

# Human Reactions to Work, Jobs, and Organizations

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*If work was really good, the rich would have found a way to keep it to themselves.*

Haitian proverb

As part of a research interview reported by Harlos and Pinder (2000, p. 255), an office clerk named Brenda reported:

There are good days, mostly when he [the boss] is not in . . . I think things are picking up, maybe I'm starting to fit in, maybe I was imagining all the bad stuff and I don't have to look for a new job . . . But then the next day is terribly bad and I just scream in my car on the way home.

Anyone who has ever held a job can relate (to some degree at least) to the visceral and emotional experiences that are the focus of this chapter; it is about people's beliefs, attitudes, and feelings (emotions) toward their work. Positive attitudes about what we do for a living make a tremendous difference in the way we feel about life in general. To have a job that is annoying, frustrating, or that regularly causes fear and conflict can be a terrible experience, as reported by Brenda in the foregoing statement.

This chapter is about such job-related attitudes and emotions. Although the discussion is sometimes scientific and esoteric, the reader should keep in mind the human experiences of the joy that comes from having a "good job" or "good career" and the worse, painful, private agonies that come from having to perform work that is dissatisfying, illegal, boring, or humiliating. This chapter, more than most others, appeals to the human, emotional side of work motivation. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the identification that people have with their work are all at the very core of the issue of work motivation. It is here (as well as in Chapter 4) where the mind and the heart meet in this book more than in any other chapters: Work can be a major source of pleasure for people or the primary source of their own private hell.

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## A PRECAUTION

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A point of semantics is in order before we begin. Although much of the discussion in this chapter is about "job attitudes," it is important to recognize that, in fact, attitudes (as we have defined them in Chapter 9) are only part of what this chapter is about. As we will find shortly, much of our experiencing of job attitudes in life and in common discourse deals, in fact, with job-related beliefs and, ultimately, emotions. So, as often happens in organizational science, terms from common

parlance are often used to represent concepts that have different technical meaning in the discipline. We clarify the distinctions among job-related beliefs, attitudes, and emotions by the end of the chapter.

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## WHY AN INTEREST IN WORK ATTITUDES?

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Since the early days of the organizational sciences, academics and other researchers have spent considerable time researching the nature, causes, and correlates of a variety of work-related attitudes, for a variety of reasons. Why is this so?

Many years ago, Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) provided four commonly accepted answers to the question. First, it has long been assumed by many managers, parents, teachers, and people in general that attitudes influence behavior. The importance of this assumption for our present purposes lies in the possibilities that it holds for managers and supervisors who wish to influence employee motivation and job performance. It has long been assumed that work-related attitudes must somehow be related to work behaviors (see Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Fisher, 1980). Early forms of this belief held that higher levels of job satisfaction are associated with higher levels of job performance: "A more satisfied employee is a more productive employee." Although years of research have shown that the relationship is not so simple (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), there is still some basis for believing that attitudes and behaviors are related to one another in some circumstances (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Cialdini, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1981). Accordingly, it remains important to develop a precise understanding of what attitudes are, the factors that influence them, and whatever connections they may have with behavior.

Second, Smith et al. (1969) pointed out that a great deal of management's activities with regard to personnel selection and placement, training, career counseling, and so on, are based in part on a concern for employee attitudes and, in turn, for employee behavior. Third, Smith and her colleagues noted that improving employee job satisfaction is a desirable goal in its own right, for humanitarian reasons. In other words, one need not expect some form of managerial payoff to justify attempts to understand employee work attitudes. Finally, understanding the nature of job attitudes may be beneficial for the greater scientific concern of understanding attitudes in general: Work is only one arena in which human attitudes are formed and altered, albeit an important one. Social scientists are interested in the nature and change of attitudes for political reasons, for marketing research, and for a variety of other social purposes. Things that are learned about job attitudes contribute to the greater stock of knowledge about human attitudes in general.

After decades of theory, research, and practice relating job attitudes to individual and organizational outcomes, an impressive study published by Harrison, Newman, and Roth (2006) demonstrated that higher-order constructs representing job attitudes held powerful statistical relationships with individual and organizational relationships – much more powerful than the typical bivariate studies that have been conducted since Smith and her colleagues (Smith et al., 1969) made their observations of the importance of job attitudes so many years ago. As observed by Dormann and Zapf (2001): "Job satisfaction is placed as a central concept in work organizational psychology which mediates the relation between working conditions on the one hand and organizational and individual outcomes on the other hand" (p. 483). Accordingly, we are interested in the study of job attitudes because they are believed to relate to work behavior, because a great deal of management activity is concerned with positively influencing them, for humanitarian reasons and for general scientific purposes. The purpose of discussing them in this book is influenced by each of these reasons.

## Job Attitudes of the Most Interest

Without doubt, the most commonly studied variety of job-related attitudes is *job satisfaction*, often defined as the degree to which a person's work is useful for satisfying her needs. (A more rigorous treatment of job satisfaction will be presented shortly.) Job satisfaction is widely viewed as a multidimensional concept, such that a person may be satisfied with certain aspects of her work ("I like my supervisor") while simultaneously being unhappy with other aspects of her work ("The pay and working conditions are terrible").

A second construct that has received considerable interest in research and theory is referred to under the general rubric of *commitment* (or, recently, *attachment*). This concept is also multidimensional and has to do with the attachment or adherence of persons to any or all of the following: To the work ethic in general, to one's occupation or profession, to one's actual day-by-day work experiences, and/or to one's employer (Morrow, 1993). As detailed by Morrow (1993), each of these four approaches to commitment has a number of variations that differ conceptually among themselves by minor degrees, and each is accompanied by one or more sets of scales and measures for their assessment. The interested reader is referred to Morrow's (1983, 1993) careful analyses and evaluations of the many nuances in meaning and measures of these concepts; we limit our discussion here to two of the major dimensions of commitment, those usually referred to as organizational commitment and job involvement.

The third concept treated in this chapter is referred to as *job involvement*. This construct has to do with people's devotion to their work per se, independent of the particular jobs they hold or the particular organization they work for. Job involvement concerns a person's views about the centrality of work to his life. For example, a person may enjoy being a machinist but may or may not be satisfied with his current job as a machinist and he may or may not have a sense of commitment to his employer.

In summary, then, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the theory and research related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement, considering their place in a broader study of work motivation.

## JOB SATISFACTION

According to a recent article in *Maclean's* (September 19, 2005, p. 38), Canada's national weekly news magazine, the labor movement in North America is in trouble; membership is declining in both public and private sectors and in both Canada and the United States. The putative reason, according to business writer Steve Maich, is that "working people" are doing very well, thank you very much, so the advantages traditionally attributed to union membership – higher wages, job security, safe and pleasant working conditions, to name a few – are no longer urgently required by working people. According to Maich, who cited studies carried out in 2005 by the American Enterprise Institute (in the United States) and a poll conducted by Environics (a leading national pollster in Canada), satisfaction of the vast majority of American workers with their jobs is very high, so union membership is in decline. In the U.S. study, 91% of respondents claimed they either liked or loved their jobs, approximately the same proportion as 4 years earlier. About four in five claimed that they were satisfied with their pay and about the same number said they were not worried about losing their jobs. Maich (2005, p. 38) wrote:

Decades ago, those forces [fear of losing one's job and anger over social inequality] helped create things like overtime, minimum wage and protection from arbitrary firing. But now, thanks in part to past union victories, North American workers no longer see themselves as part of any movement of the downtrodden.

Meanwhile, in the local Victoria, B.C., newspaper, the *Times Colonist* (TC), a story appeared on September 3, 2005 (p. B3), claiming that, compared to the "glass is four-fifths full" analysis reported by Maich's summary in *Maclean's*, the glass is still one-fifth empty (the metaphor is adopted by this author, not by any of the sources cited here). In the TC report (which summarized survey data based on national samples similar to those summarized by Maich and *Maclean's*), the text read as follows:

Nearly one in five Canadians dreads going to work each day, and another one in three feel their job is just a job . . . [suggesting] a lot may want to spend this Labour Day holiday reassessing their careers . . . Nearly one-third of the 10,000 respondents also admit to faking a sick day in the last year . . . A lot of workers feel their current job isn't giving them enough opportunity for advancement, skill development or new experiences.

Finally, on the same page in the TC (September 3, 2005, p. B3), a separate report, attributed to a survey conducted by the Canadian Labour Congress, read as follows: "Strong job growth and low unemployment have not made workers feel more secure about their jobs, nor has it translated into significant wage gains."

As a matter of fact, the proportion of people in North America who report being satisfied with their jobs has not changed a great deal over recent decades. Over a decade ago, Firebaugh and Harley (1995) reported that about 85% of U.S. workers were happy with their jobs and that men and women were approximately equal in this regard. Older workers tended to report higher levels of satisfaction than were reported by younger workers, in part because they tend to hold better jobs. In addition, the expectations of older workers may not be as high as those of younger employees because many older workers were raised during economic times when things were not as abundant as they have been more recently (Firebaugh & Harley, 1995). These figures are very similar to data reported 30 years earlier.

In short, things haven't changed much in the level of job attitudes among North American workers over the past two generations, yet it is still the focus of considerable media attention and managerial interest. An article in the June 19, 2006 edition of *Maclean's* magazine focused on the current issue referred to as "work-life" balance: Providing means and time for employees to get away from their jobs so that they don't become burned out and, in the longer term, be more productive and satisfied with their work. Alcan, one of the world's largest producers of aluminum, headquartered in Canada, found through employee surveys that "staff were grossly overworked and turnover rates were swelling, especially in the all-important finance departments." The company implemented a "work-life effectiveness strategy" that included "coaching for top executives, mandatory no-work hours, and on-site massage sessions" (p. 35). In the end, most employers have now dropped specious high-sounding principles to explain their concern for fostering work-life balance for their employees and openly admit that programs such as these do contribute good things to the "bottom line." A recent study by Greenhaus and Powell (2003), for example, showed that personality differences (such as self-esteem) and the relative strength of an individual's identification with work and with family may play key roles in the dilemmas faced by working people concerned with keeping balance in their lives.<sup>1</sup> Most large urban and airport bookstores are replete with paperback books dealing with the issues of job blues, getting more out of life through one's work, etc.

What's the point here? The point is simply to demonstrate that as old as the concept is, job satisfaction (particularly job dissatisfaction) is a matter of timeless concern for anyone who works or for anyone who must interact with working people. In fact, it is not unfair to state that most people believe themselves to be experts on the issue. Nevertheless, we turn attention to examining what this construct represents in the organizational sciences.

<sup>1</sup> See also a book by Blyton, Blunsdon, Reed, and Dastmalchian (2006), which presents a range of scholarly papers on a variety of issues related to work-life balance.

## The Nature of Job Satisfaction

Many implicit and explicit definitions of job satisfaction have been offered over the years. The definition that has probably had the most influence in the field has been that of Locke (1969, 1976). For Locke, *job satisfaction* is an *emotional* reaction that “results from the perception that one’s job fulfills or allows the fulfillment of one’s important job values, providing and to the degree that those values are congruent with one’s needs” (Locke, 1976, p. 1307). Unless otherwise indicated, this definition will be the one intended whenever the term *job satisfaction* is used in the present volume, and its obverse will be intended whenever the term *job dissatisfaction* is used. It is interesting to note in relation to our discussion in Chapter 4 that, although job satisfaction is widely seen as an attitude, Locke’s definition defines it in terms of an *emotional* reaction. While introducing their affective events theory (recall Chapter 4), Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) gave emotion greater emphasis in their definition than Locke (1976, p. 2) did. They defined job satisfaction as:

[A]n evaluative judgment about one’s job that partly, but not entirely, results from emotional experiences at work. It also partly results from more abstract beliefs about one’s job. Together, affective experiences and belief structures result in the evaluation we call job satisfaction.

Neither Locke (1976) nor Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) speculated about the particular emotions that are involved, but considerable scientific progress has been made to discern the nature of the range of emotions associated with both job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (recall Chapter 4).

What about the emotions that accompany *job dissatisfaction*? Of those that we reviewed in Chapter 4, a few likely candidates come to mind, including anger, fear, jealousy, and envy (see also Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). So in keeping with the general tradition of the field, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are discussed here primarily as if they are attitudes, although it is clear that emotions are also heavily involved in the experiences that people witness on the job.

Locke noted that job satisfaction is not the same thing as morale. Although satisfaction has to do with a retrospective assessment of one’s job, morale is seen more as concerned with a positive desire to continue to work at one’s job. Further, the term *morale* is often used to describe the overall attitudes of a *work group* rather than of a single individual. Both Locke’s and Weiss and Cropanzano’s definitions of job satisfaction are conceptual. In practice, researchers and managers often operationalize job satisfaction as having to do with the gratification of one’s needs on the job or through the work setting. (Recall the discussion in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the multitude of needs that might be considered in such a context, and see Fields, 2002, for examples.) Moreover, interest is often directed at the satisfaction one has with a variety of *specific aspects* of one’s job and the circumstances surrounding it. For example, the *theory of work adjustment* (Bretz & Judge, 1994; *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 1993; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969) concerns itself with employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction with 21 aspects of work and organizations, ranging from creativity and recognition to social status and working conditions. Thus, as noted by Locke (1976) and confirmed by Ben-Porat (1981), the list of potential causes of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction that have been investigated includes both *agents* (such as pay levels of one’s supervisor) and *events* (such as the level of responsibility that one is usually permitted to assume on the job).

Moreover, different writers over the years have tended to contrive their own measures of satisfaction, making what is learned from one study difficult to compare with the results of other studies, although this situation has improved somewhat (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992; Fields, 2002). Consequently, progress toward general agreement in the field on the nature of the construct was impeded somewhat, although the needs-based approach to job satisfaction dominated the thinking and research of scholars and practitioners alike (see Stone, 1992), at least until a decade ago, when the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; and our discussion of AET in Chapter 4) was introduced to the literature.

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Traditionally, those interested in measuring job satisfaction would seek an *overall* assessment of an individual's job ("How do you like your job?") or, alternatively, assessments of particular facets of the job, such as the pay, job challenge, or supervision, for example. A newer approach suggested the assessment of the levels of satisfaction that people have with the various *tasks* that comprise their jobs. Allowing the 573 study participants (who represented a variety of different jobs) to define "tasks" according to their own definitions, Taber and Alliger (1995) concluded that global and facet measures of satisfaction were "consistent with, but only partially predictable from," the properties of the component tasks of jobs. The value added by this approach over the traditional approach has not been demonstrated particularly well since it was first proposed.

## Causes/Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

What is known and agreed upon in relation to job satisfaction? As indicated earlier, most authors see job satisfaction as resulting from the fulfillment of needs through the activities one performs at one's job and from the context in which the work is performed. In other words, in this approach, job satisfaction is a function of, indeed the same thing as, need satisfaction, or at least the degree of correspondence, congruence, or complementarity between a person's needs and the need-gratifying capacity of the work setting. Characteristic of this work is that of Betz (1969), Fredericksen, Jensen, Beaton, and Bloxom (1972), Lofquist and Dawis (1969), Mathieu, Hofmann, and Farr (1993), Ostroff (1993), Pervin (1968), Porter (1962, 1963), Seybolt (1976), and Tuckman (1968).

Other authors, including Ilgen (1971) and McFarlin and Rice (1992), conceived of job satisfaction as resulting from the size of the *discrepancy* a person perceives, if any, between what he expects to receive from his work and what he perceives he is receiving. Thus, large differences between the amount of pay an employee perceives he is receiving and the amount he expects to receive would result in dissatisfaction with pay, no reference being made to needs per se. Within this tradition is the issue of whether people are more or less concerned with various facets of their workplaces (e.g., the pay, the supervision, the working conditions) or whether overall, global satisfaction is more important. One pair of studies, for example, found that discrepancies between what employees perceive they are receiving on the job and what they want from their jobs were critical when the comparative importance of the various facets was considered. Employees who placed high value on a specific facet were more satisfied with a small discrepancy and more dissatisfied with large discrepancies than those who placed lower importance on the same facets (McFarlin & Rice, 1992; see also Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991).

As we saw in Chapter 3, satisfaction results from at least three general types of perception. First, the person must see that there is a positive increment in the level of desired outcomes he or she receives. Second, the shorter the period over which the improvement occurs, the greater is the feeling of satisfaction (called the *notion of velocity*). Third, positive increases in the rate of positive change also add to the sensation of satisfaction: People want to see things get better for themselves over time, and the faster the improvement, the better (Salovey, Hsee, & Mayer, 1993). To the knowledge of this author, no empirical work has investigated this so-called *emodynamic theory* as it pertains to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The importance of global measures, reflecting overall satisfaction with the work, was discussed by Cranny et al. (1992), who believed that global satisfaction may be both a contributing cause and a partial effect of facet satisfaction and that global satisfaction may make workers more receptive and cooperative in reaction to management-initiated changes to the workplace. In other words, it may be that as people become satisfied with one or a few aspects of their jobs, they tend to form positive global attitudes about those jobs. By way of contrast, a person may have, for whatever reason, a generally positive view of her job and will therefore tend to report satisfaction with specific aspects of it (e.g., the promotion opportunities), if only because her general attitude is positive—a halo effect.

