, or no plans.

Turnover Content Research: The Whys

The second precondition for integration is a comprehensive content conceptualization. Some multivariate models have focused on identifying many turnover antecedents that address why employees quit organizations. However, even the most extensive content models (e.g., Bluedorn, 1982; Hom et al., 1984; Mobley et al., 1979; Price & Mueller, 1981) have neglected important motivations for quitting (Maertz & Campion, 1998; Mitchell et al., 2001). Thus, integration based on any single model risks deficiency.

In response, Maertz (2001) synthesized a typology of eight categories of motivational forces driving quitting from the commitment and turnover literatures. Table 2 presents these categories or "forces" of attachment and withdrawal.

Affective forces. At any given point in time, an individual has a feeling or affective response with respect to his or her organization. This affective response triggers either psychological comfort or discomfort, which drives a hedonistic approach-avoidance mechanism. That is, comfort/feeling good motivates staying, while discomfort/feeling negative motivates quitting.

Contractual forces. Perceived agreements with an organization to fulfill certain obligations can also create a distinct motivational force often conceptualized within the psychological contract (e.g., Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). Felt obligations to stay with the organization increase attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Conversely, perceived contract breaches by the organization can create motivation to quit (Robinson & Morrison, 2000).

Constituent forces. There is considerable evidence that employees meaningfully distinguish between their relationships with people or groups within the organizations and their relationships with the organizations themselves. As such, these relationships with constituents have been shown to be multidimensional and to have independent effects on intentions to quit (e.g., Becker, 1992). An employee may feel attached to or want to withdraw from various constituents and would thereby feel attached to or want to withdraw from the organization.

TABLE 1
Summary of Four Generic Decision Types

Decision Type	Job Offer in Hand?	Advance Plan	Description
Impulsive quitting: Quitting because of insufficient attachment	No	None	Employee's motives for quitting an organization exceed motives for remaining.
Comparison quitting: Quitting for an alternative job	Yes	None	Employees compare and favor other job alternatives over the current jobs at the time of the final decisions to quit.
Preplanned quitting: Quitting with a definite advance plan	Maybe	Definite plan to quit, made well in advance of departure, according to which the employee will quit *when* a specific time comes or an event happens.	Employees make definite plans at the time of the final decisions to quit. They immediately quit when specified time arrives or specified event happens.
Conditional quitting: Quitting with a conditional plan	Maybe	Indefinite conditional plan to quit *if* an uncertain event happens in the future.	Employees make conditional plans to quit. Something then happens that they judge to meet the conditions, at the time of the final decision to quit.

TABLE 2
The Eight Motivational Forces of Attachment and Withdrawal

Type of Force	Psychological Motive for Attachment or Withdrawal
Affective: Current affective response to an organization	A hedonistic approach-avoidance mechanism; an employee is more attached because membership currently provides enjoyment and positive emotions. Negative emotional responses to job or organizational membership cause a withdrawal response.
Contractual: Psychological contract obligations to an organization and violations of contract	A desire to fulfill perceived obligations in the current psychological contract through staying. Or conversely, the desire to dissolve a psychological contract or to respond to violations through quitting. This desire depends on an employee's holding a norm of reciprocity to some extent.
Constituent: Commitment to people or groups in an organization	A desire to maintain, or conversely, to end, relationships with constituent(s) by staying or quitting. This desire can stem from a number of motive forces. The net force (for staying or leaving) may depend on relationships with one or many constituents, and it may change direction if the constituents themselves leave the organization.
Alternative: Perceived alternatives to a current job	An employee's self-efficacy beliefs regarding capability to obtain alternatives, combining the perceived certainty and quality of alternative options.
Calculative: Anticipated future satisfaction associated with continued organization membership	An evaluation of future value attainment possibilities associated with continued membership. High expectancy of value attainment or a positive calculation increases psychological attachment, while low expectancy or a negative calculation increases withdrawal tendency.
Normative: Pressures to stay or leave an organization derived from the expectations of others	A desire to meet perceived expectations of family members or friends outside the organization with respect to staying or quitting. These pressures may come from one or many parties, and the motivation to comply with these expectations varies.
Behavioral: Behavioral commitment to an organization	A desire to avoid the explicit and/or psychological costs of quitting. These costs are brought on largely by membership-related behaviors in the past or by company policies regarding the value of tenure. Perceived costs can range from zero to a very high level.
Moral: Moral/ethical values about quitting	A desire for consistency between behavior and values with regard to turnover. Internalized values lie somewhere on a continuum from "quitting is bad and persistence is a virtue" to "changing jobs regularly is positive; staying too long leads to stagnation."

Alternative forces. Good or plentiful alternative opportunities may attract or psychologically pull employees away from their current organizations, even ones that are well-liked (e.g., Bretz et al., 1994). Conversely, employees who believe that there are few and/or low-quality jobs available to them will be less motivated to quit their current organizations (e.g., March & Simon, 1958).

Calculative forces. On the basis of rational self-interest, employees calculate their chances for achieving goals and values *in the future* at their current organizations (e.g., Mobley et al., 1979). If an employee feels that he or she can achieve goals and values in the future through continued membership, the person becomes more motivated to stay. If the calculation is that values/goals cannot be met there, the person becomes more motivated to quit.

Normative forces. Normative forces are an employee's perceptions of family or friends' expectations about his or her remaining at a job or quitting (e.g., Prestholdt, Lane, & Mathews, 1987). If the expectations favor staying, there is a motive to remain. If the expectations favor leaving, there is a motive to quit.