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A third approach considers employee *values*, which are defined as those things that a person sees as conducive to his or her welfare. Recall from Chapter 3 that it is important to distinguish between needs and values: Needs are basic forces that initiate and guide behavior for the sake of the preservation and health of the individual. People are not aware of the operation of many needs: They frequently function at the subconscious level. By contrast, values are conscious beliefs about what is good and bad for the individual's well-being. Thus, whereas the author might place a high value on a new sports car, he might have trouble convincing his wife that he really needs one. Locke (1976) emphasized the role of values being met as the key determinant of job satisfaction, at least to the degree that these values are congruent with one's needs.

Still another approach centers around the issue of whether a person's expectations are met or thwarted. In other words, the concern here is with whether the individual believes that psychological (or literal) contracts, promises, and expectations are honored in the workplace (see Rousseau, 1995).

Another view sees satisfaction or dissatisfaction resulting from comparisons that a person makes between herself and others around her. In this view (see Chapter 11) a person is most likely to be dissatisfied when she perceives that the relationship between the contributions she makes to the organization and the benefits she derives in return is less satisfactory than the relationship she perceives between the inputs and outcomes derived by some other person or group of persons. Feelings of inequitable treatment have been shown to be predictive of intentions to quit organizations.

Finally, the most recent and currently influential view on what causes job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (particularly the latter) is found in the burgeoning literature on justice theory. As we will see in the next chapter, perceptions by people that they are victims of injustice cause them many negative reactions toward the job and the employing organization, as well as toward the individual(s) who is seen as the proximal deliverer of the injustice. Being treated unjustly hurts. A more thorough treatment of equity theory and several issues related to justice and injustice is presented in Chapter 11.

### **Situations, dispositions, and job satisfaction**

For many years, much of the debate on the origins and nature of job satisfaction hinged on the issue of whether it is determined by situations (i.e., the contextual factors of the workplace, such as organizational climate and culture, reward systems, leadership style) or by stable traits and dispositions of individuals. Brief mention was made of this issue earlier in the book (see Chapter 2), and a full discussion of the matter is beyond the scope of this chapter as well (cf. George, 1991, 1992; Gerhart, 2005), except note here that the position one adopts on this matter may have applied consequences aside from theoretical import. Although the dispositional approach does not rule out the potential effects of contexts (such as job design and organizational structure), it does propose that people may have characteristic predilections toward positive or negative emotional states and toward jobs in particular that might limit the power of interventions in the work context.<sup>2</sup> Gerhart (2005) discussed these potential applied implications and concluded that an assumption on the side of dispositions implies that there is wisdom in hiring people who have generally positive personalities; on the other hand, there may, theoretically, be limits in the degree of benefit that can be attained by improving working conditions for people with a generally negative view of the world. On the basis of his analysis of the matter, Gerhart concluded: "within-person consistency in attitudes and behaviors can coexist with mean-level changes in [both] attitudes and behaviors induced by situational changes in the workplace" (p. 79).

Researchers in the late 1980s and into the 1990s investigated two streams of enquiry. One stream, basing their analyses largely on research involving monozygotic twins, successfully identified

<sup>2</sup>In the extreme, the dispositional approach would significantly reduce the emphasis placed on contextual factors such as job design, organizational policies, climates and culture, and leadership styles (Dormann & Zapf, 2001).

statistical relationships between people's genetic structures and their reactions to jobs (e.g., Arvey & Bouchard, 1994; Arvey, Bouchard, Segal, & Abraham, 1989; Arvey, McCall, Bouchard, Taubman, & Cavanaugh, 1994).

The second stream examined the relationships between individual personality traits and job reactions. For example, some scholars started with the premise that human beings vary in a general trait toward happiness (*positive affectivity*) or unhappiness (*negative affectivity*), a disposition that accompanies and influences them in many different aspects of their lives, predisposing them toward positive or negative emotional reactions, even toward otherwise-neutral stimuli (cf. Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; Watson, Wiese, Vaidya, & Tellegen, 1999). Soon, connections between these traits and employee reactions to jobs were sought in empirical studies: A meta-analysis by Connolly and Viswesvaran (2000) reported an adjusted overall correlation between positive affectivity (PA) and job satisfaction of 0.40 and a corresponding correlation between negative affectivity (NA) and job dissatisfaction of  $-0.33$ .

Until recently, however, the reason for a two-way relationship between genetic composition and job attitudes was a matter of speculation (e.g., Judge & Larsen, 2001). Then, two investigations by Timothy Judge and his colleagues (a meta-analysis by Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002, and an original study by Ilies & Judge, 2003) supported the hypothesis that a (or *the*) missing link between genes and job satisfaction/dissatisfaction is *personality*; that is, genes heavily influence an individual's personality structures and that they, in turn, influence a person's predisposition toward job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. While the meta-analysis of Judge et al. (2002) found moderate-to-mixed correlations between the *Big Five* (Barrick & Mount, 1991) personality traits and job satisfaction, the two personality dimensions mentioned earlier (positive affectivity and negative affectivity) did a better job than did the Big Five of explaining the mediated relationships between genes and job reactions by working people.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, a meta-analysis of previous studies of test-retest estimates of the stability of job satisfaction (as measured by standard scales for this purpose) was reported by Dormann and Zapf (2001). The purpose of the study was to estimate the extent to which stable personality traits, as opposed to organizational contextual factors, can explain job satisfaction. In a clever research design, the researchers separated samples of employees into "stayers" (those who did not shift jobs between the occasions when their job satisfaction was measured) and "changers" (those who shifted jobs). They found that job stayers and job changers did not differ significantly in the test-retest stabilities of their job attitudes, at least in part because people who shift from one job to another are bound to seek considerable levels of similarity between their former jobs and their new jobs. Why? Because their stable personality traits contribute to the preferences they have for any and all jobs. In other words, as people change jobs, they do not normally find themselves moving to entirely different job circumstances than they leave behind; rather, their (stable) preferences will cause them to seek new jobs that share many core features with their former jobs. Thus, support was provided for the argument that, although dispositions may contribute a significant proportion of the cause of job attitudes, contextual factors also play a significant role. Once more, as we discuss in Chapter 2 and elsewhere throughout this book, both individual and contextual factors are involved in explaining work motivation, work behavior, and other phenomena related to them.

## The Nature and Causes of Job Dissatisfaction

Traditional thought on the matter has always held that job dissatisfaction is simply the opposite of job satisfaction, such that if an employee becomes more satisfied with her job, she necessarily becomes more dissatisfied with her former job.

<sup>3</sup> For the current author, these two streams of work – introducing genetic research into organizational behavior and reintroducing personality dimensions with construct-valid measures to investigate mediated relationships – separately and in combination, comprise some of the most interesting and significant advances made in the general domain of work motivation in more than a decade.



becomes less dissatisfied, and vice versa. In Chapters 2 and 7, Herzberg's challenge to this assumption was presented and discussed at length. To review it briefly, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) argued that the concepts of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not the opposite of one another; rather, they are independent of one another.

The reader will recall from that discussion that this asymmetrical aspect of the motivator-hygiene theory is the one responsible for much of the so-called Herzberg controversy.<sup>4</sup> Because of the lack of clear and consistent support for the two-factor approach that has *not* been based on questionable research, the perspective adopted here is the traditional one: Satisfaction and dissatisfaction represent opposite ends of the same continuum. Nevertheless, it is clear that jobs have multiple facets, so it is recognized that people can be satisfied and/or dissatisfied with different aspects of their jobs simultaneously (Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991). (See Mahoney, 1979, for an approach that reconciles the two-factor approach with the more traditional one.)

## Job Dissatisfaction as Need Frustration

It is important to note as well the connection between what was presented in Chapter 8 as need frustration and what is commonly viewed as job dissatisfaction: When dissatisfaction is conceived of as an emotional reaction to the blockage of attempts on the job to satisfy one's needs, job dissatisfaction amounts to the same psychological state of frustration as we discussed in Chapter 8, and we can expect any of the usual human responses to it (see Spector, 1978).

What causes such blockages? Organizational policies that prevent people from being effective, despite their best efforts. Fellow employees who don't cooperate. Too much work to be done in the time permitted, such that none of it can be accomplished effectively. Shoddy machinery or supplies. A supervisor who doesn't listen or who fails to provide assistance when it is needed. An organizational structure that prohibits rapid advancement or promotion. One's gender (being the wrong one), or lack of abilities. Inconsistent expectations from one's bosses or members of one's job environment. Being assigned to undesirable working hours, such as the night shift. In short, frustration results from a blockage of one's effort in pursuit of goals, and the blockage can emanate from any of a countless number of sources in an organization. The emotional reaction to frustration on the job is job dissatisfaction, although as we noted earlier, the specific emotions felt during job dissatisfaction have received little empirical attention and may, in fact, vary widely from person to person. Work is required on this issue.

To understand job dissatisfaction as a specific form of frustration, we must understand the nature of the needs that can be blocked on the job. Remember from Chapter 3 that there are a variety of human needs in addition to those for existence and relatedness. The various forms of growth needs have become more important to members of the modern workforce than they were in previous times, in large measure because of the relatively high levels of education and economic abundance enjoyed by Western society over the past generation. The point is that the modern workforce demands greater challenge and stimulation, greater opportunities to self-actualize on the job, more chances to feel competent and efficacious, and more frequent opportunities to achieve and develop than did previous generations (Universum Communications, 2006). But there are not enough jobs in business and industry that provide sufficient challenge and stimulation to make this sort of universal need satisfaction possible from work. People seek alternative activities to meet their needs for challenge and stimulation.

Earlier, we focused on Locke's (1968) definition of job satisfaction as an emotional reaction to one's work. It follows that job dissatisfaction is also an emotional reaction, although the blend and intensity of the emotions involved have not received systematic study. Nevertheless, the concept

is fairness to Herzberg, and as noted in Chapter 2, much of the research that purports to refute the motivator-hygiene theory was also flawed (Grigaliunas & Weiner, 1974).

of *emodynamic* satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) must be mentioned here again. From this view a person's emotional experience of job dissatisfaction will be greatest when she loses desired outcomes, when the loss occurs suddenly rather than gradually, and when the rate of loss increases over time (see Salovey et al., 1993). Empirical research into this dynamic, temporal perspective on job dissatisfaction remains to be conducted, although the fertile and relatively new affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) introduced in Chapter 4 may prove useful in such research.

## Social Information Processing and Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

Throughout this book, we will periodically encounter the hypothesis that people's reactions to and interpretations of organizational events are heavily influenced by the social contexts within which the events occur. That is, people can be heavily influenced by the cues they receive from others (such as their coworkers, their supervisors, and even their loved ones) in forming beliefs about the meaning and significance of events that occur around them. In the following chapter, for example, time and again, we will see that these social cues play a huge role in people's interpretations of whether they are being treated equitably and justly in their work. Interestingly, this *social information processing* approach made its first notable appearance in the domain of organizational behavior theory and research in the context of job attitudes (see Pfeffer, 1981b; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977, 1978). Indeed, the proponents of this view have been among the harshest critics of needs-based models of job attitudes (see Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; and a reply by Alderfer, 1977).

Again, the basic tenet of this school of thought is that a person's reactions to his or her job are heavily influenced by the interpretation of cues provided by other people and other sources. Employees make use of the nouns and verbs as well as of the nonverbal cues provided to them by the social contexts of the workplace to describe and to think about their jobs. They learn about the relative desirability of the work by watching and speaking with coworkers and other people. Two proponents of the social information processing approach describe it this way:

Social information refers to comments, observations, and similar cues provided by people whose view of the job an employee considers relevant. It may be provided by people directly associated with the job, such as co-workers, supervisors, and customers, or it may be provided by people not employed by the company, such as family members and friends.

(Thomas & Griffin, 1989, p. 65)

Social information from these sources provides the employee not only with ideas about what things are important in the workplace but also about the relative importance of these features (Pfeffer, 1981b). In addition, they can provide insight into formation of the employee's evaluation of these features – are they favorable or aversive? Hulin (1990, pp. 455–456), who is a harsh critic of the social information processing view, wrote:

An extreme version of this approach argues that individuals experience little affect about their job satisfaction until they are *asked* (usually by social scientists). This view argues that social attitudes and affect are latent and unrecognized until some event triggers an evaluation. The nature of the triggering event (e.g., an attitude survey) may influence the resulting expressed and experienced attitudes as much as the events that presumably formed the latent attitudes. If asked, the respondents will produce an answer *because they are expected to*; they will then search their environments for information to justify their response – they enact subjective environments that provide a justification for their response.

As is usually the case in the social sciences, the introduction of new approaches to a sacred tradition

re again. From this view when she loses desired outcomes the rate of loss increases. From a social, temporal perspective and relatively new affective theory may prove useful in such

sparked a number of studies that attempted to pit the old theory against the new one. In this case the question was: Which is correct, the belief that objective features of the work environment are responsible for people's attitude, or are job attitudes merely the result of socially constructed realities? The reader is referred to Griffin (1987), Griffin, Bateman, Wayne, and Head (1987), and Thomas and Griffin (1989) for summaries of these studies. As often occurs in situations such as this – the debate between competing views on a matter – the conflicting data that result from research studies cause someone to proclaim that there is an element of truth in both viewpoints. Hence, Griffin et al. (1987) concluded: "The conclusions of researchers seeking to validate the social information processing model notwithstanding, it appears that perceptions of tasks are, in fact, partially determined by their objective properties and partially determined by social cues in workplaces" (p. 505). This author still concurs with this conclusion (cf. Pinder, 1998).

In summary, there is a variety of theoretical perspectives on the nature and experience of job dissatisfaction. The reader is encouraged to consider the proposition that all the models we discussed here have elements of truth: None is more "right" or "wrong" than the others, so perhaps the most important thing to remember is that job dissatisfaction can be a terrible drain on the spirits and health of people, both when they are at work and when they are trying to be away from it. We turn now to a look at some of the consequences of disliking one's job.

### Some Consequences of Job Dissatisfaction

It is instructive to consider what job dissatisfaction *feels like* to those who are experiencing it. It often carries feelings of gloom and despair, sometimes anger and resentment, sometimes futility. A study employing affective events theory (cf. Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), for example, found that negative experiences on the job caused employees to develop "emotion composites" and that three specific emotions – disappointed, unhappy, and depressed – were most significantly related to employees' intentions to leave the job (Grandey, Tam, & Brauburger, 2002). Jobs that are frustrating tend to make people tired and more mentally fatigued than they would otherwise be. Dissatisfying jobs can fill up lives, such that people feel depressed off the job as much as they do while at work, making the pursuit of leisure activities more critical, yet often less rewarding at the same time (recall Chapter 4). Moreover, job dissatisfaction can be a major contributor to poor mental health as well as to poor physical health (Herzberg, 1976; Jamal & Mitchell, 1980; Kavanagh, Hurst, & Rose, 1981).

In a nutshell, job dissatisfaction hurts. Discussing it in black and white offers a limited means of portraying how powerful an emotion it can be for those who suffer personally from it, not to mention how powerful the consequences can be for coworkers and loved ones associated with people suffering it. In extreme cases, such as those reported in Chapter 8, job dissatisfaction can, at times, be a matter of life and death.

### Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Jobs and in Life

It should come as no surprise, then, that the relationship between job satisfaction (dissatisfaction) and life happiness (unhappiness) has been a topic of considerable study for decades in the social sciences, although the strength of the relationship has been challenged from time to time (Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989), as has the nature of the causal relationships between the two constructs, if they do exist (e.g., Heller, Judge, & Watson, 2002). The primary implicit hypothesis has traditionally been that of a form of "spillover effect": Because work plays such a central role in our lives, experiences on the job produce either positive or negative attitudes and emotions and these are carried by the individual into the home setting. Tait and her colleagues (Tait et al., 1989) conducted a meta-analysis of the studies reported through the mid-1980s on the matter and concluded that,

indeed, the correlation between life and job satisfaction is significantly higher than zero and that, interestingly, the correlation among male samples in studies before 1974 (corrected  $r = 0.40$ ) was significantly higher than that among female samples during that same time period (corrected  $r = 0.20$ ). However, in the individual studies conducted *after* 1974, the difference between the correlations found in the two sex groups diminished to non-significance although the overall relationships between the two forms of satisfaction remained significantly greater than zero.

As opposed to the relatively simple one-way causal model assumed to link job happiness (the putative cause) with life happiness (the putative consequence), alternative models have been explored. For example, Judge and Watanabe (1993) tested and supported a reciprocal causal model and, still more recently, Heller et al. (2002) have provided support that the long-observed correlations between life and job satisfaction may be spurious; that is, it is possible that people's dispositional happiness/unhappiness (as we discussed it earlier) may account for much of the common variance observed in happiness in the two arenas.

The diversity of conceptual and operational definitions of job satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) used by investigators and managers (cf. Fields, 2002; Wanous & Lawler, 1972) makes it somewhat difficult to generalize the findings of research into the organizational consequences of holding favorable or unfavorable job attitudes. It has been assumed for many years that job attitudes may be more closely related to employee decisions to participate in organizations than they are to employee decisions concerning performance levels (see March & Simon, 1958). In other words, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been assumed to be much better predictors of attendance (or absenteeism), tardiness (as opposed to punctuality), and turnover than they are of performance levels. In the following section, we focus on the evidence behind these conclusions and discuss the costs and benefits of the consequences associated with unfavorable job attitudes.

## Job Dissatisfaction and Withdrawal Behaviors

Withdrawal in response to job dissatisfaction takes a number of characteristic forms, sometimes together or in sequence. Tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover are the three most commonly acknowledged forms of withdrawal, but psychological withdrawal consists of passive compliance and minimal attempts to perform on the job, demonstrating a general lack of desire to excel, to be creative, or alone to perform "above and beyond the call of duty" (see George, 1991; Organ, 1990). It sometimes manifests itself as laziness, sometimes as stupidity. Hanisch and Hulin (1990) developed a scale of withdrawal behaviors that includes self-report items such as leaving work early, letting others do my work for me, making excuses to go somewhere to get out of work, and being absent when not really sick. While tardiness, absenteeism, turnover, and psychological withdrawal are separate phenomena, they do tend to be related to one another and to appear hand in hand or sequentially (Beehr & Gupta, 1978; Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2004; Edwards, 1979; Hanish & Hulin, 1990; Stumpf & Dawley, 1981). It is important to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover, and to realize that job attitudes can be predictive only of withdrawal behaviors that are voluntary in nature (Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Many times, employees are late for work, absent from work, or must quit their jobs for reasons that are somewhat or totally beyond their control. For example, many employees find they must quit their jobs to accompany their spouses to new job sites in other cities following transfers. It would be unreasonable to include turnover of this sort in any analysis of the connection between job attitudes and turnover.

Research evidence suggests that job satisfaction will be conducive to lower levels of absenteeism (Breaugh, 1981; Dittrich & Carrell, 1979; Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1977; Mirvis & Lawler, 1977; Nicholson, Wall, & Lischeron, 1977), higher levels of motivation to attend work on a given day (Smith, 1977; Steers & Rhodes, 1978), lower levels of tardiness (Adler & Golan, 1981), and lower levels of voluntary turnover (Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Dunnette, Arvey, & Banas, 1973; Karp & Nickson, 1973; Nicholson et al., 1977), possibly including early retirement (Schmitt & McCune, 1981).



### **Absenteeism and job attitudes**

It has long been an article of faith among both researchers and managers that a primary cause of absenteeism behavior is low job satisfaction, low organizational commitment, or some other blend of unhappy attitudes toward one's work and the workplace. Although it may be true that, on the margin, unhappy workers are less likely to report to work than happier ones, there is much more to the absenteeism phenomenon than job attitudes, and the research evidence shows that the connection between absenteeism and job satisfaction/dissatisfaction is not very strong.

For example, Johns and Nicholson (1982) argued many years ago that there are several different reasons for people to be absent from work, and the psychological factors related to absence behavior should be treated case by case. In fact, two meta-analytic studies of the matter have reported that facets of job satisfaction count for less than 5% of absence behavior. Another meta-analysis of 31 at about the same time (Hackett & Guion, 1985) concluded that the relationship between the two concepts was very small and weak, the apparent appeal of the belief that people who dislike their jobs are more likely to stay away from those jobs notwithstanding. A decade later, Martocchio and Judge (1994) formed clusters of employees who worked for a large university on the basis of the common origins of their absenteeism behavior. Factors such as personal illness, the illness of others in one's household, community activities and hobby or leisure activities, and having children were considered. The results suggested that, following Johns and Nicholson (1982), there are many reasons, and combinations of reasons, for people to be absent from work. Of interest to our purposes here, job dissatisfaction was a statistically significant factor, but the effect was not large, particularly compared to some of the other factors included, such as personal illness.

### **Employee turnover and job attitudes**

Two very thorough meta-analyses of the empirical literature on the antecedents and consequences of employee turnover have found a consistent although only moderate linear relationship between job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and employee turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Although absenteeism does not appear to have many redeeming qualities, there is considerable theory and research to suggest that employee turnover entails both costs and benefits both for individuals and for organizations (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). As in the case of absenteeism and other withdrawal behaviors, it is critical to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary quitting behavior.

First, let's consider the costs of turnover for organizations. First, departing employees frequently take with them valuable expertise and knowledge acquired at the organizations they leave. This is especially problematic when they have developed profitable and positive relationships with some of the organizations' customers and clients. There are costs associated with recruiting and placing new people, training them, and waiting until the costs they represent are offset by the value they contribute once they are up to speed. Estimates of the aggregate costs of replacing an employee vary (with the skill level sought, the supply and demand for labor in the marketplace, and other factors). A survey by New York-based William Mercer Inc., found that 45% of companies in their sample reported turnover to cost more than \$10,000 per employee. Twenty percent estimated the costs at \$30,000 or higher.<sup>9</sup> A study of the tourism industry (where turnover is approximately 30%) estimates that the cost of replacing an employee is between \$1500 and \$4500 (*Personnel Today*, January 2, 2007, p. 19). When turnover occurs among top performers in senior organizational ranks, the costs to the organization can be particularly acute: The value contributed by higher-paid individuals is usually higher than that contributed by people at lower organizational levels and

<sup>9</sup> This information was taken from c20011948, "What are the costs of employee turnover?" by Entrepreneurial Edge, Edgewood Lowe Foundation. <http://www.celec.edu/publications/edinfo/ED01-07.html>

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frequently, it can be more difficult to locate and recruit suitable replacements at high levels than at lower levels. Finally, the loss of senior people, especially higher-performing ones, can mean the loss of future leadership talent for the organization as a whole (Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997).

What are some benefits to organizations of employee turnover? In some cases, an organization can reap real dollar cost savings through turnover, especially in cases where those who leave can easily be replaced by newcomers who are compensated at lower rates of pay and benefits (Dalton, 1981; Dalton & Todor, 1982a). In addition, turnover can help introduce new ideas, new "blood," and the potential for change and adaptation of the organization involved, a necessity for organizations facing even moderate levels of change in their environments (Aldrich, 1980; Gross, 1965). People who leave tend to be the ones who withdraw in other ways, so turnover may help reduce absenteeism, tardiness, psychological withdrawal, and their associated costs (Mobley, 1982).

Turnover may also be the only solution in cases of extreme conflict between organizational members, as often occurs following mergers and other forms of reorganization (Mobley, 1982). For the individual, moving to a new organization can serve as an adaptive escape from a job that is stressful or conducive to marital discord, alcohol and drug abuse, or general life maladjustment (see Hulin's 1990 discussion of withdrawal behaviors of all sorts as adaptive responses to job dissatisfaction and frustration). From a societal point of view, turnover helps cross-organizational institution building, as ideas and techniques developed in some organizations are taken into others, often at the cost of individual organizations but often for the benefit of entire industries or networks of organizations. (See McKelvey, 1982, for a discussion of the transmission of "genes" among organizations.)

Second, although job dissatisfaction may generate a desire to leave one's organization in favor of employment elsewhere, we cannot assume that low levels of turnover are indicative of generally positive work attitudes in a workforce. A number of factors can lock in disgruntled employees, preventing them from leaving dissatisfying work settings (Flowers & Hughes, 1973; Hershey, 1973). For example, while an employee may be very dissatisfied with some aspects of her job (such as the nature of the work itself), she might be quite unwilling to leave it and lose the high levels of pay it brings her. The availability (or unavailability) of alternative employment has been recognized as a major factor in determining whether an unhappy employee will actually leave a paying job voluntarily (cf. March & Simon, 1958; Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Sometimes a generalized fear of the unknown, often based on real or imagined self-perceptions of obsolescence, prevents dissatisfied employees from quitting. That said, a recent study by Maertz and Campion (2004) found that people who leave a job with no alternative lined up tend to be much more dissatisfied than those who have alternatives available. Another study found that people who feel they have been mistreated are more likely to quit than others (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2004). Finally, Côté and Morgan (2002) found that employees whose jobs require them to suppress unpleasant emotions suffer decreased job satisfaction, which is, in turn, related to intentions to quit (recall our discussion of emotional labor in Chapter 4).

Many organizations inadvertently prevent their employees from leaving them because of the "golden handcuffs" they manage to lock onto their workforce over the years through pension plans, health insurance plans, and other benefits. The importance of this point is that although there is no necessary connection between job attitudes and individual job performance, disgruntled employees are often those who perform their jobs at the minimum levels required and who seldom demonstrate a desire to be creative or to excel "above and beyond the call of duty" when the occasion to do so presents itself. Moreover, there is evidence, presented earlier, that dissatisfied personnel are more likely to be absent and tardy, disrupting the normal flow of events for their employers, customers, and coworkers (Wright & Bonett, 1993). Hence, an organization may benefit from ridding itself of those who are dissatisfied.

This raises the following question: Is voluntary turnover higher among an organization's poor performers or its high performers? At first blush, one might hypothesize that workers who voluntarily leave are often the most competent and (therefore) the most marketable. But Steers and Mowday (1981) suggested that low performers are probable candidates for turnover because of their

low satisfaction with intrinsic elements of their jobs, motivating them to leave for more satisfying pastures. What does the research evidence say? It is mixed.

The results of three meta-analyses reported uncorrected linear correlations in the range of  $-0.16$  to  $-0.24$  (MacEvoy & Cascio, 1987; Bycio, Hackett, & Alvares, 1990; Williams & Livingstone, 1994): *Turnover and performance tend to have a small inverse linear relationship.* A study of employee files in a large U.S. insurance company, using logistic regression rather than the more frequently used OLS technique, came to the same conclusion (Morrow, McElroy, Laczniak, & Fenton, 1999). By way of contrast, Jackofsky (1984; see also Jackofsky, Ferris, & Breckenridge, 1986) proposed that there may be more to the story than a simple (inverse) linear relationship. Building on some of the conceptual arguments presented earlier, he proposed that there may be a curvilinear relationship, such that both high and low performers may be more likely to quit work voluntarily than people who are "average performers." Indeed, a large-scale study by Trevor et al. (1997) found support for such a curvilinear relationship,<sup>10</sup> as did the meta-analysis by Williams and Livingstone (1994).

Whether turnover occurs among an organization's high performers and low performers may depend on its reward system. Trevor et al. (1997) summarized their findings this way:

[P]erhaps the most important result from this study concerns the moderating influence of salary growth. We found that low salary growth resulted in a more pronounced curvilinear relationship, relative to the high salary growth condition, as top performer turnover probabilities approximated the high turnover tendencies of poor performers. Conversely, because the negative effect of salary growth on turnover probability increased in magnitude as performance increased, paying for high performance defused this tendency as high performer turnover probabilities resembled the relatively low turnover tendencies of average performers.

In other words, both high- and low-level performers are more likely to quit voluntarily when pay and other rewards are contingent on performance, whereas they are more likely to leave when rewards are not distributed in accordance with performance (see also Dreher, 1982). Whether the relationship is linear and inverse or curvilinear seems to depend on moderator variables still to be discovered. At this point, the key consideration for the retention of top performers is to recognize their excellence with positive rewards, as would be prescribed by most theories presented elsewhere in this book (see especially Chapter 12).

The focus of all the work examined here in relation to the connection between performance and turnover has been on individuals. There has been less research conducted at the level of work groups or formal organizational units. An exception is a study reported by McElroy, Morrow, and Rude (2001) which found that three varieties of turnover at the unit level were all related to reductions in profitability among a sample of 31 geographically separated units of an American insurance company. The three forms were involuntary turnover (dismissals), voluntary, and reduction in force (layoffs). All three types of turnover had detrimental impacts on organizational performance, although the effects of layoffs were the strongest.

Finally, while job dissatisfaction is a contributing factor to voluntary turnover, it is not responsible for most cases of involuntary quitting. Hence, turnover may be beneficial for the employee who leaves and for the organization to which he goes. And turnover may be either beneficial or detrimental to the organization that suffers it, depending on the costs associated with the economic and noneconomic considerations discussed earlier. An exhaustive analysis of the causes, costs, and benefits of turnover is beyond the scope of this chapter; the interested reader is referred to recent reviews by Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner (2000) and Mitchell & Lee (2001).

<sup>10</sup> This project is an admirable example of the combination of good theory, common sense, and rigorous empirical study, one that has interesting theoretical and applied implications.



### ***The unfolding model of voluntary turnover***

Employee turnover has been the subject of countless empirical studies over the past 50 years (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). As suggested in the foregoing discussion, most of the research and the theory related to it has focused on attitudinal factors (such as those discussed in Chapter 9) – the idea being that dissatisfying experiences will result in negative job attitudes that, in turn, will generate intentions to quit, followed by, when alternatives were perceived to be available, actual quitting behavior.

Mitchell and Lee (2001) introduced a fundamentally new model of voluntary turnover, one that introduces new constructs called *organizational attachment* and *job embeddedness*. (Embeddedness is a newly coined term for a construct that includes an individual's links to other people, teams, and groups; perceptions of their fit with the job, organization, and community; and what they say they would have to sacrifice if they left their jobs.)

Although this new model does not replace the traditional dissatisfaction-search-quit paradigm, it augments it by recognizing that there are a variety of sequences that explain the quitting behavior of different people. Specifically, they recognize that certain events in a person's life, either related to their jobs or not, can cause an individual to take stock of his or her job attitudes and, in some cases, consider whether the event (which they refer to as "shock") bears significance for their decision to search for alternatives or not. For example, the death of a loved one may cause an individual to consider whether s/he should leave a job and move abroad to be closer to one's children. The takeover by one's employer by another organization is a second example: The event may cause a person to stop and reflect about the wisdom of staying or leaving the company. Mitchell and Lee (2001) proposed four general "paths" that people tend to follow toward quitting (or staying) in a job in the aftermath of a shock. The path(s) people follow toward quitting or staying "unfold" as they consider a variety of factors, including the availability of alternative jobs, the goodness of fit they perceive between themselves and the circumstances they anticipate by either leaving or staying, the degree of embeddedness they have in their current work, and life-in-general circumstances.

Mitchell and Lee (2001) described two early studies they conducted with their colleagues to help launch the unfolding model, and a number of other studies have followed to develop the model (e.g., Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden, 2005) and, in subsequent studies, found that job embeddedness explained variance in intentions to quit as well as actual quitting behavior (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001).

Complete detail of the unfolding model is beyond our present scope. The point is that job dissatisfaction is not the only cause of the various types of withdrawal behaviors that we have discussed here, although it does contribute to many people's decisions to quit.

Suffice it to say that this new model offers a much more realistic description of the processes in voluntary turnover than earlier models and, as research and further validation proceed, it will enhance our capacity to predict and perhaps control voluntary quitting (cf. Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001).

### ***Turnover and gender in Canada***

In the study mentioned earlier in this chapter, Statistics Canada (2007) has recently reported that the traditional gap in turnover rates of men and women has virtually closed over the past two decades. The annual percentage of the male workforce in Canada that voluntarily quit their jobs in 1984, 1994, and 2002 were, respectively, 5.5%, 5.5%, and 7.6%. The corresponding figures for working Canadian women were 7.0%, 5.6%, and 7.5% – now, virtually no different from the male data.

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### **A closing note on the strength of the forces to withdraw: The case of the military**

A powerful and poignant portrayal of the forces that cause individuals to be voluntarily absent from their work and/or to quit it altogether is provided by Dobie (2005) in her discussion of the problems of AWOL (absent without leave) and desertion in the U.S. military. According to her analysis, the number of desertions in the U.S. Army has risen from 1509 in 1995 to 4739 in 2001. When one considers the severity of the punishment for being caught in either of these two forms of withdrawal (court martial and imprisonment), the magnitude of misery soldiers face is placed in stark relief. Knowing the personal costs of being caught and punished for being AWOL or for desertion, increasing numbers of military personnel "withdraw" anyway. This author suspects that the traditional dissatisfaction → withdrawal model as well as the unfolding model featuring "shocks" can both contribute to the experiences of soldiers who take the risks of escape from life in the military.