Behavioral forces. One may be attached to an organization by past behaviors that mean one will incur costs by leaving. Such behaviors include investing in nonvested pension benefits or company-specific training time (Becker, 1960; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Thus, for behavioral forces, the general motivational mechanism for staying is that an

employee wants to avoid costs (explicit or psychological) incurred by leaving (Salancik, 1977). Conversely, perceiving no significant costs of leaving can create a perception of freedom, contributing to an employee's motivation to quit.

Moral forces. Employees may also have an internalized value or norm about quitting itself (Triandis, 1975). At one end of the continuum, this value may be the view that quitting jobs shows weak character or fickleness. At the opposite end of the spectrum is an internalized value that changing jobs is a virtue (the view that "variety is the spice of life"). In either direction, the psychological motive is the desire to "do the right thing" and to avoid acting inconsistently with one's values about quitting (Festinger, 1957).

These eight motive forces constitute the first attempt to comprehensively capture and describe the "why factors" driving turnover decisions. Thus, these forces served as our content factors for the purpose of process-content integration.

INTEGRATIVE HYPOTHESES

To integrate process and content, we propose hypotheses that compare the four generic decision types to one another in terms of the likelihood that a user will have high or low levels of different motive forces at the time of a final decision to quit. Further, in the interest of improving turnover-management efficiency, we also investigated which generic decision types were rated more avoidable and, thus, more amenable to management intervention. However, there is little research on which to directly base "motive by decision type" hypotheses. Thus, to form hypotheses, we had to rely on logic combined with indirect support from research. Table 3 summarizes how the four decision types are hypothesized to vary on the eight motive forces and on avoidability.

Affective Forces by Decision Types

Impulsive quitters decide to leave jobs quickly, without planning and, thus, without job alternatives. When one considers what might motivate such a hasty and rash decision, a logical conclusion might be a sharp drop in affect toward an organization (Sheridan & Abelson, 1983). A person may feel so angry or betrayed by an organization that he or she cannot work there for another day. Thus, we reason that having no alternative at the time of a final decision will accompany negative affect toward the current organization and, thus, low affective forces of attachment to it. Alternatively, employees who feel very negative toward an organization may not quit immediately. Perhaps they are hesitant to act without a plan or they do not want to risk unemployment. Despite negative affect, they may make a more tentative conditional plan to quit ("if __ happens or if I get another job offer"), which may also lead to further negative attitudes toward the organization (e.g., Salancik, 1977).

In contrast, comparison quitters rationally compare alternative jobs. This description suggests that affect may be secondary to rational self-interest and

TABLE 3
Comparison of the Four Decision Types on Levels of Motive Forces and Avoidability[a]

Motive Forces and Avoidability	1. Impulsive Quitters	2. Comparison Quitters	3. Preplanned Quitters	4. Conditional Quitters
Affective	Low	Higher	Higher	Low
Contractual	Low	Higher	Higher	Low
Constituent	Low	Higher	Higher	Low
Alternative	Higher	Low	Higher	Low
Calculative	Higher	Higher	Higher	Low
Normative	Higher	Higher	Low	Higher
Behavioral	?	?	?	?
Moral	?	?	?	?
Avoidability	Higher	Higher	Low	Higher

[a] Avoidability is the difficulty or ease of preventing quitting.

that comparison quitting entails less negative affect than impulsive and conditional quitting. "Preplanned quitters" make definite plans, considerably in advance of leaving, that often have little to do with their current organizations, but are likely instead to involve pregnancy, family caregiving, relocation plans, educational plans, career change plans, military enlistment, or time-limits inherent in some jobs (e.g., Lee et al., 1996). Nothing inherent in these plans suggests negative affect as a main motivation. Thus:

Hypothesis 1. Impulsive quitters and conditional quitters should have more negative feelings toward their organizations and less affective attachment at the times of their final decisions than comparison quitters and preplanned quitters.

Contractual Forces by Decision Types

An impulsive quitter leaves with no alternative in hand. One reason to resign immediately with no alternative lined up is a psychological contract breach that profoundly changes the relationship with the employing organization (Robinson et al., 1994). This reasoning suggests the potential for low contractual attachment among impulsive quitters. Conditional quitters make plans to quit *if* something specific occurs. The anticipated condition itself may constitute a contract breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) or some other unfair practice (Aquino, Griffeth, Allen, & Hom, 1997) that lowers contractual forces of attachment (for instance, an employee is passed over for promotion, given an unfair assignment, and so forth). Moreover, a conditional quitter acknowledges that the anticipated negative condition is possible simply by making his or her plan. This acknowledgment may indicate a declining sense of obligation to the organization (e.g., Morrison & Robinson, 1997). On the other hand, there is little specific in comparison or preplanned quitting that would suggest that low contractual forces would be a particularly important motive. Thus:

Hypothesis 2. Impulsive quitters and conditional quitters should have lower contractual attachment to their organizations at the times of their final decisions than comparison quitters and preplanned quitters.

Constituent Forces by Decision Types

Along with the organization-level breaches just discussed, managers, coworkers, union shop stewards, and others may cause perceived breaches of psychological contracts as well, through unfair performance reviews, insults, or taking sides against an employee. These would normally cause negative affect (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) directed toward the employing organization (Hunt & Morgan, 1994). For these reasons, we expected that impulsive quitters and conditional quitters might well desire to withdraw from work associates. On the other hand, for comparison quitters, alternative jobs likely trigger the final decisions (Lee et al., 1999), rather than conflicts with other organizational constituents. For preplanned quitters, the shocks causing employees to make definite advance plans are likely to be external to their organizations (see Lee et al., 1996), rather than internal factors like desire to withdraw from constituents. Thus:

Hypothesis 3. Impulsive quitters and conditional quitters should have lower constituent attachments at the time of their final decisions than comparison quitters and preplanned quitters.