### **Job Satisfaction and Individual Productivity**

At least since the beginning of the human relations movement in the 1940s, it has commonly been assumed that employees who are more satisfied with their work tend to be more productive than those who are not as satisfied. Among many managers, politicians, and social critics, it makes intuitive sense to assume that "a more satisfied employee is a productive employee." Fisher (2003) has offered evidence of the strength and universality of this belief as well as a number of explanations for its widespread acceptance, while Judge et al. (2001) identified seven different belief structures people hold to portray the satisfaction-performance relationship (see Figure 10.1). For the current author, this "truism" (that happy workers are more productive workers) is the surest way to debunk naive ideas students and newcomers to the field have about the limitations to the argument that OB is simply a matter of common sense!!

The intuitive appeal of this idea notwithstanding, after countless studies into the relationship between these two variables, it can be concluded that there is only a small statistical bivariate relationship between job attitudes and individual performance, where "performance" is conceived as short-term productivity and task accomplishment (see Fisher, 2003, for a review).

Recall from our discussion in Chapter 9 that it is seldom the case that attitudes lead to specific behaviors in a predictable fashion. Sometimes, high levels of satisfaction are associated with high levels of productivity; other times, the opposite is the case. It may be, for example, that a dissatisfied employee will become quite productive if she perceives that high performance levels may help her earn a promotion, a raise in pay, or even a chance to attain a job elsewhere. Alternatively, highly satisfied employees can become complacent, resting on their reputations and assuming that contributions made in the past have earned them the right to "coast" on the job, perhaps until retirement or layoff.

Why do general attitudes about one's work *not* predict job performance? Fisher (1980) observed years ago that it is unreasonable to expect *general* attitudes (such as a generally positive attitude toward one's job) to be predictive of *specific* acts (such as performing at a high level of productivity). Fisher points out that we can reasonably expect only *specific attitudes* to predict *specific actions*. More to the point – using concepts from the theory of reasoned action (recall Chapter 9) – rather than expecting to predict a specific behavior (such as expending high job effort) with a *global* attitude toward one's job, we should attempt to use people's *attitudes toward the act in question* (expending high levels of effort on the job) to predict that behavior. Fisher (1980) observed that attitudes and behaviors are conceptualized and measured at the same levels of specificity. It is hopeless to expect job satisfaction to predict individual job performance. The wisdom of Fisher's insight was to be resurrected years later to help OB researchers get the genie out of the bottle on the satisfaction-performance hypothesis. We return to her insight shortly.

One suggests for high when it will be "equivocal" it is dis and a to that pe increase uncertain in creatir intrinsic associate uncertain behavior. pleasure i one's env believes t through l pleasure c formance increases, interesting was appar some of inspired D latter two another. T White's ( motivation of Weick's Deci & R equate the with that of Katzell advanced a marizing a dence on tl job satisfacti research tha other resear bivariate cc attitudes an either low whether en provide the are probably and that whe of other such valued extrin

to be voluntarily absent from work. According to her analysis, the two forms of withdrawal are placed in stark relief. One is for desertion, increases as the traditional "shocks" can both in the military.

In the 1940s, it has commonly been thought to be more productive than and social critics, it makes an employee." Fisher (2003) has given a number of explanations for different belief structures (Figure 10.1). For the current study, the surest way to debunk the argument that OB

studies into the relationship between a small statistical bivariate connection "performance" is conceived as a review).

It is that attitudes lead to specific actions are associated with high performance levels may help her earn more. Alternatively, highly satisfied and assuming that contribute to job, perhaps until retirement or

performance? Fisher (1980) observed that as a generally positive attitude (at a high level of productivity) tends to predict specific actions (recall Chapter 9) — rather than high job effort) with a global attitude toward the act in question. Fisher (1980) observed that until the same levels of specificity, it is performance. The wisdom of Fisher's is the genie out of the bottle on the Y.

One intriguing theoretical approach suggests that satisfaction may be responsible for high levels of individual productivity only when the person believes that productivity will be successful as a means of removing "equivocality" (Weick, 1969, p. 99). Equivocality is disorder, ambiguity, multiple meanings, and a touch of chaos. We noted in Chapter 7 that people are frequently motivated to increase and then reduce the amounts of uncertainty in their lives. The energy expended in creating these cycles is called, in one view, intrinsic motivation. The actual behavior associated with increasing and removing uncertainty is called intrinsically motivated behavior. Weick (1969) suggested that there is pleasure in the removal of equivocality from one's environment, and so if an employee believes that equivocality can be mastered through high energy expenditure and that pleasure occurs in the removal process, performance and satisfaction will covary: As one increases, so does the other. Historically, it is interesting to note that Weick's hypothesis was apparently derived, at least in part, from some of the same intellectual roots that inspired Deci and his colleagues, although the latter two authors do not acknowledge one another. The common roots are found in White's (1959) writing about *effectance motivation* (see Chapter 7). Direct comparison of Weick's thinking and that of Deci (1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985) would require us to equate the concept of equivocality (Weick) with that of uncertainty (Deci).

Katzell, Thompson, and Guzzo (1992) advanced a complex theoretical model summarizing a great deal of the then-existing evidence on the complex relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. In the research that followed, they found, as had other researchers before them, that the simple bivariate connection between positive job attitudes and high levels of performance is either low or nonexistent, depending on whether employees or their supervisors

provide the performance data. They also concluded that both performance and satisfaction are probably best thought of as consequences of many other organizational and attitudinal factors, and that when they are connected with one another, it is usually very indirectly, through the effects of other such variables. For example, the work must yield intrinsic rewards. There must be highly valued extrinsic rewards tied to performance and administered equitably. Job involvement must be

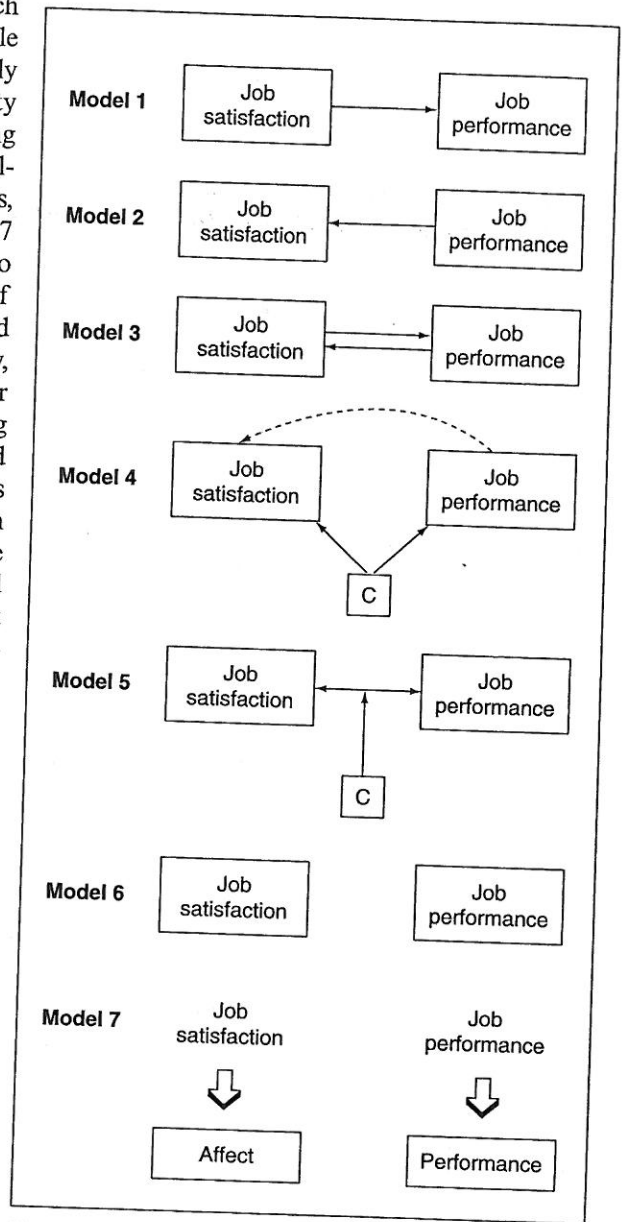


FIG. 10.1 Models of the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance.

Source: Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction–job performance relationship: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(3): 376–407. (Note that in Models 4 and 5, C denotes a third variable.) Reprinted with permission.

high, and clear, challenging, and acceptable goals must be set (Katzell et al., 1992). Their conclusions were reminiscent of much earlier formulations presented by Porter and Lawler (1968) and by Locke and Latham (1990b).

### *The between-persons-within-persons issue (again)*

Since the last time this author reviewed this literature (Pinder, 1998), significant innovations have occurred in both conceptual clarity and research methodology directed to the satisfaction-performance relationship. One more time, we find that research evidence is frequently a joint product of the actual relationships among parameters and the nature of the methodology we use to find those relationships. At this point, the reader is reminded of the "between-within" dilemma in research methodology we first discovered in Chapter 2 and that will reappear in Chapter 12.

Here is the core of the matter: Do we believe that:

- (a) Persons who are happier with their jobs than other people are also likely to be more productive at their jobs than those other people?
- (b) As a particular individual becomes happier with her job, she will become more productive at it?
- (c) As a person becomes more productive at her job (and receives intrinsic and/or extrinsic rewards for this improvement), she will become more satisfied with that job?

Interpretation (a) has been the most traditional throughout this long debate, and the evidence to support it has been very weak – see Fisher (2003) for a summary of the reviews on the matter. Why would one suppose that because John is happier (for any of a number of reasons) with his job than Mary is with hers he should be more productive than Mary? The correlation and possible causal connection between a person's attitudes and motivation or behavior is a private affair, not a social one. Therein lies the wisdom of Fisher's insight.<sup>11</sup>

### *Experience-sampling procedures*

Interpretations (b) and (c) discard the across-person comparisons and adopt a more appropriate within-individual person approach and have found much stronger connections between the two parameters than have been isolated by the between-persons approach. The technique of choice for undertaking research with the within-individual conceptualization of the satisfaction-performance hypothesis is *experience sampling methodology* (ESM), described here by Ilies and Judge (2002, p. 1120):

In an ESM design, participants are required to report their momentary experiences or subjective feeling states, or to record momentary measures of physiological variables (e.g., heart rate, body temperature, etc.). The ESM measurement approach eliminates the process of recall or summarization, which can be problematic due to selective memory processes . . . Measurement occurs in the natural environment and the data collection process is intensive, typically involving multiple observations per person.

In short, this method allows the researcher to study the covariation between two (or more) variables over time, within a single person, permitting the study of within-person dynamic relationships among those variables. Of most interest to our present purposes, of course, this method allows us to study whether increases in positive mood experienced at Time 1 by a person are associated with subsequent increases in performance at Time 2. Notice that data collected through this method also

<sup>11</sup> The interested reader may enjoy a debate instigated by Wright and Staw (1999), who resurrected the happy-productive worker hypothesis for further study by examining the relationship between people's mood states and trait dispositions. Successfully seeking relationships with supervisory ratings, Ledford (1999) and Wright and Staw (1999) then exchanged papers to advance the resurrection of the hypothesis.

enable a search for across-person covariations (of the traditional sort as well). The interested reader is referred to a paper by Hormuth (1986) for greater detail about this data-collection technique.

Using this technique, Ilies and Judge (2002) tested a model that an individual's personality (neuroticism, extraversion, positive affectivity, and negative affectivity) would predict his or her average mood, and that mood would, in turn, predict job satisfaction between and within individuals. They tested their model using 27 Americans whose jobs ranged from secretarial to professional, each person recording his or her momentary mood and job satisfaction four times per day for 19 working days. This meant that the maximum number of observations per person was 76, and the maximum number of observations across individuals and time periods was 2052. (In fact, they managed to record a total of only 1907 ESM ratings of mood and job satisfaction.) Among their findings was that "for the average individual, job satisfaction ratings vary across time almost as much as average levels of job satisfaction vary across individuals. To be more precise, 36% of the differences in job satisfaction ratings were due to differences within individuals" (p. 1132). Note that Ilies and Judge were not concerned with the satisfaction-performance link in their study but, rather, were employing the ESM technique to study relationships among personality, mood and satisfaction, largely supporting their model.

A study more germane for our present purposes was reported by Fisher and Noble (2004), who, using the ESM method, both hypothesized and found significant within-person correlations among a host of variables, including task skill, task difficulty, task interest, effort, performance, and positive and negative emotions. A total of 4507 responses were gathered from a sample of 1221 people. Complete detail of their elaborate model is not provided here; the interested reader is referred to the original research report. Nevertheless, while causal connections among variables could not be justified by the cross-sectional nature of the data collection and analysis, the researchers estimated a strong within-person correlation ( $r = .47$ ) between task performance and positive emotions and a strong inverse correlation ( $r = -.43$ ) between task performance and negative emotions.<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusions on job satisfaction and individual job performance**

A thorough and scholarly review of the literature on this subject was conducted by Judge et al. (2001). Noting that thousands of previous studies as well as a number of earlier meta-analyses had failed to reach much in the way of satisfying conclusions, they conducted a fresh meta-analysis that included 312 samples and a combined number of 54,417 research participants. As mentioned earlier, they organized their thinking around seven different conceptual models that previous researchers had employed, either explicitly or implicitly. (Judge and his colleagues cite a general lack of clarity in model articulation and accumulation as a source of much of the confusion they found in the literature.) Using the various procedures for adjusting parameter estimates employed in meta-analysis, they estimated the "mean true correlation" between overall job satisfaction and job performance to be .30. On the basis of their review, they propose a hybrid model to guide future research that is, for the most part, a blend of five of the models they identified at the beginning of their research. In many ways similar to the early theoretic model of Porter and Lawler (1968), the hybrid model proposed by Judge et al. (2001) contains the following features:

1. A circular relationship between individual satisfaction and individual job performance; that is, each is a contributing cause of the other.

<sup>12</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 4, another ESM study by these researchers found that people's interest in their work, their perceived skill at their jobs and the effort that they put into their jobs were positive predictors of positive emotions and negative predictors of negative emotions (Fisher & Noble, 2004). Results also showed that people's emotions about their work varied considerably over time, as did their levels of job performance. However, the results did not support the hypothesis that prior positive emotions would predict current performance levels or the hypothesis that prior negative emotions would predict current performance levels (Fisher & Noble, 2004).

2. In the case of the satisfaction-causes-performance connection, several mediating variables are proposed, including the individual's behavioral intentions and possessing a positive mood state. This model is also seen as subject to the effects of a number of moderator variables, the person's self-concept, autonomy on the job, norms of the workplace as well as methodological factors such as the means by which data are aggregated and the level of analysis used in the research.
3. In the case of the performance-causes-satisfaction connection, mediators such as the person's self-efficacy and positive mood may be invoked to explain the relationship. Moreover, the main bivariate relationship may well be moderated by characteristics of the person's job, the strength of the relationship between rewards and performance, and personality factors such as need for achievement.

Finally, Judge et al. (2001) identify nearly 20 research questions that follow from their analysis to inspire and guide other researchers who wish to join the ranks of countless others before them who have sought the solution to the problem: "What is the relationship between employee performance and satisfaction?"

## Job Satisfaction and other Forms of Performance

So why are positive job attitudes important if they are so modestly related to bottom-line indicators of performance? Farrell (1983), Fisher and Locke (1992), and Smith (1992), among others, have provided some answers. Although it is true that positive job attitudes are not reliably predictive of the performance levels of individual employees (as detailed earlier), *job satisfaction may be related to a variety of other outcome variables that have largely been ignored until recently*. An alternative way of stating the same thing is that current thinking requires a broader definition of performance than has traditionally been used in the past by organizational scientists – a definition that equates "performance" with "individual productivity."

### Unit-level analyses

Throughout the 1990s, the Gallup Organization conducted and reported a series of studies on job attitudes and copyrighted a 13-item scale to assess job satisfaction and employee engagement, which, for Gallup, refers to an individual's involvement and satisfaction as well as enthusiasm for work. The items were identified through focus groups and other, more traditional approaches. The particularly interesting thing about these items is that they focus on issues that managers and supervisors can influence, such as the degree of clarity a person has about what is expected of her or him and the degree to which the person feels pride in the organization's vision. When results collected by Gallup's instrument are combined to the work unit level, they are generally positively associated with positive unit-level dependent variables, including profit. A meta-analysis reported by Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) summarized and supported the satisfaction-performance link at the unit level, with the implication that the causal flow was in the satisfaction/engagement to performance direction. An early study by Ostroff (1992), involving nearly 300 public schools and more than 13,000 teachers, showed that, collectively, positive job attitudes (including attitudinal commitment) among the teachers was significantly correlated with a range of school-level performance measures.

Building on the work of Farrell (1983), for example, Fisher and Locke (1992) constructed a typology of outcomes that can result from negative job attitudes. These categories include avoidance acts such as quitting one's job outright, avoidance by minimizing effort or dodging difficult tasks, psychological adjustments (e.g., using drugs or other substances), constructive problem solving such as forming a union, defying authority and resisting managerial directions, and outright aggression such as acts involving sabotage, rumor mongering, and the like. Fisher and Locke's categories

include many other specific examples, but their point is made: "Performance" consists of much more than simple efficiency and measures of individual productivity, as has usually been construed in the past (see Staw, 1984).

On the positive side, an entire set of prosocial behaviors (or what Fisher and Locke, 1992, call "helping behaviors") often result from positive employee attitudes. Originally conceived of as work that lies outside the individual's formal job description (Katz, 1964), four more specific forms of work above and beyond the call of duty have been studied in recent years, usually in relation to positive job attitudes. These positive behaviors have been referred to as extra-role, prosocial, altruistic, and citizenship behaviors (see Organ, 1990).

Clearly, most organizations would rather have their employees engage in such acts than not do so: We have all experienced the chill of the bureaucratic employee who prefers not to extend himself beyond minimal service, and a few of us have actually enjoyed the relief and satisfaction that can occur when an employee extends himself beyond normal expectations to be especially helpful. Good citizenship behavior by employees becomes particularly important in service industries, where courtesy, sympathy, and energetic creativity and positive attitude toward customers' problems can mean the difference between profit and loss (George, 1991).

## Job Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction

There may be other reasons to be concerned with generating and fostering positive job attitudes — having more to do with mental and physical health and personal well-being than they do with corporate profit and individual job performance. As suggested earlier, there is a renewal in the belief that positive attitudes in one forum of a person's life "spill over" into positive mental health and happiness in other arenas of life. This idea was first proposed decades ago but has continued to receive attention from job satisfaction theorists such as Smith (1992), who wrote about general feelings of happiness and trust that people may generate and enjoy through their work. Their feelings of happiness and joy also contribute to similar emotions in non-work settings, such as in their family lives, recreation activities, and so on (see Schmitt & Bedeian, 1982; Schmitt & Pulakos, 1985). A general sense of joy and a predilection toward being happy fosters positive job attitudes as well, so the causality between general happiness and context-specific happiness prevails. According to Smith (1992), people blessed with such feelings of happiness and trust are much more open to change in their lives, particularly changes in their work situations. Their generally positive disposition tends to transcend time and situations, although as we noted earlier, they too are subject to negative feelings. It is a matter of relative rank order among their peers who don't possess the predisposition. At work, they are less resistant to managerial initiatives and approach new work procedures more constructively and with minimum supervision.

A longitudinal study conducted in the mid-1980s involved a sample of full-time employees of a private U.S. university. This study illustrated the concept of spillover and the statements that Cranny et al. (1992) have made about the benefits of positive general life satisfaction. The study also extended previous work to examine the effects of two (rather than just one) dimensions of emotionality. Negative affectivity and positive affectivity (Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Slack, 1993). Each of these moods can be experienced either as a passing state or as stable traits, although the focus in this project was on the trait forms of affectivity. People who have strong negative affectivity tend to view the world from a negative, pessimistic perspective. They witness higher levels of distress and dissatisfaction in most settings in which they find themselves. On the contrary, people high in positive trait affectivity have fun in life, viewing things positively and with a generalized optimism. They may even have heightened capacities to enjoy positive stimuli.

In their study, Watson and Slack (1993) gathered data on both positive and negative affectivity at two points in time, spanning 2 years. They controlled for a number of other variables relating to their participants' work and assessed job satisfaction at the end of the 2-year period. A total of 82 of

the original 151 employees stayed with the project to provide complete sets of data. The results confirmed that both positive and negative trait measures of emotionality were related to at least some dimensions of job satisfaction. Thus, negative trait affect was associated with lower satisfaction with one's work and one's coworkers; positive trait affect was predictive of positive assessments of employees' work, promotions, and overall job satisfaction. They also found that these traits/predispositions remained stable over the 2 years of the project. The authors concluded that job satisfaction can reasonably be understood "in the context of the broader emotional lives of employees." It is not just a result of organizational policies, procedures, and job design; it is a reflection of the greater, more general degree of individual happiness or unhappiness of the person. To the extent that this is true, there is plenty of reason to study job satisfaction, aside from the relentless quest for its elusive link to productivity, performance, and other aspects of organizational effectiveness.

Another study examined the notion that job and life satisfaction are related to one another using a large survey database from the early 1970s (Judge & Watanabe, 1993). These researchers found a strong cross-sectional link between the two variables but a much smaller connection between job satisfaction and life satisfaction when the latter was measured 5 years later than the former.

In contrast to the argument that job satisfaction and life satisfaction are related to one another (Cranny et al., 1992) presumably in the sense that one is responsible for much of the other (i.e., that job satisfaction causes some or much of life satisfaction), there is another possibility. A study of 631 people in their homes, combined with data analysis techniques appropriate for the purpose, suggested that any relationship that does exist between job and life satisfaction is due, at least in large measure, to the effects of one or more other variables (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1994). In other words, it may be that the oft-observed bivariate relationship between satisfaction at work and satisfaction with life in general (or, alternatively, dissatisfaction in both arenas) is spurious. This means that the correlation between them may be because some other variable(s) is driving both of them, although life and work satisfaction may not actually be causally related. Indeed, a more recent study by Hart (1999) found that job satisfaction and non-work satisfaction, although related to one another directly, both contributed to the variance in life satisfaction reported by a sample of police officers and a within-individual study by Heller, Watson, and Ilies (2006) found that both marital and job satisfaction were positively correlated with the life satisfaction of a sample of married Americans under the age of 65.

## Measurement of Job Satisfaction

Perhaps the construct of most interest over the 70-year history of social scientific attention to work, employees, and related matters, job satisfaction has been measured countless times by countless managers, consultants, and researchers. As is usually the case, hasty scales and single-item measures were often slapped together for quick-and-dirty analyses. However, perhaps more than any other construct of interest in the organizational sciences, job satisfaction has enjoyed some of the "best" (recall Chapter 2) measurement available to us. A recent compendium of organizational measures compiled by Fields (2002) lists many scales of proven validity. Indeed, even some of the scales that brag the best early psychometric properties continue to undergo scrutiny (e.g., Kimicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim, & Carson, 2002). There is no longer any excuse for researchers to construct home-made measures of job satisfaction.

## Conclusions on Job Satisfaction and a Glance Ahead

In the foregoing sections of this chapter (as well as in parts of Chapter 4), we have seen that job satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) are complex motivation-related phenomena, containing both



attitudinal and affective elements. We have seen that both are influenced by a range of individual and organizational variables and they, in turn, can have significant effects on a range of other individual as well as organizational variables. The history of the study of job attitudes is as old as the history of the organizational sciences and history has seen a cyclical pattern of attention being paid to people's feelings about their jobs. The frustrated attempts through the 1980s to find the widely anticipated causal connections between job attitudes and individual performance portended a decline in scientific interest, even though practitioners seemed to believe that "a satisfied employee is a productive employee." The connections between job attitudes and nonperformance variables, especially withdrawal behaviors, never lost their value in the eyes of either researchers or practitioners. Then, with the introduction of more appropriate conceptualizations of job attitudes (as within-individual phenomena) in the 1990s, research on job attitudes and all of its antecedents and consequences enjoyed a renaissance and the topic is now again "popular" in the academic literature.

Aside from the historical significance of the phenomena, the more important issue, for this author, is the tremendous significance they have as experienced by working people. Those who have experienced the joys of working know what this means, as do those who have suffered the frustrations of job and career dissatisfaction: They really hurt, and they deliver significant impacts on our daily lives, both while we are actually at work as well as when we are not.

### ***A glance ahead***

Whereas Part Two of this book approached the motivation to participate and the motivation to perform from a needs perspective, Part Three looks at these two elements of work motivation from the perspective of people's attitudes and beliefs. In short, the purpose here is to understand how certain job-related attitudes may or may not be related to the desire of people to participate in organizations and to perform well for those organizations. Now that we have examined job satisfaction in detail, we turn our attention to work commitment, a set of attitudes, beliefs, and intentions that people form in reference to their employers, as opposed to their jobs per se.

## **WORK COMMITMENT**

Whereas job satisfaction generally has to do with the degree to which one's needs or values are satisfied by one's job, work commitment is a multidimensional construct that is somewhat broader in scope. Specifically, *work commitment* is currently seen as comprising several dimensions, such as adherence to a work ethic (see Chapter 1 of this book), commitment to a career or a profession, job involvement (the degree of daily absorption in everyday work experiences), and organizational commitment (the degree of loyalty a person holds for a particular employer) (see Blau & Paul, 1993; Morrow, 1993). Space limitations here require that we focus primarily on the third and fourth varieties of work commitment identified by Morrow (1993): Organizational commitment and job involvement. The interested reader is referred to Morrow (1993, Chapter 1) and to Chapter 1 of this volume for a discussion of the issue of the Protestant work ethic, and to Morrow (1993, Chapters 2 and 3) for an examination of a relatively new concept, career commitment. We examine organizational commitment in the following sections and conclude the chapter with job involvement.

### **Varieties of Organizational Commitment: What is It?**

Organizational commitment has attracted more attention among organizational scientists than any other variety of work commitment, and it has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, although

sets of data. The results were related to at least associated with lower satisfaction of positive assessments so found that these traits/authors concluded that job broader emotional lives of es, and job design; it is a unhappiness of the person. satisfaction, aside from the er aspects of organizational

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### **Ahead**

apter 4), we have seen that job phenomena, containing both

there is some convergence among the best-developed perspectives (Morrow, 1993). For example, Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) saw organizational commitment as consisting of three interrelated (although not identical) attitudes and intentions: (1) a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a definite desire to remain a member of the organization (Porter et al., 1974). The Porter approach, which has been the predominant one for three decades, has come to be referred to as an *affective* view of the concept (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989). "Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they *want* to do so" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67).

A second component of organizational commitment is referred to as *normative commitment* (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It consists of "the totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational goals and interests" (Weiner, 1982). In this approach, commitment causes individuals to behave in ways that they believe are morally right rather than in ways that are going to be instrumental for their own goals. It involves a belief that *a person simply ought to be loyal*; it is a matter of intrinsic responsibility. Beliefs and values of this sort are believed to originate in one's family and culture and through organizational socialization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). People who are normatively committed to their organizations are more likely to make sacrifices for them, to persist in their attempts to serve them, and to be preoccupied with them, devoting a considerable proportion of their time and energy to the pursuit of the objectives of their organizations. It is seen simply as the right thing to do.

A third approach to organizational commitment has been referred to as *calculative* (Morrow, 1993) or *continuance commitment* (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 1989). Originating with Becker (1960), this form of organizational commitment is concerned with the individual's attachment to an employer by virtue of transactions that occur between the employee and the organization, resulting in various forms of side-bets and investments over time (e.g., seniority rights, personal attachments to other workers, pension plans, company-specific work skills). In this view an employee is committed to an organization because the costs of leaving become too high. A person's attachment is not based on emotion or good feelings toward the company (as in the affective view), or upon any normative beliefs about the inherent goodness and value in being loyal (as in the second approach). Rather, this third understanding of commitment is based upon sheer economics and pragmatic consideration: It simply becomes too expensive for the person not to adhere to the company or other employer.

In short, we can think of organizational commitment as a form of extreme loyalty to one's organization. The important aspect of this construct for our present purpose is that the attitude object here is the organization per se, not the person's particular job, department, work group, occupation, profession, or career. Meyer and Allen (1997), two of the leading scholars in this area, suggest that we think of the three dimensions of commitment just discussed as components (of an underlying construct) rather than as types of commitment (which would imply less underlying unity of the construct).

### **Distinctive forms of commitment?**

Research directed to empirically distinguish among the three forms of commitment has not always succeeded in verifying that they are distinct from one another. While continuance commitment has had no trouble differentiating itself from affective and normative commitment, the last two frequently are found to be very highly intercorrelated in empirical studies (cf. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). A recent conceptual paper by Bergman (2006) has examined the nature of the three forms conceptually and has raised issues concerning the different antecedents and consequences that should be associated with each form as well as a number of different moderator variables that could be investigated in connection with the operations of each of the three forms. She also provides advice for better measurement of the constructs that have occurred in the past and offers a research direction for the future.

## Is Organizational Commitment a Trait, a Value, or a Propensity?

Earlier in this chapter we touched briefly upon the notion that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction may represent personal dispositions among people – that some people possess a propensity toward either positive or negative affective states that influence the way they evaluate their jobs and their general work lives. Similarly, some researchers think of organizational commitment, or at least certain aspects of it, as parts of a person's personality or personal value system (e.g., Angle & Lawson, 1993). In one study, a sample of 400 employees who were transferred en masse by their employer more than 1000 miles for a corporate relocation were measured for organizational commitment twice, both at the time of the relocation and then again 2 years later (Angle & Lawson, 1993). The researchers found that affective and continuance commitment were only modestly related to one another, but more important, they tested and supported a model that treated normative commitment as a personal value that predisposes a person toward possessing high affective and continuance commitment (Angle & Lawson, 1993). By this view, then, normative commitment is a more or less stable trait – a value – that people bring with them to any and all workplaces. Although a person's values are subject to change over time (see Chapter 3), normative commitment is seen by this perspective as being more or less constant: Either a person values commitment or does not, regardless of the circumstances.

Another early study, this one with a sample of U.S. Air Force cadets, investigated Mowday, Porter, and Steers' (1982) concept of *commitment propensity* (Lee, Ashford, Walsh, & Mowday, 1992). This concept is seen as representing all the personality factors, experiences, expectations, and values that a person brings to bear when considering going to work for an employer (Mowday et al., 1982). Commitment propensity is a summary concept that reflects the likelihood, in advance of being employed by an organization, that the person will become committed to the organization after being hired. It also takes into account the degree of volition a person has in choosing to work for a particular organization. The Air Force study showed that the various experiences (situational factors) and the cadets' varying degrees of commitment propensity both had an effect on their survival in the Air Force. Specifically, preentry commitment propensity was related to initial commitment, which, in turn, was related to organizational commitment in the longer term, as measured by lower levels of voluntary withdrawal from the academy.

The Lee et al. (1992) study was important for several reasons. First, it provided an early example of the new variety of research that attempts to disentangle the various effects of personal variables from situational variables (recall the discussion in Chapter 1; and see Judge, 1992; Organ, 1990; and Schneider, 1983). Second, it provides another illustration of the critical importance of early experiences for a person after he enters an organization or new job setting for the first time. Earlier in this chapter, for instance, we saw how important it is for newcomers to have challenging first assignments, participation in the decisions about their jobs, and a chance to be "heard" about the work itself for satisfaction and commitment to the organization. This same effect has been well documented among engineers (Badawy, 1982).

## Psychological Bases for Organizational Commitment

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) built upon an earlier typology of attitude change proposed by Kelman (1958) to delineate three distinct psychological bases that can underlie organizational commitment. The issue is: What, psychologically, forms the basis for a person's commitment to an organization? The three bases are referred to as compliance, identification, and internalization. *Compliance* occurs when a person is attached for the sake of gaining rewards or advancement of some sort. It is an instrumental form of commitment that has little or nothing to do with adherence to the

Morrow, 1993). For example, commitment as consisting of three components: belief in, and acceptance of, a considerable effort on behalf of the organization (Porter et al., 1974). In addition, it has come to be referred to as *normative commitment* (Allen, 1991). People who are expected to originate in one's sacrifices for them, to persist in making a considerable proportion of organizations. It is seen simply

as *normative commitment* (Morrow, 1989). Originating with Becker's (1960) concept of an individual's attachment to an organization, resulting in personal attachments to an employee is committed to an organization is not based on any normative (second approach). Rather, this is a pragmatic consideration: It is seen simply as *calculative* (Morrow, 1989). Originating with Becker's (1960) concept of an individual's attachment to an organization, resulting in personal attachments to an employee is committed to an organization is not based on any normative (second approach). Rather, this is a pragmatic consideration: It is seen simply

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of commitment has not always been the same. While continuance commitment and normative commitment, the last two components of the three (cf. Meyer, Stanley, & Bergman, 2006) has examined the different antecedents leading to each of the three components of each of the three components that have occurred in the

organization's mission or the values of its key members. *Identification* occurs when a person accepts influence to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship (see also Pratt, 1998). This may entail pride in membership in a group, "respecting its values and accomplishments without adopting them as his own" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. 493). Affiliation with another person or group, for the sake of affiliation, is the key.