Alternative Forces by Decision Types

Because comparison quitters by definition have available alternatives, attraction to those alternatives would logically be a central motivating factor in their final decisions. Conditional quitters may plan to resign if "satisfying" alternative jobs are found. Thus, for some conditional quitters, attraction to alternatives will help motivate their final decisions. Impulsive quitters have no specific alternative jobs, suggesting relatively low attraction to alternatives. Preplanned quitters may or may not have specific alternatives in mind when their plans to quit are made. However, because most job offers have relatively short decision windows (such as three weeks), attraction to alternative jobs is unlikely to be a key motivator for preplanned quitters, although significant attraction to nonwork roles may exist. Thus:

Hypothesis 4. Comparison quitters and conditional quitters should have higher forces of attraction to alternative jobs at the time of their final decisions than preplanned quitters and impulsive quitters.

Calculative Forces by Decision Types

Conditional quitters, who have made conditional plans to quit if something bad happens, have seemingly acknowledged the possibility that something bad could happen in the future. Thus, they may anticipate that their future prospects at their organizations are not particularly good, at least in some

respect. After formulating conditional plans, these employees may also devalue their future prospects to be more consistent with their conditional intentions to quit (e.g., Salancik, 1977). In contrast, impulsive quitters leave with no planning and no alternative jobs in hand, focusing more on the present rather than on future opportunities. Comparison quitters could easily calculate that they have very good future prospects at their current organizations but that their prospects are simply better at the alternative ones (Bretz et al., 1994). Because making a definite advance plan to quit often depends on outside concerns (such as relocation or school graduation), meeting future goals at a current organization would not be as relevant for preplanned quitters. They may even calculate good potential prospects at the organization but have overriding motives to leave. Thus, other decision types besides conditional quitting do not specifically suggest low calculative attachment.

Hypothesis 5. Conditional quitters should have lower calculative attachment at the time of their final decisions than the other three generic decision types.

Normative Forces by Decision Types

Common shocks for preplanned quitters include notice of spouse's transfer, pregnancy, and illness or other need among family members (e.g., Maertz, Stevens, & Campion, 2003). In these instances, normative pressures from family would be strong. Even those planning to return to school or change careers might experience encouragement from others to pursue these goals. Such encouragement implies normative expectations that they will quit. For the other decision types, nothing suggests particularly high family expectations of their quitting. Thus:

Hypothesis 6. Preplanned quitters should have lower normative forces of attachment at the time of their final decisions than the other generic decision types.

Behavioral and Moral Forces by Decision Types

Nothing readily apparent in the process types suggests more or less behavioral attachment. Employees in lower-level jobs and with shorter tenure typically have invested less in employing organizations and have lower costs of leaving (Becker, 1960), but this observation does not provide a clear link to a decision type. Moral attachment would largely be a function of early socialization experiences (Maertz, 2001), but because moral forces have

not been studied empirically, we had little basis for hypothesizing. Therefore, we examined behavioral and moral forces in an exploratory way.

Avoidability and Manageability of the Decision Types

Turnover avoidability is the extent to which an employee believes an employer could have prevented his or her quitting and thus indicates how susceptible the quitting is to management intervention (Abelson, 1987). As we have argued, preplanned quitting may well be driven by family-related events or career change activities (for instance, starting a business, going back to graduate school). These individuals may feel great pressure to follow family expectations or to pursue superordinate life goals that have little to do with their current organizations themselves. Thus, preplanned quitters may perceive that their plans are impossible for their organizations to address, much less to prevent. As hypothesized earlier, impulsive and conditional quitting are likely to stem from negative experiences relating to an organization and its constituents. Thus, these types are more likely to be perceived as under the control of the organization's management. For comparison quitters, there is clear potential for the current organization to make a counteroffer that is better than the alternative, suggesting significant potential for avoidability. Thus:

Hypothesis 7. Preplanned quitting is less avoidable than the other three types.

METHODS

We collected data in several midwestern cities from a convenience sample of 159 respondents from many occupational types. Respondents worked at a large electronics firm, a manufacturing facility, a credit union, a public service institution, restaurants, and several other businesses. These respondents had last quit professional or managerial jobs (30%), factory assembly or manual labor jobs (18%), clerical or office administration jobs (16%), restaurant or retail customer service jobs (23%), sales jobs (3%), temporary jobs (3%), and military jobs (2%). The remaining 5 percent—three nurses, two hair stylists, two bus drivers, and a security guard—had most recently quit jobs in these occupations. The average tenure on the job last quit was 37.7 months (s.d. = 48.6). Forty-seven percent of the respondents (47%) were male, 87 percent were white, 8 percent were African American, 3 percent were Hispanic, and 2 percent were Asian Ameri-

can; 48 percent were married, and the mean age was 35.1 (s.d. = 10.9).