The third basis for commitment that O'Reilly and Chatman borrowed from Kelman (1958) is referred to as *internalization*. In this case, the person accepts a group's attitudes and behaviors as congruent with his or her own. There is commitment that goes beyond mere identification: Internalization means the closest association between one's own motives and the motives of whatever group or organization is at issue. In two different studies, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) found that identification and internalization forms of commitment were positively related to prosocial behaviors and negatively related to both intentions to quit and actual quitting behavior. Commitment based on compliance was not related to prosocial behaviors or actual quitting behavior, but it was correlated with people's expressions of an intention to leave. The distinctions among these three "bases" for commitment are important and have roots in organizational science from many years past. We will see shortly that keeping the psychological bases for organizational commitment disentangled from one another allows for even further refinement of the general concept of organizational commitment (see Becker, 1992).

## Why is Commitment Thought to be Important?

Why has there been so much interest in organizational commitment among managers and academics? There are a number of reasons, some of which have legitimate scientific grounding, and some of which have been shown to have little or no basis in reality. On an intuitive level, it has been believed that high commitment is beneficial for both employers and employees. From the individual's perspective, high commitment provides a sense of identity and perhaps even status and prestige (Romzek, 1989). High commitment provides an opportunity for the person to receive both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfactions through their association with the employer, the other employees, and the business or industry in general. An employee who is committed to his employer may suffer less anxiety about the prospect of losing his job and may generally feel much more secure and content as a result. Commitment is accompanied by feelings of nurturance and mutual trust and fosters a generally positive outlook in life. For those who have it, commitment can be a source of comfort, identity, and security (Mowday et al., 1982).

### Commitment and identification

Ashforth and Mael (1989) described the value to people of *identifying* with an organization. While committing to an organization is related to identifying with it, the concepts are slightly different:

According to SIT [social identity theory], people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as organizational membership, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort . . . Social classification serves two functions. First, it cognitively segments and orders the social environment, providing the individual with a systematic means of defining others . . . Second, social classification enables the individual to define *him- or herself* in the social environment. (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, pp. 20-21)

It is possible for a person's social identity to adhere to a work group, a department, or a union (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), but our focus here is on the identification that comes with high organizational commitment. Once a focus for the identification has been selected ("I am an employee of the University of Nebraska's Alumni Association"), the person will derive a sense of pride and

self-concept, defined in part through that association. In short, identification that comes with commitment can be beneficial to a person (cf. Pratt, 1998; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998).

In the years since Ashforth and Mael's (1989) observations about the propensity to identify with an organization and how it is similar or different from being committed to one, organizational researchers working under the tradition of the commitment banner have devoted increasing attention to the matter of identification and its conceptual and empirical relationship(s) with commitment. Two other constructs – *attachment* and *embeddedness*<sup>13</sup> – have also come onto the scene, causing some skeptics, with good reason, to wonder whether the distinctions among these many concepts have more to offer theorists than practitioners and whether it is even possible to differentiate among them.

Most recently, a special edition of the periodical *Journal of Organizational Behavior* (cf. Van Dick, Becker, & Meyer, 2006) was devoted to these matters in late 2006. In that issue, Herrbach (2006) gathered data from a sample of engineers to provide some evidence for a distinction between identification and affective commitment, as they related to people's attachment to either (or both) their workgroup or their organization.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere in the same *JOB* issue, Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) concluded that identification represents a sense of oneness between an individual and an organization whereas commitment implies a relationship between two distinct entities (the person and the organization), while Meyer, Becker, and Van Dick (2006) proposed that literatures pertaining to commitment and those related to identity might be useful in informing one another.

A "discursive essay" by Brooks and Wallace (2006) provided a very readable summary of the various facets, factors, and nomological nets that pertain to the theory and research on organizational commitment. It is clear from their essay that there has been considerable convergence on the nature of the constructs themselves, conceptually, at least, and individuals in organizational settings will be "committed" to many different facets of the organization and its constituent elements (such as coworkers, bosses, workmates, the work etc., and the union). On the basis of their summary, however, Brooks and Wallace (2006) concluded: "More research endeavor is required before a complete understanding of the specific antecedents and consequences (and their directional connections) relating to the concept unfolds" (p. 236). This author agrees with their conclusion and would issue a caution that the proliferation of constructs relating to the connections between people and organizations has reached its limits: The conceptual hairs have been frequently split, perhaps enough.

## Management's Stake in Commitment

What is important about commitment from an employer's perspective? Organizations value high levels of commitment on the parts of their employees for a number of reasons (Randall, 1987). It has been widely believed that highly committed employees perform better on the job and are less likely to be absent, late, or to leave altogether. Such people are assumed to be more likely to engage in good citizen behaviors or work above and beyond the call of duty (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Mowday et al., 1982; Organ, 1990; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). At a societal level, high commitment may be associated with lower rates of overall mobility, higher levels of stability, greater national productivity, and higher aggregate levels of quality of life (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). On the face of it, then, intuitive reasoning suggests that high levels of organizational commitment will benefit both individuals and employers: Everyone wins.

In the following sections, we examine the ways in which organizations attempt to build commitment for the sake of gaining the benefits it is thought to produce. We then look closely at the evidence on the matter: What are the actual costs and benefits of high commitment?

<sup>13</sup> We encountered the embeddedness concept earlier in this chapter in relations to its association with voluntary employee turnover.  
<sup>14</sup> We return to issue of multiple foci for commitment shortly.

## Organizational Socialization and Commitment

From the time they enter the employment of organizations, most people witness attempts to make them committed and devoted to those organizations. Again, the purpose of these attempts is based on the hope and belief that highly committed workers are likely to be more effective. Thus, organizational rules are designed to assure that employees behave according to the norms and expectations of the organization. Often, an attempt is made to impress the newcomer with the merit of the organization's mission and major goals as well as to provide a sense of the history and traditions of the organization (Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Dandridge, 1983).

For example, induction programs and other socialization rituals attempt to inculcate the employee with an understanding of, and an appreciation for, "our way of doing things" (Feldman, 1977, 1981). Pensions and other benefit plans sometimes constitute so-called "golden handcuffs," which make it increasingly difficult for employees to consider leaving (see Angle & Perry, 1981, 1983). Organizational logos and insignia, off-the-job social functions, and programs for employees' spouses are all designed, in part, to build loyalty. (See Becker, 1960, on the role of social involvement in commitment building.) Company newsletters are common in large organizations, serving more to build a sense of loyalty and commitment than to communicate real news.

It has been suggested that even certain formal personnel transactions conducted upon employees once they are "onboard" facilitate commitment, binding them to the organization as a primary source of emotional and social support. For example, Edstrom and Galbraith (1977) suggested that the transferring of employees to positions at the various operating sites of geographically dispersed organizations functions, in part, to make them less likely to build connections outside the organization that may be distracting or that may serve to compromise their complete and undivided devotion. Finally, there is some evidence that reward systems (including promotions and merit pay) that link performance to rewards will tend to make employees more committed (Dreher, 1982). Many of these commitment builders are more deliberate than others, and some of them can be very subtle. The point is that organized activity requires commitment among organizational members (Katz, 1964), so organizational procedures are necessary to generate and sustain such loyalty.

Several researchers have shown that in addition to active and deliberate organizational procedures for building commitment, other factors can contribute to it as well: Factors related to the employees themselves, to their jobs, as well as to other elements of the work environment (e.g., Angle & Perry, 1981; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Steers 1977).

For example, in a study of scientists, engineers, and hospital employees, Steers (1977) found that individual needs for achievement, education, and age were associated with commitment to their organizations. (Education was inversely correlated: Higher levels of education were related to lower levels of commitment. This is a common phenomenon among professional employees, whose loyalty is devoted to the profession first and to the employer second.) Pro-organizational attitudes of the person's work group were associated with greater commitment. Jobs that permitted the employee greater degrees of voluntary interaction with coworkers, and jobs that permitted employees to understand how their work related to the jobs done by others in the organization, also seemed conducive to commitment (probably through the satisfaction these job characteristics fostered). However, Steers' (1977) results showed that certain work-related experiences were more powerful predictors of commitment than were the personal, job, or other organizational factors considered. Specifically, Steers found that positive group attitudes among one's peers, feelings that the organization had met the person's prior expectations, feelings that the organization could be relied on to carry out its commitments to its personnel, and feelings that the individual was of some importance to the organization collectively seemed to be the most important influences on commitment levels. Similar results were found in separate studies by Angle and Perry (1981), Buchanan (1974), and Morris and Sherman (1981).

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A number of work-related experiences have been shown to foster organizational commitment, such as confirmation of preemployment expectations (Arnold & Feldman, 1982), job satisfaction (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1981), participation in decision making (Rhodes & Steers, 1981), role clarity and freedom from conflict (Jamal, 1984), and organizational dependency or concern for employees (Steers, 1977). As pointed out by Meyer and Allen (1988), however, most of these early studies were cross-sectional, so the direction of the causality is hard to determine. In other words, such research designs do not permit us to discern whether job satisfaction causes organizational commitment, or vice versa. (Another possibility is that both variables are the consequences of one or more other systemic variable, such as organizational policies, leadership style, or whatever.)

One work-related experience that seems to have definite positive impact on organizational commitment early in a person's career is the nature of the early assignments they are given on being hired. Two related studies of Canadian university graduates by Meyer and Allen (1987, 1988), for example, found that measures of self-expression (being allowed to be one's own person), participation in decision making, and confirmed preentry expectations during the first month after being hired were positively related to organizational commitment later (after 6 and 11 months). These two studies both employed longitudinal designs, allowing for more confidence in the causal conclusions reached than is the case with cross-sectional designs. Other, earlier studies that tried to link early experiences with commitment much later in employees' tenure with employers failed to find such an effect, so the impact may erode after a year on the job (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988). The critical thing, then, seems to be that managers must be clear about what employees can expect on the job, before they are hired, and then assure that early job assignments both fulfill those expectations and permit the employee to express herself in the planning and execution of her work, especially during the critical first month or two of employment (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988; Wanous, 1980).

## Evidence on Organizational Commitment

Earlier we noted that employers attempt to generate and sustain high commitment because many of them believe that high commitment yields high business benefits. Is this actually the case? Since an earlier examination of the matter (Pinder, 1984), considerable effort has been invested to confirm or disconfirm the validity of people's beliefs about the benefits of high commitment. As might be expected the evidence does not support most of the popular beliefs and expectations (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

### Commitment and performance

First, there is mixed evidence for positive relationships between organizational commitment and a variety of forms of organizational performance (see Brooks & Wallace, 2006, for a recent review), although the link between organizational commitment and individual productivity has been hard to establish reliably. When the general notion of commitment is disassembled, there is some support for the notion that certain varieties of commitment may have different relationships with different varieties of employee performance (see the discussion above of varieties of commitment). Hence, Meyer et al. (1989) found, as they had hypothesized, that affective commitment (that which is characterized by positive beliefs and attitudes about the organization) was correlated with performance, whereas continuance commitment (which is based on economic necessity and side-bets) was inversely correlated with performance. Affective commitment is also positively related to organizational citizenship behavior (see Organ, 1990). Moreover, as service industries grow to become a more significant element of many economies, it is interesting to find that positive organizational culture can positively influence employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the delivery of better services to customers (cf. Mowday, 1998; Paulin, Ferguson, & Bergeron, 2006).

### Commitment and withdrawal

A number of attempts were made during the 1990s to link different types or elements of organizational commitment to different types of withdrawal behavior. An example was provided by a study by Somers (1995), who found that affective commitment was the best predictor of the various forms of withdrawal considered (which included intentions to withdraw, turnover, and absenteeism). By comparison, normative commitment was associated only with intentions, and continuance commitment had no direct effects on any of the withdrawal variables studied. (The reader is referred to our earlier discussion of the three psychological bases of commitment.) However, most of the correlations found between commitment and leaving behavior have varied in size and strength and have depended in part on how one defines organizational commitment – as normative, affective, or continuance (Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, & Sincich, 1993), leading to at least two closer examinations using meta-analysis (Cohen, 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

In one of these meta-analyses, as expected, Cohen (1993) found that the relationship between commitment and turnover was much stronger when the two variables were measured relatively close in time: When the time between the measurement of commitment and the observation of departure was longer, the relationships have been weaker. The reader will recall that we discussed this matter in Chapter 9 in relation to the theory of reasoned action. In short, it seems clear that organizational commitment, in some of its various forms (as was discussed earlier), is predictive of employees' staying with or leaving their organizations. The effects of commitment, however, appear to be indirect (Jaros et al., 1993). That is, the effects of high or low commitment on turnover behavior seem to work through the person's *intentions* to withdraw (see Jaros et al., 1993; and recall the theory of reasoned action in Chapter 9). If the intention to leave is not formed, the likelihood of leaving is low.

Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) meta-analysis confirmed the conclusions reached a decade earlier by Mowday et al. (1982), that there is very little relationship between organizational commitment and individual worker performance (see Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, p. 184). As in the case of Cohen's (1993) meta-analysis, there is very little relationship between organizational commitment and lateness, turnover, and intention to turn over. High commitment was also associated with attendance. Although significant in statistical terms, none of the relationships in Cohen's study between commitment and withdrawal and attendance behaviors was large in magnitude.

In a summary of the link between commitment and withdrawal behaviors, Meyer and Allen (1997, p. 26) concluded:

On the basis of these findings, it might be tempting to conclude that if an organization's goal is to develop a stable workforce on whose continued membership it can count, any form of commitment will suffice. . . . [H]owever, we caution strongly against this conclusion unless employee retention is the organization's *only goal*. An emphasis on employee retention to the exclusion of performance is unlikely to characterize many organizations. Indeed, it is now widely recognized that some voluntary turnover is helpful, rather than harmful, to the organization in that it includes resignations from employees who perform poorly or are disruptive. . . . Most organizations – and most managers – want much more from committed employees than simply their continued membership in the organization.

A comparison of the general findings of studies that consider constructs at the most general, undifferentiated levels (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) with more fine-grained analyses such as that of Meyer et al. (1989), which look at the more precise subconstructs, highlights the importance of defining constructs carefully and precisely before expecting to find relationships among variables such as commitment and performance (Schwab, 1980). We saw the same issue arise earlier in this chapter in connection with the long-sought-after linkage between job satisfaction and job performance (see Fisher, 1980). Morrow (1983) is responsible for first pointing out the multidimensionality of commitment; the wisdom of her observation and argument set the stage for the deliberate

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examination of *elements* of the overall construct in relation to performance by Meyer et al. (1989). There is a lesson to be learned.

### **Costs to employees of high commitment**

In the foregoing sections, we examined the value of high worker commitment from the organization's point of view. What about the individual's perspective? People who become highly committed often tend to anthropomorphize or reify their organizations. We noted earlier in this book that although organizations are made up of human beings, they are not themselves human beings. Organizations are complex social systems that structure themselves and behave so as to survive. They do not have memories, and they do not have hearts. Senior managers and executives may be capable of remembering who deserves support and loyal treatment for jobs done well in the past, but senior executives come and go. Loyalty earned during one era can lose all value as new managerial regimes evolve. The survival of the organization is tantamount; if it is expedient to continue to support the faithful servants of the past, they will be supported. But when economic or other exigencies arise to threaten the survival or effectiveness of an organization, the highly committed individual's loyalty is often unrequited, and the individual may be left with organization-specific skills that are limited and that restrict her mobility to find new employment (Randall, 1987).

The author was personally acquainted with the senior executive of a large foreign airline who devoted most of his adult life to the profitability and effectiveness of the firm. The executive's hard work led to a stroke at age 46, although he eventually recovered most of his physical abilities and all of his mental skills. The company kept him on, but organizational policies requiring that he have his health examined by corporate doctors (rather than local doctors) precipitated a second stroke 12 years later. Obeying the firm's orders rather than acting according to his own best interest, the executive undertook to travel halfway around the world for a medical check, despite his protestations that his health was poor at that time and that it would be further threatened by a trip of such demanding proportions. His local doctors were able to perform the necessary work, making the journey unnecessary. The trip killed the executive, and his wife was granted a small settlement. The high levels of commitment the executive had to the airline and the obedience that derived from that commitment compelled him to pursue corporate advice that was not in the best interest of his health.

Aside from the possibility that commitment may not be reciprocated by one's organization, leaving the person abandoned in hard times, there is the issue, of course, of the nature of the organizational goals to which individuals commit themselves. Clearly, if a person becomes enthralled by the goals of an organization, the legality and the morality of those goals have important implications for the committed employee (Weiner, 1982). Many cases of corporate corruption and crime have been perpetrated by highly committed employees whose zealous pursuit of their employer's goals required them to engage in illegal and immoral activities in which they probably would not have otherwise engaged.

Twenty years ago, Schaeff and Fassel (1988) advanced the idea that work organizations can be seen as addictive substances, and that adherence to the goals and work expectation of these organizations can result in a condition of process addiction for employees (Schaeff & Fassel, 1988, p. 119). According to these authors:

Nothing in and of itself is addictive. *Anything* can be addictive when it becomes so central in one's life that one feels that life is not possible without the substance or process. Organizations function as the addictive substance in the lives of many people. We recognized [in our work] that for many people, the workplace, the job, and the organization were the central foci of their lives. Because the organization was so primary in their lives, because they were totally preoccupied with it, they began to lose touch with other aspects of their lives and gradually gave up what they knew, felt, and believed.

The point is this: Organizations require the commitment of their members in order to survive, so

they do what they can to develop and foster it. But economic necessities can force even the most benevolent of employers to lay off, or otherwise abandon, those who have helped to make them effective. Even in Japan, where loyalty to one's organization is an inherent part of the culture, managers, and employees at all levels have been laid off, North American style, as the economic advantage previously enjoyed by Japanese industry has declined over the years (e.g., Rifkin, 1995, p. 105; Watanabe, 1996). In short, although commitment is necessary for the organization's survival, it may or may not be best for a person's long-term interests, all the things our parents told us notwithstanding.

Romzek (1989) pursued the old hypothesis that beneficial experiences at one's work can "spill over" and have a positive influence on a person's non-work life (as we discussed earlier in this chapter in connection with the linkage between job satisfaction and life satisfaction). She has reported a study in which she followed a panel of 485 employees through two waves of data collection, in 1982 and then again in 1984. Of interest to Romzek in this longitudinal project was whether the consequences of employee commitment on non-work and career satisfactions are positive or negative. Although the effects were not strong, she found consistent support for the proposition that organizational commitment has positive benefit for people's lives outside the employment relationship, in areas such as satisfaction with their families, the cities in which they live, their friendships and hobbies, and so on. She also found that high levels of organizational commitment as measured in 1982 were predictive of high levels of job satisfaction and career satisfaction 2 years later. One of the interpretations Romzek placed on her findings is that people tend to possess a disposition toward either positive or negative attitudes in life in general, and that these predispositions cover most or all aspects of a person's life, including work and non-work activities. This dispositional hypothesis was discussed earlier in this chapter; there is no need to review it again here (see George, 1992; Judge, 1992).

## Multiple, Conflicting Commitments

One interesting consequence of extreme levels of organizational commitment may be reduced levels of commitment to other sources of support (as mentioned earlier). Sometimes this can be dysfunctional for the organization involved. For example, Rotondi (1975) found that research and development engineers who were more committed to their organization tended to be less creative and innovative, probably because devotion to one's scientific discipline can often clash with devotion to one's employer (see also Shepard, 1956).

On the other hand, some feel that work organizations represent arenas for multiple forms of commitment for the employees involved. Hence, according to Reichers (1985), many employees experience allegiance to the goals, products and services, values, or people associated with multiple constituencies associated with their workplaces, such as unions, suppliers, customers, managers, professional associations, and so on. Therefore, the nature of the "commitment" experienced by any one person is likely to be entirely different from that experienced by another, because the foci of the commitment(s) vary from person to person. "Thus one individual's 'organizational commitment' may be primarily a function of the perception that the organization is dedicated to high quality products at a reasonable price: another person's commitment may depend to a great extent on the individual's belief that the organization espouses humanistic values towards [its] employees" (Reichers, 1985, p. 473).

Taking the multiple constituencies concept a step further, Becker (1992) argued that we should differentiate between the foci of commitment, meaning the various individuals and groups to whom an employee might be attached, and the bases of commitment, the motives that explain the attachment (recall the three bases mentioned earlier: Compliance, identification, and internalization). The reason for the argument is that attachment to foci may be predictive of different organizational outcomes than is attachment, which is predicated on different psychological "bases."

In fact, Becker was able to demonstrate that this may be the case. He found negative correlations between people's commitment to their organizations, work groups, and supervisors, and their intentions to quit. In other words, attachment to the various groups tended to reduce a person's desire to leave an organization. At the same time, he found positive correlations between these interpersonally based bonds and job satisfaction and the occurrence of prosocial behaviors of the sort we discussed earlier in the chapter.

Different results were found when the focus turned to the psychological bases for organizational commitment. Becker assessed the employees' levels of compliance, identification, and internalization (see O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). As predicted, when the basis for commitment was either identification or internalization, higher levels of job satisfaction and prosocial behavior resulted, while commitment based on compliance was associated with higher levels of intention to leave the organization. In short, it appears that the global concept of organizational commitment is, in fact, a blend of attachments to various groups and individuals, on the one hand, and an array of psychological dynamics, on the other – a sort of apples and oranges concept in totality. The work of Reichers (1985) and, particularly, of Becker (1992) points to the wisdom of disentangling the foci of commitment (the people to whom we are committed) from the bases of the commitment (the psychological motives for the attachments). For as O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) demonstrated, different psychological bases for one's attachment to an organization can result in entirely different outcome dynamics for people.

## The Past, Present, and Future of Organizational Commitment

It was an article of faith among many people of previous generations that being committed to one's employer was wise and a proper thing to do (Randall, 1987). The virtues of organizational commitment seemed self-evident – again, if not for the instrumental benefits that would accrue, but also because it was somehow inherently virtuous. This sentiment was summarized in an important book of the mid-1950s, *The organization man* (Whyte, 1956).

A few generations of experience in North America of intermittent recessions and the attendant layoffs, cutbacks, downsizing, and “right-sizing” that comes with recessions have seen a change in the common values as they pertain to organizational commitment. Twenty-five years ago, for example, three influential American scholars in the area of work motivation and commitment wrote that *they anticipated a marked decrease* in the commitment of North American employees to their companies. Among the reasons they cited to back their prediction were that more people would be wanting jobs, more people would be wanting *good jobs*, increasing demands for personal growth and personal freedom, greater expectations for immediate need gratification, demands for more than work in their lives, better awareness of job alternatives than in the past, and, interestingly, a sort of acceptance at societal levels that low commitment is legitimate: If it were to become a cultural norm to reject high organizational commitment, more people would feel free to do so (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

A few years later, Baruch (1998, p. 136) wrote an essay that reiterated this argument, claiming that indeed, the aggregate experiences of working people had dashed the traditional values favoring organizational commitment: “Recent processes and developments in the way organizations treat their employees raise doubts about whether the traditional concept of OC fits the new age of management and industrial relation [sic] systems.” First, he noted that organizational commitment to employees (from the organization) is a major causal factor in the commitment organizations can expect in return from employees. Moreover, as the former declines – as it had appeared to be declining in the years before Baruch wrote his essay – the latter (employee commitment to organizations) will decline as well, and he predicted that both would continue to decline downward for years to follow. On the basis of this argument, Baruch (1998) concluded that organizational commitment would reduce in importance as a determinant of positive individual and organizational outcomes.

He cited the results of three meta-analyses conducted by other researchers to show that the apparent impact of OC on organizational outcomes was lower among studies conducted in the late 1980s than those conducted in either the early 1970s or the early 1980s. For Baruch (1998) "recent actual practice [had] put the developments of OC on a dead end track." It was not that organizational commitment was not inherently important, but that it had become much less useful in explaining organizational outcomes than it had been in previous decades: Survival requirements had trumped the softer values of loyalty.

In part a response to Baruch (1998), one of the key academics in the early work on commitment, Mowday (1998) wrote an essay that, in part, acknowledged that organizational commitment by employees is a critical contributing factor to organizational success and that, in spite of the fact that many organizations continue to lay off people during good times as well as bad times, the underlying importance of the commitment factor will not be diminished. He added that recent advances in what have come to be called "high-performance management systems" (see Chapter 7), the purpose of which is to create employee commitment and engagement, have proven to be effective for organization-level performance (cf. Benson, Young, & Lawler, 2006; Combs, Yongmei Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Pfeffer, 1998).

Meyer and Allen (1997), two scholars who have championed the commitment construct over the past 20 years, noted that most small organizations are particularly dependent on core groups of devoted people who will offer the energy and citizenship behavior required for their survival and success. Second, even though many organizations are outsourcing much of their work to other organizations, they must be concerned about the commitment of the personnel in these other organizations. "Admittedly, the commitment may be different, perhaps being of a shorter duration and with a focus on a contract of project rather than on the organization itself" (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 5). Finally, Meyer and Allen (1997) claimed that commitment develops naturally in people. Not to be committed to *something* is to be alienated. So workers who do not commit to employers will naturally seek commitment with some other source of gratification, such as a hobby, a church, a friend, a job, or an occupation. Hence, even if *organizational commitment* itself declines, it will remain important for social scientists to pursue an understanding of commitment in its varied forms.

## Conclusion: The Ebb and Flow of Organizational Commitment

The author has been teaching students in several North American business schools for more than 35 years, observing the changing attitudes of students regarding life's important issues. It is true that values swing like a pendulum on most issues, the issue of commitment being no exception. Thirty years ago, it was heretical to suggest to business school students that to become committed to an employer was foolish. In recent years, young people who are leaving college and joining the workforce for the first time seem to be fully aware of the issues of loyalty and commitment. Many or most of these students have known someone who was the victim of harsh or inconsiderate treatment at the hands of an organization. Most have known people who were laid off because of downsizings, mergers, and other corporate necessities for survival. Regardless of whether it is wise or noble for a person to expect commitment from an employer, and whether it is fair of an employer to expect loyalty from its workers, are matters of opinion, rooted in the values each of us hold.

For their part, North American employers seem to be trying to recapture the commitment of employees as they had in years gone by. Management texts and journals these days rarely use the word commitment however – these days terms such as employee *attachment*, *engagement*, and *identification* are used – but, to a large extent, these notions are old wine in new bottles: Their primary purpose is to keep (good) employees locked in, happy at their jobs, creative and less willing to be absent, late for work or likely to leave. (See a scholarly paper by Mitchell et al., 2001, for a summary

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of some of these newer constructs.) The author hopes only that the foregoing discussion will bring the matter of commitment, its costs and its benefits, to a conscious level for consideration by readers of this book.

We turn next to a study of a similar work-related attitude – job involvement.

## JOB INVOLVEMENT

A third psychological construct related to work behavior that has received considerable attention is referred to as *job involvement*. There have been a number of attempts to define this concept and to differentiate it from related constructs such as job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation (Lawler & Hall, 1970; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965; Saleh & Hosek, 1976). *Job involvement*, loosely defined, has to do with the strength of the relationship between a person's work and his or her self-concept.

### Definition of Job Involvement

Specifically, a person is said to be involved in her job if she:

- finds the job motivating and challenging
- is committed to her work in general, to her particular job, and to her organization, making her less likely to consider leaving her position
- engages closely with coworkers in such a way that she can get feedback about her work and performance (Brown, 1996).

A recent study in Sweden (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006) confirmed the separate identity of job involvement, as distinct from organizational commitment, which we discussed in the foregoing sections, and *work engagement* (which is defined as a positive feeling of energy and joy in working).

People who are highly job involved can be obsessed with their work. When they perform poorly, they feel poorly. They like others to know them for their work and to know that they do it well. For a highly job-involved person, work is one of the most important aspects of life, if not the most important. There is some evidence that job-involved people tend to be more satisfied with their work (Gorn & Kanungo, 1980) and more intrinsically motivated (Lawler & Hall, 1970), but it is important to repeat that involvement, satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation are distinct constructs (Lawler & Hall, 1970). *Moreover, this construct has to do with one's commitment to her job, not to her employer per se, and these two forms of commitment are only slightly related to one another (Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978; Weiner & Vardi, 1980).*

### Causes/Antecedents of Job Involvement

What determines the level of involvement a person has in his job? A number of studies have suggested that, as in the case of the determinants of commitment, characteristics of both the individual and of the organization must be taken into account. For example, Rabinowitz and Hall (1977) found that job involvement was correlated with the strength of the person's growth needs (see Chapter 7) and with the strength of one's belief in the "Protestant work ethic." In addition, the length of time the person was on the job, as well as the scope provided by the job, were positively associated with involvement. Another study found that employees whose jobs served to satisfy their most salient needs (regardless of whether these were intrinsic or extrinsic) were higher in both involvement

with the particular jobs they held at the time, as well as with work in general (Gorn & Kanungo, 1980). In a third study, it was found that employees who participated more in the decision making related to their jobs were more involved in those jobs (Siegel & Ruh, 1973).

In short, the level of involvement people feel with regard to their jobs is determined by the interaction of their own needs and values with a variety of features of the job and the job setting. Consequently, we might assume that job involvement may be somewhat manipulable through the enactment of appropriate organizational policies and procedures.

## Consequences of Moderate Job Involvement

As we did in our discussion of commitment, we can suitably ask whether job involvement is a good thing; and as before, we must conclude that the answer may depend on who provides it. There is some evidence that job-involved employees tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than are employees who are less job involved (Cheloha & Farr, 1980; Gannon & Hendrickson, 1973; Gorn & Kanungo, 1980; Lawler & Hall, 1970). Similarly, there is suggestive evidence that job-involved employees are likely to be somewhat happier with their organizations (Schwyhart & Smith, 1972), as well as more committed to them and less absent from them (Cheloha & Farr, 1980), although as mentioned earlier, the relationships are mixed and of only moderate strength (Gorn & Kanungo, 1980). This means that it is quite possible for employees to enjoy their jobs but not feel fully involved in them. Or it is possible for people to be attached to their jobs and to enjoy them but not be very committed to their employing organization. This is often the case with managerial, professional, technical, and other highly skilled employees. Physicians working under terribly constrained budgets and limited resources in equipment and supplies often are terribly unhappy with their jobs, totally uncommitted to the hospitals in which they function, yet remain unflaggingly committed to their chosen profession of medicine.

Is there any relationship between job involvement and employee effort and performance? Very little research has been reported on this issue, so caution is necessary. One study found moderately strong linkages between involvement and self-report measures of effort and performance (as measured by salary) among a group of insurance sales representatives who worked on commission (Gorn & Kanungo, 1980). It is critical to note that virtually all of the studies reported earlier were conducted in a cross-sectional manner, making it impossible when there were relationships observed to determine which variables were causal and which were the results of the workings of others.

For example, are highly involved employees more likely to devote higher levels of effort to their jobs because of the fulfillment it provides them? Or is it the other way around: Could more highly involved employees become more satisfied with their jobs because their devotion to them results in mastery and feelings of achievement and competence? What seems most plausible is that certain characteristics of employees, their jobs, and their organizations are likely to be responsible for causing levels of commitment, satisfaction, and involvement; these in turn both influence, and are influenced by, the person's performance level. Therefore, managers may be able to affect this cluster of events and associations by thoughtful application of enlightened policies and practices, but it is probable that the characteristics of their employees will limit (or magnify) the impact that they can have on these various outcome variables.

In simple terms, the job involvement construct has to do with how seriously people take their work. Therefore, it would follow that people who are characteristically high in job involvement may be more prone to permit the stressors they encounter on their jobs to "get to them," to be more deleterious to their well-being, than would be the case for people who are lower in job involvement. In fact, a study by Frone, Russell, and Cooper (1994) suggested this may be the case. After controlling for a set of sociological variables that are normally associated with poor health, the researchers found that job involvement exacerbated the relationship between job stressors and employee

health. Although depression, a "the job involved their work" syndrome that are common about people who are people who be

## Work Addict and the Extreme

Before we leave levels of job involvement, let us discuss some consequences for this construct labeled "workaholic." Aziz and Zenger (1994) define the syndrome, consisting of

1. excessive work
2. a high drive
3. lack of work-life balance

Individuals classified as workaholics are often acquaintances of the author and have low work-life

In early workaholic. She develops our stress to reach an accomplishment, goals to reach an accomplishment, suggested that "highly driven" people are merely being authentic. "balance" should be within limits, of course, their own values.

For Killinger (1994), workaholics are people who are neurotic, becomes emotionally unstable, control and success, recognition, and status. They feel pain in the face of failure, they simply a job. Workaholics are characterized by a lack of intimacy with other people.

Workaholics are often otherwise at peak performance. They are motivated that about the work force who are unemployed. They plan their lives around their work, through the difficulty

health. Although the results were mixed across the various dependent variables studied (such as depression, alcohol use, and physical symptoms), they were consistent with our understanding of the job involvement construct as well as with common sense. People who “eat, breathe, and sleep their work” seem more susceptible to health difficulties, particularly if they do not engage in practices that are designed to assuage tension and relieve the stress that their work entails for them. What about people who are exceptionally committed to their work? We turn next to an examination of people who become addicted to their work, commonly referred to as *workaholics*.