Measures

The methodology used here involved two distinct measurements: a classification interview to determine the generic decision type a respondent had used in quitting his or her last job, and a follow-up survey to measure the eight motivational forces and turnover avoidability. The interview consisted of an objective classification protocol. Respondents were asked to recall their most recent instances of quitting jobs and then asked yes/no questions about the levels of planning in their decision processes and whether alternative jobs were available at the time they quit. Each combination of yes or no responses led to classification into one and only one of the four generic decision types. Figure 1 includes the questions and illustrates the questioning protocol. Only five participants required any clarification of a question, and all participants answered a definite yes or no to each question, suggesting that the classification scheme was reliable and objective.

At the end of the interview, each respondent reported demographic characteristics and other data pertaining to quitting his or her last job. Dependent measures were collected in a follow-up survey. Other descriptive data about quitting were also collected on the survey. We considered using existing scales but judged them to not adequately capture the motives in Maertz's (2001) content framework. For instance, Bozeman and Perrewe (2001) suggested that the most common organizational commitment measure is contaminated with intentions to stay. McGee and Ford (1987) found that attraction to alternatives was contained in a common continuance commitment measure. Referring to Maertz's construct definitions, we wrote items for each construct in the common "agree-disagree" format. Two experts (human resources Ph.D.'s) reviewed these items to ensure that they validly measured the construct as defined and deleted those that did not. Fourteen students and restaurant employees answered the remaining items and were asked to specify any unclear items and what was unclear about them. We modified items according to their comments and deleted items that could not be modified.

For measures of the eight forces, respondents evaluated statements on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). *Affective forces* were measured with four items. A further item assessed *negative feelings toward the organization* at the time of a decision ("When you decided to quit, did you have negative feelings or anger toward the job or the organization?" 1, "no"; 2, "somewhat"; 3, "yes"). *Normative forces* were measured with two items. *Alternative forces, behavioral forces, calculative forces, moral forces, contractual forces,* and *constituent forces* were all measured with three items. (The moral forces scale, however, was later discarded for lack of reliability.) Table 4 contains the texts of the items. All data were recoded so that higher scores indicated more attachment, and thus, lower withdrawal force. The *avoidability* of turnover was measured with "Was there anything that could have been done by anyone to prevent you from quitting? (This includes the CEO, your immediate supervisor, coworkers, or Human Resources)" (1, "no"; 2, "not sure"; 3, "yes").

In factor analyses, the moral forces scale did not "load" on a factor and had extremely low reliability ($\alpha = .42$). Thus, we dropped this scale from the analyses. Items from the seven remaining psychological force scales were factor-analyzed via an oblique promax rotation, and the pattern matrix was examined (Tabachnik & Fidell, 1989). Seven factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and were extracted. Each item loaded on its intended factor, with no cross-loadings exceeding .40. Internal consistency reliabilities were above .70, except the reliability for behavioral forces, which was .60. Given these supportive factor analysis results and generally good reliabilities (with the exception of the behavioral scale), we used the remaining seven forces scales as we had proposed.

Procedures and Analyses

Most respondents were approached at their workplaces, but 23 percent were approached in public, nonwork meeting places. One hundred sixty-five potential respondents were asked if they wanted to participate in the research. If they agreed, they were asked if they could clearly remember the time that they last quit a job. If a potential respondent could remember this, we conducted an interview; if not, the individual was disqualified. Three individuals refused to participate, and one was disqualified. Respondents were assured of confidentiality. Following introductory background questions, the classification questions were administered. After his or her interview, each respondent was asked to read through the survey questions for understanding. We then told the respondent to focus on the instance of quitting just discussed in the interview and to answer items in terms of the time when he or she made the *final* decision to quit. The survey was collected within