## Work Addiction: Involvement and Commitment in the Extreme

Before we leave our discussion of the benefits of job involvement, we should ask whether extreme levels of job involvement, like extreme levels of commitment, might have any unfortunate consequences for the employee. The person on the street often uses the term *workaholicism* to refer to the construct labeled job involvement by students of organizational science. What is workaholicism?

Aziz and Zickar (2006) have concluded that workaholicism can legitimately be conceived of as a *syndrome*, consisting of at least three factors:

1. excessive work involvement
2. a high drive to work (intrinsic motivation)
3. lack of work enjoyment.

Individuals classified as workaholics were more likely to label themselves as such, more likely to have acquaintances think of them as workaholics, and more likely to have relatively low life satisfaction and low work-life balance.

In early work on the issue, Killinger (1991) pointed out that not everyone who works hard is a workaholic. She noted that “work is essential for our well-being. Through work we define ourselves, develop our strengths, and take our places in society. Work gives us satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment, and mastery over problems. It provides us with a sense of direction, and gives us goals to reach and hurdles to overcome” (p. 5). Further to this point, Friedman and Lobel (2003) suggested that “happy workaholics” are people who legitimately love their work so much that they are merely being authentic to their values when they put in long hours. The notion of work-non-work “balance” should be replaced by a norm of such authenticity, whereby people should be encouraged, within limits, of course, to apportion their time to work and non-work activities in accordance with their own values.

For Killinger (1991), work *addiction* is a different matter. It usually happens to middle-class people who are necessarily driven by economic necessity. A workaholic is “a person who gradually becomes emotionally crippled and addicted to control and power in a compulsive drive to gain control and success” (p. 6). Such people are competitive and driven to acquire the “fix” of fame, recognition, and success that comes with hard work and long hours. Without this fix, the workaholic feels pain in the form of anger, hurt, guilt, and fear. Working becomes a state of mind more than simply a job. Working permits people an overly inflated sense of responsibility and an escape from intimacy with other people (Killinger, 1991).

Workaholics are people who live to work. They plan their work during periods when they are otherwise at play, such as during holidays and vacations (Killinger, 1991). Machlowitz (1980) estimated that about 5% of the adult population are workaholics, but that the proportion of the workforce who are workaholics is probably higher since, almost by definition, these people tend not to be unemployed. Although not all hard workers are workaholics, all workaholics are hard workers. They plan their lives round their jobs and love it. Both men and women can be workaholics, although the difficulties faced by female workers are different (and sometimes worse) than those

faced by male workaholics. Many workaholics contribute to the effectiveness of their organizations at levels that are detrimental to their own health (Caplan & Jones, 1975) but don't mind doing so and are often not aware that they are doing so (Killinger, 1991).

The author is not aware of any research that has attempted to apportion workaholic tendencies between people's organizational commitment and their job involvement, as we have defined these phenomena here. Research on workaholics suggests that people who work too hard for their own good can be driven by either high commitment to their institutions, or to their occupations, or to some blends of both. The precise origins of the phenomenon are less important than the consequences of workaholism for the people who are afflicted as well as for those who love them or work with them.

### Types of work addiction

According to Fassel (1992), there are at least four categories of workaholics. The reader will notice the similarities among the names of the categories, the characteristics of the people in the categories, and the nouns and verbs that are used in common reference to addictions and addicts related to other substances and processes. There is the *compulsive worker*, the person who is simply driven to work all the time. This is the category we usually associate with workaholism. They keep long and strange hours, they never plan vacations, and they seldom make plans in their outside lives because they are always concerned about what might come up for them at work. But these people are not the only category or type of workaholic, according to Fassel (1992).

There are also *binge workers*, people who work with high intensity when they work, even if it is only at intervals. When work has to be done, they are obsessed and driven to get it done. Fassel links the patterns of these people to those of binge drinkers, who "save it up" and then go on working with nothing else in their lives for short, sharp spurts of it.

A third category consists of what Fassel (1992) refers to as *closet workers*. People in this category have "a niggling awareness" that something is dysfunctional about their work style (p. 20). They tend to make promises to reform themselves but seldom keep their promises. They hide work-related files and problems away similar to the ways that alcoholics hide bottles of liquor in closets, basements, and nooks and crannies. They often pretend not to be working, as when they are on "vacation," but they are thinking, dreaming, and making plans about their work. They are the types of people who take cellular telephones with them to museums, libraries, and gymnasiums, into places and into activities where, otherwise, they might be thought of as relaxing or not working. They are basically dishonest about their priorities and cheat in the way they relate to others about those priorities.

A fourth category of workaholic identified by Fassel (1992) are people whom she refers to as *work anorexics*. They are people who act as if the way to get out of their problems (analogous to overeaters) is by not doing anything at all. Their theme, according to Fassel (1992, p. 23), is "I'm darned good at what I do, but I seldom do it." Work becomes such an addiction to these people that they do everything they can to avoid it, to pretend that it is not a problem for them. They procrastinate and then feel guilty about their procrastination. So they place themselves in positions of lateness, deadlines, and pressures where they must produce to survive and to save face. They force schedules upon themselves because pacing and spacing of assignments fail to provide the thrill of an emergency in which the work must get done at once. They like to "slip under the gate just as it is closing," according to Fassel (1992, p. 24).

Is there a problem? In an economy worried about the motivation of its workforce to sustain itself and be competitive, we can ask: Is workaholism a good thing? A quarter of a century of research and writing on the issue has brought mixed answers (see Fassel, 1992; Killinger, 1991; Machlowitz, 1980; Oates, 1971). Without workaholics, many organizations could not function as effectively as they do (Oates, 1971). Workaholics are always there to backstop the errors made by others. (Of course, they are also often the cause of many of these errors themselves.) They often make up for the low commitment of others. They can be counted on to perform the jobs others

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avoid, and generally, to attack them with passion. They work hard; they provide management more "bang for the buck." Every person reading this volume must be familiar with at least one workaholic, as well as with how others around that person have grown dependent on him, or her, in the job setting.

There has been disagreement over the years among people who have studied workaholics on the issue of whether they are healthy or normal. One early authority, for example, claimed that workaholics are generally healthy and happy people (Machlowitz, 1980). By the same token, it is common to pity workaholics, or even to look upon them with disdain, as if they are afflicted with some form of social or occupational disease. For example, Schwartz (1982) defined involvement as a manifestation of neurotic obsession/compulsion, while Schaeff and Fassel (1988) and Fassel (1992) cast overly involved work as an addiction, a "process addiction that features all the common characteristics of other addictions." According to Schaeff and Fassel (1988) and Fassel (1992), these symptoms include confusion, self-centeredness, dishonesty, perfectionism, a preoccupation with control, frozen feelings, ethical deterioration, stress, low self-esteem, an inability to relax, depression, negativism, and a variety of other forms of maladjustment. Workaholism is a major source of marital breakdown. It is a substitute for normal religious experiences for many who are afflicted by it (Killinger, 1991).

Most commonly, addicts of all types make great use of *denial*: They claim steadfastly that there is nothing wrong with them, that they have no problems (Fassel, 1992; Killinger, 1991). An interesting comment once made by a friend to this author about work addiction is that "people are workaholics who work harder than I do." In other words, for many hard-working persons, the pace they set and the goals they accomplish are, to them, defined as somehow "normal." Anyone else who significantly exceeds these standards is typically defined by anyone else as being abnormal, as being a workaholic.

Workaholics typically come from dysfunctional families, families in which behavior and interpersonal relations deviate from normal. Frequently, these families feature addiction to substances such as alcohol or drugs or to processes such as sex, perfectionism, or orderliness (Killinger, 1991). In fact, workaholism is often "the addiction of choice" of adult children of alcoholics (Schaeff & Fassel, 1988). Typically, these people are better at work than they are at personal relationships, so they fill their lives with work — too much of it. Therefore, employees who are addicted to their work, in the extreme, are anything but healthy, according to Fassel (1992) and Schaeff and Fassel (1988).

Machlowitz (1980) claimed that while they spend long hours of intense effort at their jobs, workaholics are often very poor performers, for a variety of reasons. One reason is that they have an inherent aversion to delegating responsibilities to other people. They insist on maintaining control and would generally rather do everything themselves. As a result, they often spread themselves too thinly and take on so many tasks that they simply cannot be effective at all of them, despite the long hours they spend at their work. Workaholics often try to create and foster the impression that they are indispensable (due to their reluctance to delegate, this is often the case). But much of the flurry surrounding them is artificial rather than truly warranted. Moreover, workaholics tend to intimidate and annoy others around them who are not so completely obsessed with work. As supervisors, they push their subordinates with impunity, often causing high levels of stress and low levels of job satisfaction among them, and sometimes driving away talented people. There is no cause to believe that the high levels of energy they expend necessarily result in greater levels of performance efficiency than would be attainable by working at more "normal" speeds. Workaholics often lose sight of work priorities; in their attempts to get everything done, they often get little actually accomplished. Their obsession with their own time and time schedules means they frequently fail to honor the time requirements of others; they are characteristically late for meetings and frequently leave in the middle of meetings. Cast in the terms we discussed in Chapter 8, workaholics can be major sources of frustration for people around them, both on the job and off.

Fassel's work indicated that workaholics become hooked on both a physiological (or "substance") level and a process or activity level, making this form of addiction especially pernicious. The substance is adrenaline; the rush comes when the person is under pressure. The process aspect comes

from the acts of applying effort, of spending the hours and of feeling the thrill of accomplishment when (and if) it arrives, just in time. Like others writing on this topic, Fassel (1992) used the terms *workaholism* and *work addiction* interchangeably because they categorize the condition as they do other forms of addiction, as sharing many of the characteristics and problems seen in other addictions. What are some of these symptoms of work addiction that are so similar to other addictions to substances and processes?

Fassel argued that like other addictions, workaholism can be a one-way slide toward person destruction. Combinations of the symptoms listed earlier can ultimately result in hospitalization, physical illness, and death. Workaholics can kill themselves via stomach ailments, alcoholism, accidents brought on by physical fatigue, excessive smoking and eating, insomnia, and even suicide. Fassel (1992) argued that in our society, the syndrome can be especially perilous for women, especially women who try to establish and maintain occupations outside of the home: "A woman's work is never done" (p. 53). She acknowledged that work addiction is gender neutral, however, in the sense that many men also become victims, although the specific tasks and role expectations placed on them (or which they place on themselves) are different in type, although not in ultimate effect. For many men in our culture, the self-concept of innate superiority must be fulfilled and maintained, according to Fassel (1992), so the drive to produce, to provide, can be constant and unrelenting. Space limitations prevent a full treatment of the theory and research evidence here; the interested reader is referred to Fassel (1992), Schaefer and Fassel (1988), and Schor (1991).

So the prevailing current answer to the question "Is workaholism a good thing?" seems to be a resounding "No!" Perhaps a more appropriate position is the one proposed recently by Friedman and Lobel (and discussed earlier): People should be authentic and true to their values, adopting a "live-and-let-live" approach for themselves and for others.

## SUMMARY

Employees' job attitudes (and emotional reactions to their work) are important both to the people who hold them and to the organizations that employ those people. Although the connections are somewhat unpredictable, attitudes can result in behaviors that can have either positive or negative consequences for both people and organizations (recall Chapter 9). Managers often assume that the connection between employee attitudes and behaviors is stronger than in fact it is, sometimes overreacting to what they see as extreme attitudes of either positive or negative tone. Up to a certain point, both organizational commitment and job involvement are necessary and potentially beneficial for both employees and employers. In the extreme, however, too much commitment may make employees emotionally and occupationally vulnerable, and too much job involvement may result in the sorts of human consequences associated with workaholism. To date, however, there has been nothing to indicate that too much job satisfaction has any harmful effects, but we seem to be a long way from reaching the stage where, on a macro level, this will ever be the case. In the foreseeable future, a vast number of undesirable jobs will continue to need to be done.

The various job-related attitudes discussed in this chapter are not the only ones that have been investigated by organizational scientists. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement were singled out for discussion here both because they have been the subjects of considerable research over the years and because they are important. In other words, these three constructs do not exhaust all the possible forms that employee attitudes may take. Identified and articulated in the ways they have been presented here, these constructs represent only three of an infinite number of mental and visceral reactions people may have toward their work. In many ways, these concepts are arbitrary: Who is to say that they represent the most common or even the most important attitudes that can be found in the minds and hearts of working people? In short, the

careful reader will pay attention to these three constructs as important but will realize that in many ways they represent the mental events of the researchers and scholars who have identified (created?) and discussed them (see Schwab, 1980).

## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE CONCEPTS

Although the various forms of work-related attitudes are thought of as conceptually distinct from one another, empirically they tend to be inter-correlated: A person who tends to be high on one of these dimensions will tend to be relatively high on the others (Blau & Paul, 1993; Morrow, 1983, 1993). One study of more than 700 U.S. men and women found that job satisfaction had a significant effect on job involvement, but the obverse was not the case (Mortimer & Lorence, 1989). Although the researchers failed to show that satisfaction at one time may predict levels of involvement 4 years later, their cross-sectional analysis did support a weak but significant satisfaction-causes-involvement connection. This particular paper is cited because it is typical of the many that have been conducted on these matters, as are the findings reported.

In fact, the empirically observed relationships among job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation are so consistent (although not overwhelmingly high) that two reviewers suggested that the three variables "may be conceived of as rather specific aspects of a more generalized affective response to the work environment" (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). On the other hand, the more recent Swedish study mentioned earlier (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006) concluded that job involvement is in fact distinct from organizational commitment, and work engagement.

Some working people may not be able or willing to disentangle their feelings about their jobs from their beliefs and attitudes regarding their employers. That explanation may have a lot of merit; not everyone we study is as cerebral or as contemplative about work-related matters as organizational researchers wish them to be.<sup>15</sup> Another explanation is that organizational researchers may simply not be able to measure these various dimensions with sufficient validity and precision using the particular time sequences in longitudinal designs that are appropriated to the phenomena involved, to find any relationships that actually exist among these variables. Difficulties of this sort were introduced and discussed at length in Chapter 2.<sup>16</sup>

The author suspects that the truth lies in some combination of these two explanations. There are plenty of intuitive grounds to believe that people who are satisfied with parts of their jobs may become committed to their employers, out of gratitude or for no particular reason, such that we would expect satisfied employees to be more committed employees. The causal connection may work the other way: People who, for whatever reason, are committed to their employers may tend to see their work as satisfying (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). As is the case on many points throughout this book, the author suspects that the intuitive truth about matters related to work motivation may not be totally discernible by the crude tools of behavioral researchers. Hence, in this case, there is still just cause to expect causal relationships between motivation, commitment, and other job attitude variables, although the relationships may be complex and circular.

Before we leave our extended discussion of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement, it is worth considering briefly how these concepts might interact in practice.

<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, at least two studies, involving different categories of workers, found that measures of job involvement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction are distinct from one another; that is, that the people studied did differentiate among the three forms of work-related attitudes (Brooke, Russell, & Price, 1988; Mathieu & Farr, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Some progress has, however, been made: A study examined four possible causal models linking commitment and satisfaction (satisfaction causes commitment; commitment causes satisfaction; the two are related reciprocally; and that there is no simple bivariate relationship between the two constructs). The evidence supported the "commitment causes satisfaction" alternative (Vandenberg & Lance, 1992).

Consider what it may be like for someone who is high in job involvement (meaning they live to work) but who is exceptionally dissatisfied with her company or with conditions of her current job. Consider the case of the person who is high in job involvement but who has no job or who is capable of holding only part-time work. People of this sort are commonplace; in the next few years they may become the norm. There will then be major consequences for people to redefine the concept of careers as we have known them, and for many people, there may be a regression to an increased importance to simple survival needs, to do "whatever work needs to be done" (Bridges, 1994).

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## LOOKING AHEAD

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In Chapters 9 and 10, we introduced the cognitive approach to understanding work motivation and behavior. In Chapter 9, we studied the general nature and functioning of human beliefs and attitudes and their connection to behavior. In the current chapter, we surveyed the scientific literature dealing with three important types of work-related attitude: Satisfaction, commitment, and involvement. While attitudes are not motivation, per se, attitudes can instigate behavior: Job attitudes can instigate work-related behaviors such as joining an organization, leaving it, staying with it, forming a trade union, working hard, stealing from the organization, and so on. Attitudes are slippery and hard to discern or observe directly. But job attitudes are common, powerful precursors to employee work behavior. They provide an important conceptual basis for an understanding for work motivation and behavior that complements the need-based theories presented in Chapters 3 through 8.

In the following three chapters, we present three separate bodies of formal theory of work motivation, all of which rely on the cognitive model of human functioning introduced in Chapter 9.