FIGURE 1
Classification into Decision Types
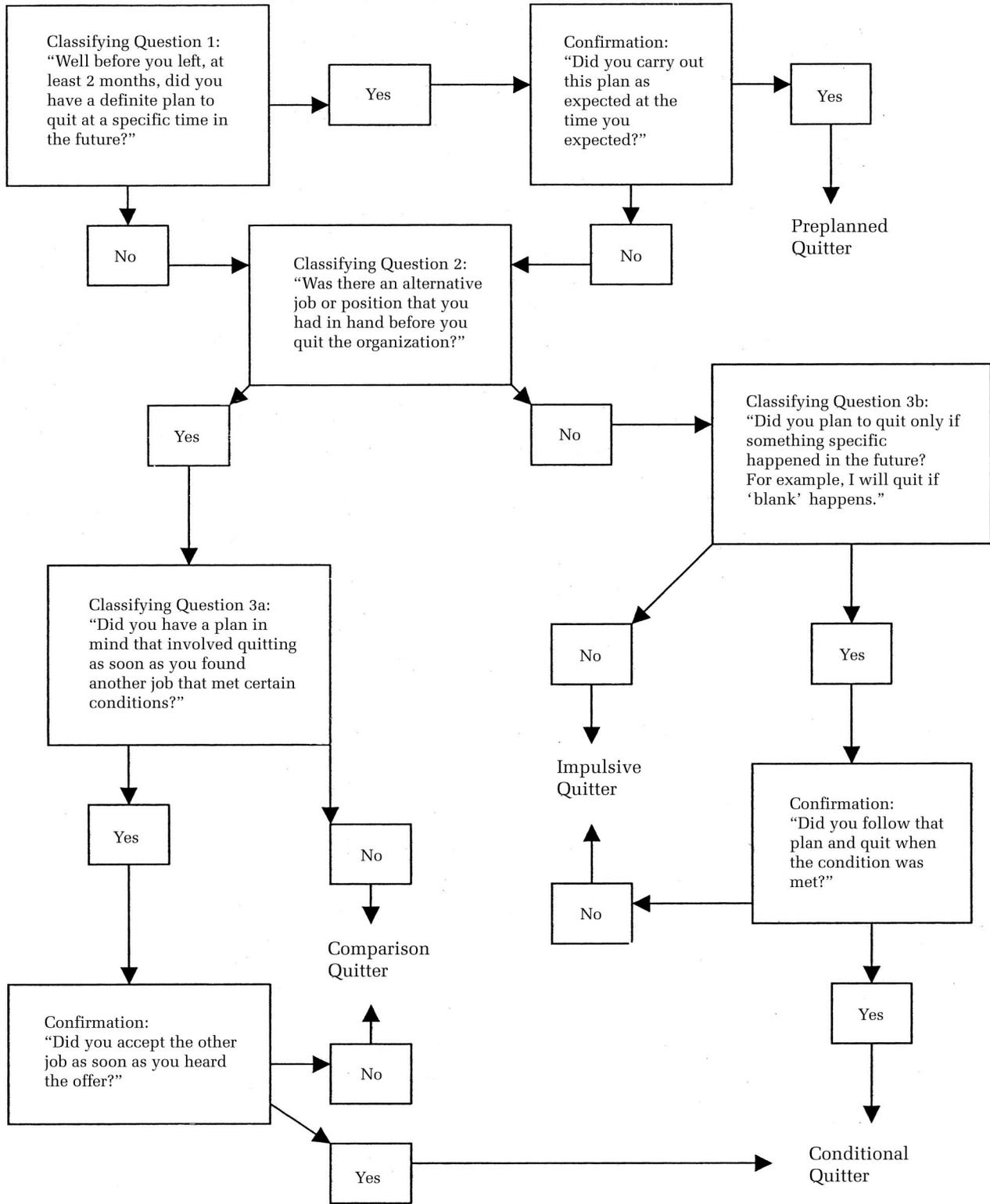
two days of the interview for all but two respondents, leaving complete data for 159. We tested the hypotheses for this study using analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Tukey's comparisons. Residual plots indicated no major departures from assumptions of normality, constant error variance, and un-

TABLE 4
Results of Factor Analysis[a]

Items	Affect	Alternative	Behavioral	Calcu-lative	Norma-tive	Contractual	Consti-tuent
When I thought about the organization I felt good.	.89						
Membership in the organization made me feel proud.	.77						
I liked my job at the organization in question.	.50						
I felt that the organization was a good place to work.	.89						
There were other comparable jobs available.		.80					
I was very attracted to opportunities somewhere else.		.75					
I believed that I could easily find an equal or better job.		.84					
I felt that I would lose valuable experience with the organization if I left.			.55				
I believed I would lose pension investments or other benefits if I quit.			.78				
I felt that leaving at that time would prove very costly to my career.			.79				
I was confident that I would be happy at the organization in the future.				.44			
At that job I had good chances for promotion.				.86			
The organization provided ample opportunities to develop myself.				.89			
I felt pressure to find a job closer to family members.					.86		
I wanted to move to a location better for my family.					.89		
I felt I owed the organization because it had supported me.						.74	
I felt obligated to stay in that job.						.88	
I believed, that to be fair, I should stay at this job a while longer.						.86	
I wanted to continue working with my coworkers there.							.87
I felt I would lose valuable relationships with the people there by quitting.							.87
I felt loyal to groups or teams in that organization.							.75

[a] Only pattern matrix coefficients with an absolute value greater than .40 are shown.

correlated errors. For the ANOVA, there was power to detect medium effects of 84 percent at type I error equal to .10 (Cohen, 1969). We proposed directional hypotheses and thus used one-tailed statistical tests, which also increased our power to detect effects. Because this study was exploratory, with new discovery as a major objective, it was important to maximize power and balance the probabilities of type I and type II errors. Thus, we also examined findings at a .10 significance level. The fact that we might be examining small effect sizes also supported the decision to test hypotheses at this level of significance.

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, alpha internal consistency reliabilities, and correlations among the dependent variables are presented in Table 5.

The four generic decision types were unrelated to gender ($\chi^2 = 1.06$, $df = 6$, $p > .10$), race ($\chi^2 = 8.69$;

$df = 12$, $p > .10$), tenure on the job quit ($F = 0.23$, $df = 3,155$, $p > .10$), or number of jobs quit previously ($F = 0.27$, $df = 3,154$, $p > .10$), suggesting that the decision types are generic and used by all kinds of people. Also, the time since individuals had quit their last jobs ($\bar{x} = 2.8$ years; s.d. = 2.37) was unrelated to decision type ($F = 1.83$, $df = 3,155$, $p > .10$). This finding helped to rule out the possibility that differential memory decay systematically affected hypothesis tests. A between-subjects MANOVA was conducted as a global test of significance prior to hypothesis testing. The Wilks's lambda (.68) was significant ($F = 2.23$, $df = 27,427$, $p < .001$), so the null hypothesis that the four decision types were unrelated to the motivational forces could be rejected.

Hypothesis Tests

Results are presented in Table 6. As Hypothesis 1 predicts, impulsive quitters had more negative feel-

TABLE 5
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations[a]

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Negative feelings toward organization	1.92	0.86								
2. Affective attachment	3.16	1.00	−.55	**.81**						
3. Alternative attachment	2.23	0.94	−.01	.08	**.72**					
4. Behavioral attachment	1.97	0.73	−.12	.30	.28	**.60**				
5. Calculative attachment	2.49	1.03	−.32	.54	.13	.36	**.75**			
6. Normative attachment	3.55	0.98	.13	−.06	.01	−.11	−.03	**.73**		
7. Contractual attachment	2.22	0.84	−.31	.31	.10	.33	.41	−.18	**.81**	
8. Constituent attachment	2.97	0.99	−.12	.42	.08	.33	.42	−.06	.27	**.82**
9. Avoidability	1.95	0.93	.26	−.13	.26	.00	−.07	−.02	−.04	.03

[a] $n = 159$. Decimals have been omitted in correlations; $p < .05$ for values of .16 or above. Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliabilities are reported on the diagonal in bold.

TABLE 6
Hypothesized Mean Differences by Decision Type[a, b]

Hypothesis	ANOVA F	R^2	Impulsive Quitters		Comparison Quitters		Preplanned Quitters		Conditional Quitters	
1a: Negative feelings (affective)	4.52**	.08	2.27[d]	(0.81)	1.68[c]	(0.87)	1.64[c]	(0.83)	1.98[c, d]	(0.83)
1b: Affective attachment	3.67*	.07	2.89[c]	(1.10)	3.45[† d]	(1.01)	3.46[† d]	(0.85)	2.98[† c, d]	(0.90)
2: Contractual attachment	1.63	.03	2.30	(0.88)	2.25	(0.86)	2.43[†]	(0.79)	2.02[†]	(0.82)
3: Constituent attachment	1.58	.03	3.02	(1.01)	2.86	(1.02)	3.31[†]	(0.84)	2.84[†]	(1.03)
4: Alternative attachment	4.04**	.07	2.44[d, e]	(0.82)	2.04[c, d]	(1.05)	2.61[e]	(0.94)	1.99[c]	(0.94)
5: Calculative attachment	4.50**	.08	2.68[d]	(1.08)	2.69[d]	(1.04)	2.73[d]	(0.80)	2.08[c]	(1.04)
6: Normative attachment	0.95	.02	3.63	(0.83)	3.72	(0.88)	3.46	(1.19)	3.40	(1.05)
7: Avoidability	3.38*	.06	2.07[d]	(0.90)	2.11[d]	(0.95)	1.46[c]	(0.74)	2.02[d]	(0.96)

[a] Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means that do not share any superscript ("c," "d," or "e") are significantly different at $p < .05$, one-tailed test. Means that share a dagger (†) are significantly different at $p < .10$, one-tailed test. Comparison and preplanned quitters are both significantly different from conditional quitters in the row for the test of Hypothesis 1b.

[b] Impulsive quitters: $n = 41$, 26 percent of sample. Comparison quitters: $n = 38$, 24 percent of sample. Preplanned quitters: $n = 28$, 18 percent of sample. Conditional quitters: $n = 52$, 32 percent of sample.

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

ings for the organization and lower affective attachment than comparison quitters and preplanned quitters. Contrary to Hypothesis 1, conditional quitters were not found to have greater negative affect than comparison and preplanned quitters. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 state that impulsive quitters and conditional quitters will have lower contractual and constituent attachments than comparison and preplanned quitters. Conditional quitters were lower than preplanned quitters on contractual and constituent attachments, indicating support. Contrary to these hypotheses, differences involving impulsive and comparison quitters on contractual and constituent forces were not significant.

Hypothesis 4 holds that comparison and conditional quitters will have lower alternative forces of attachment than impulsive and preplanned quitters. In support of this prediction, comparison quit-

ters and conditional quitters had lower alternative forces of attachment than preplanned quitters. Also, conditional quitters had lower alternative forces than impulsive quitters. Contrary to Hypothesis 4, the difference between comparison and impulsive quitters was not significant.

Hypothesis 5 states that conditional quitters will have lower calculative attachment at the final decision time than impulsive, comparison, and preplanned quitters. This prediction was fully supported.

Hypothesis 6 states that preplanned quitters will have lower normative attachment than the users of the other decision types, but this prediction was not supported. Also, the four decision types did not differ significantly on behavioral forces of attachment ($F = 1.18$; $df = 3,155$, $p > .10$).

Hypothesis 7 states that, compared to preplanned quitters, impulsive, comparison, and conditional

quitters will rate their quitting as more avoidable for their organizations. This hypothesis was fully supported.

DISCUSSION

Six of the seven hypotheses were at least partially supported, indicating that different turnover motive forces are systematically related to the four decision process types. Specifically, at the time they decided to quit, impulsive quitters had stronger negative affect than comparison quitters and preplanned quitters. Conditional quitters had lower contractual and constituent attachment than preplanned quitters. Comparison quitters and conditional quitters had higher attraction to alternative jobs than preplanned quitters and impulsive quitters. Conditional quitters had lower calculative attachment than the other three decision types. Finally, preplanned quitting was found to be less avoidable, and therefore less manageable, than the other types.

This study provides an initial demonstration that researchers can formally integrate content and process factors to promote theoretical development. Another necessary research direction to supplement our retrospective approach would be to use longitudinal analysis to study whether the predictive potency of content motives varies with decision type or whether changes in certain motives over time spur certain decision types more than others. Through understanding which motive levels are associated with certain processes, researchers could begin to theorize and investigate profiles. These content-rich decision profiles would provide a much deeper and more detailed understanding of the voluntary turnover phenomenon. A comprehensive typology of profiles would include the cognitive decision steps used and their timing, the type of event or cognition that likely triggered these steps, and the alignment of motives or reasons that influenced the ultimate decision. Such profiles would also suggest much more detailed and tailored approaches to identifying and to managing various kinds of quitting.

In the following paragraphs, we discuss our findings in the context of the four decision types. These descriptions of the four types in terms of significant findings are meant to help further profile development, but they should only be taken as a starting point for future research. We then discuss the other contributions of this study that go beyond existing research.

Impulsive Quitters

Impulsive quitting is driven by sharp negative affect followed by quitting "on the spot." It makes sense that impulsive quitters would be less attracted to alternatives. They experience such strong negative affect, perhaps from a psychological contract breach, that they decide to quit immediately without any planning. Impulsive quitting is more avoidable than preplanned quitting, but the spontaneity of these decisions may make them hard to anticipate and manage. Nevertheless, management interventions should focus on increasing good feelings toward organizations and minimizing policies that elicit strong negative affect among employees. This requires regularly measuring motivational forces and being responsive to low levels and decreases. A myriad of potential actions may influence employee feelings (Kraut, 1996) and thereby impulsive quitting. In addition, an implication may be that employees with tendencies toward impulsive quitting should perhaps be encouraged to quit (for instance, through realistic job previews) before expensive investments have been made in them.

Although this category was not specifically explored in this study, some people classified as impulsive quitters may not leave immediately after making their decisions and may not exhibit strong negative affect. Workers may drift in and out of the workforce with regularity without having any great job dissatisfaction or detailed deliberation (Hulin, Rosnowski, & Hachiya, 1985). These employees do not see leaving the labor market as a financial hardship and thus may not have any alternative jobs (Steel, 2002). Young people with little career direction, who can also live for free with their parents, may fit this profile. Investigating this "drifter" type may be a fruitful direction for future studies. Together these two processes of quitting without alternatives may serve as subtypes of or theoretical refinements to Lee and Mitchell's path 2.

Comparison Quitters

Comparison quitters are mainly attracted away from organizations by alternative jobs and are relatively free of strong negative affect toward their current employers. Compared with conditional quitters, they feel more positive toward their organizations and may anticipate good future prospects for themselves there. They are simply drawn to something better. These findings suggest that comparison quitting involves a rational evaluation without negative feelings as the primary motivators of the final decision, a profile seemingly inconsis-

tent with the traditional view that job dissatisfaction drives such decisions (e.g., Mobley, 1977).

At the individual level, managers must strive to keep open lines of communication with key employees to determine when they are considering other jobs and to make sure they know that their organization wants to keep them. If a comparison quitter makes a rational, benefit-driven decision, the balance can theoretically be shifted in favor of the current organization. The lack of strong negative affect suggests that the employee may listen without prejudice to a counteroffer; however, caution is in order. If a policy of counteroffers becomes widely known, more employees may start attempting to obtain outside job offers simply to increase their pay.

At the group level, employees may misconstrue the advantages labor-market competitors offer (for instance, "Because that other organization pays a higher wage, it has higher total compensation"). Management should clarify any misconceptions and emphasize the relative benefits of the current organization. Of course, management could also track competitors and attempt to "lead the market" on most key job attributes. This policy would certainly prevent many unfavorable comparisons with alternatives, but it must fit with the organization's HR strategy and have positive utility in order to be adopted (Boudreau & Berger, 1985).

Preplanned Quitters

Preplanned quitters plan in advance to quit at a specific time in the future. Preplanned quitters are less likely to be highly dissatisfied with their organizations than impulsive quitters. This type is consistent with data in which nurses had a definite plan to quit at a certain time and quit when the time arrived with no apparent negative affect (Lee et al., 1996). Employees may well be counting down the weeks until their departures, consciously anticipating them until the appointed times come. Employees may even enter organizations with definite plans to quit at specific future times. Such controlled deliberation and conscious anticipation are not consistent with the decision process proposed in Lee and Mitchell's path 1. Preplanned quitting would not necessarily depend on a shock and memory search for a behavioral script as proposed. The shock in path 1 is somewhat uncertain, whereas the final trigger for preplanned quitting is certain, in the mind of an employee, to occur at a specific time in the future. With these differences, preplanned quitting may be a useful extension to Lee and Mitchell's paths.

A major distinguishing characteristic of pre-

planned quitting is that it was rated as the least avoidable and, therefore, as the least amenable to prevention by management. This makes sense because planning to quit in advance may often be caused by shocks outside an organization (such as notification of spousal relocation or pregnancy) and largely out of management's control. Given this, the key challenge is simply to learn about these definite plans as soon as they are made. By encouraging employees to share such plans and by not punishing them for announcing their intentions to quit, managers can maximize the lead time that they have to find adequate replacements for preplanned quitters and minimize staffing inefficiencies.

Conditional Quitters

Conditional quitters plan to quit if some uncertain event or shock occurs, as judged by the employees. Conditional quitters experience more alternative forces to withdraw than other types, except comparison quitters. In fact, our interviews allowed us to calculate that 45 of the 52 conditional quitters had conditional plans that involved getting alternative job offers. This finding supports the view that some conditional quitters' planning is along these lines: "I will quit as soon as I get another job offer that meets certain conditions." This view suggests a type of "satisficing" job choice process, as opposed to the more optimizing approach of comparison quitting (Glueck, 1974).

However, the condition to be fulfilled in such a plan will not always involve getting another job offer. For example, an employee may tell herself "I will quit if my supervisor talks to me like that again." Such a conditional plan is essentially identical to the behavioral scripts described in Lee and Mitchell's path 1. Future research should distinguish this type of conditional plan to quit from the type of conditional plan that involves receiving an acceptable alternative job offer.

Conditional quitters also may calculate that their future prospects with current organizations are relatively poor. Perhaps they discount their future prospects with the current organizations as a result of their conditional plans to quit, or to maintain consistency with those plans (Salancik, 1977). Conditional quitters may experience breaches of psychological contracts or unfairness caused by organizations or their constituents more intensely or more frequently than preplanned quitters and comparison quitters. There is also some evidence that negative affect toward an organization may help motivate this type more than preplanned quitting. Because conditional quitters likely believe that

they do not have good futures with their organizations, managements should consider instituting career advising, clarifying criteria for promotion, and adhering to principles of procedural justice in providing development opportunities. Helping employees see futures for themselves with organizations may induce them to avoid making—or to rethink—conditional plans to quit. Somewhat weaker findings suggested that preventing contract breaches and strengthening attachments to coworkers, teams, or supervisors could help prevent conditional quitting as well.

Other Contributions

Our research approach also makes several important contributions that extend current turnover research. First, our approach suggests a new direction or goal for theoretical research, namely, to develop motive-rich decision profiles of quitting. Second, we introduced the approach of specifically measuring both process and content factors. Third, we introduced the first attempt to comprehensively measure turnover motives. Such a measurement is needed if managers are going to track levels of these motives and target interventions toward the specific motives causing withdrawal. Fourth, the categorization protocol that we have introduced offers a new and objective way to classify decision process types that does not rely on expert judgment, as earlier studies have. This objectivity should improve the reliability of classifying decisions across studies with heterogeneous samples, and thereby, our protocol should facilitate the accumulation of knowledge.

With respect to the unfolding model, our differentiating preplanned quitting from conditional quitting underscores the fact that the behavioral scripts of path 1 and other paths (Lee et al., 1999) and the shocks that trigger them may be definite for a specific time or uncertain in the mind of an employee. This distinction is a potential refinement to path 1. Further, conditional quitting, in which the plan for quitting is automatically activated only if a satisfying job offer is obtained, could constitute an additional subtype of path 1. Lee and Mitchell considered circumstances in which employees left jobs quickly and had no alternative job offers (elements of impulsive quitting), but they did not specifically recognize this combination as impulsive quitting. They also did not recognize these instances as constituting a unique path or specify that they were primarily driven by strong negative affect. We propose that impulsive quitting may be a subtype of Lee and Mitchell's path 2, in which negative affect is the primary driving motive. The drifter type of

quitting, instances in which employees leave with no alternatives, relatively slowly, and relatively without negative affect, may be another subtype of path 2.

This study also has implications for the more traditional turnover models of Hom and Griffeth (e.g., Griffeth & Hom, 1995, 2001) and of Steel (2002). First, the eight motive forces may serve to summarize, organize, and define the many influences of satisfaction and commitment in Hom and Griffeth's model. Our identification of eight motives also disputes their assertion that organizational commitment and shocks are the two main causes of decisions to quit. Also, our assertion that different motives may cause different decision processes may be a fruitful way to advance theoretical development of this model. The current study also supports elements of Hom and Griffeth's model. For example, our classification protocol supports their assertion that alternative job evaluation is a major differentiating process factor. Second, Steel (2002) focused on job search process and proposed two reasons why people would quit without search: (1) they have alternative sources of income (and don't need to work) or (2) they get spontaneous job offers. Our proposed profile of impulsive quitting adds a third reason: employees may not search if strong negative affect causes a flight mechanism that precludes rational consideration of alternative employment.

Limitations and Conclusions

One limitation of this study was the inability to examine moral forces owing to the low reliability of this scale. Low reliability in the behavioral forces scale may have also contributed to low power and a related failure to detect effects. This pattern suggests that our initial attempt to measure Maertz's (2001) motive forces needs improvement. Also, we used a one-item measure of avoidability. Although the item was precise and produced significant findings, it was of unknown reliability. Although memory error is always a potential limitation with retrospective designs, the fact that turnover events are being studied ameliorates this concern. First, quitting is a salient, major life event, and people remember the details surrounding such events relatively easily (e.g., Tourangeau, 2000). Second, quitting tends to be associated with affective arousal, be it negative or positive; such events are more easily remembered than those with little accompanying affective arousal (e.g., Banaji & Hardin, 1994). Moreover, people often remember such events *better* after a long rather than a short period of time (e.g., Kihlstrom, Eich, Sandbrand, & Tobias,

2000). Also, time since quitting was unrelated to decision type, lessening the chance that memory decay had an effect on the findings. Lastly, Lee and his coauthors (1999) drew on three lines of research to establish that inaccurate memory and retrospective designs are not major flaws in turnover studies. Another possibility is that the relationships discovered could be partially due to employee schemata or implicit theories of turnover. However, if such schemata reflect reality or are widely held by employees, they may not threaten the validity of our findings. If not, future research must rule out the possibility that these schemata cause motive-by-decision-type relationships. Finally, sampling limitations (we used a convenience sample from a single region of the United States) prevent generalizing our findings to all employees.

Nevertheless, the many contributions of this study partially mitigate and far outweigh these limitations. Foremost, the current study uncovered unique findings about how motive levels relate to different decision process types. These findings represent an important step and help to set an agenda for future research by demonstrating how process and content approaches to turnover can be integrated. We hope that this step will help stimulate integrative research efforts to develop a motive-rich theory of turnover decisions.

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