Turnover Reconceptualized: An Exploration of the Proximal Withdrawal States' Relationship with Turnover Antecedents and the Act Itself

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science

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August 2013

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This thesis titled
Turnover Reconceptualized: An Exploration of the Proximal Withdrawal States'
Relationship with Turnover Antecedents and the Act Itself

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Abstract

NICHOLSON, KRISTINA C., M.S., August 2013, Psychology

Turnover Reconceptualized: An Exploration of the Proximal Withdrawal States' Relationship with Turnover Antecedents and the Act Itself

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This thesis was the first to empirically test the four main groups of a new construct, proximal withdrawal state, proposed by Hom, Mitchell, Lee, and Griffeth (2012). Firstly, differences between individuals classified as enthusiastic stayers, enthusiastic leavers, reluctant stayers, and reluctant leavers (i.e. the four main types of the proximal withdrawal states) were examined using a sample of 443 employees of a large, national insurance agency. Results of analyses of variance indicated differences in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover base rates between the different states; however, there were no differences in performance. Secondly, the incremental validity of the proximal withdrawal states above that offered by intention to quit in the prediction of turnover was tested. Results of a hierarchical binary logistic regression indicated that the new construct does not provide additional explained variance in turnover beyond that of turnover intention. Based on these findings, limitations of the current study and implications for future research of the proximal withdrawal states are discussed.
Dedication

To all of my family and friends who have supported me throughout this process.
Thank you.
Acknowledgments

Many thanks are given to Dr. Rodger Griffeth for his enthusiasm and guidance throughout the course of this project. I greatly thank Dr. Paula Popovich and Dr. Jeffery Vancouver for the invaluable feedback provided during the thesis proposal and defense process. I am also very appreciative of Amanda Cameron, Justin Purl, and Allison Tenbrink for their editorial assistance throughout the project.
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Introduction

Within the past decade numerous reviews of turnover models have been published to better organize the multitude of turnover research that has accumulated over the past half century (e.g., Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom, 2010; Steel & Lounsbury, 2009). Turnover research has accrued in response to the need to predict and ameliorate the detrimental outcomes to individuals and organizations when employees leave. These outcomes are well documented (i.e. Mobley, 1982). From syntheses of these studies, research has revealed a continuing path of developing constructs and theories to better understand the decision to leave an organization.

As the empirical research has grown, so has the need to understand and predict turnover (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008) and so iterations of different turnover content models, or why individuals leave an organization, have been built into the framework of theory (e.g. Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The most recent of these models, developed by Hom, Mitchell, Lee, and Griffeth (2012), postulated that a new construct, proximal withdrawal state, is related to a variety of attitudes and behaviors. A major aim and contribution of this thesis is to be the first empirical study of how this state relates to attitudes and behaviors, specifically: organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and organizational turnover.

Although theory and the turnover process have continued to evolve, a reoccurring mention of the understanding of the turnover criterion has arisen (Hom, 2010; Steel & Lounsbury, 2009). The common practice in testing turnover models has been to dichotomize the turnover criterion variable into “stayers” versus “leavers”. Campion
(1991) noted that dichotomizing whether an individual stays or leaves the organization undercuts the identification of differences within the groups of individuals who remain with the organization and those who decide to leave. Hom et al. (2012) also suggest this practice fails to fully capture the underlying conditions of the decision to remain or leave. They opined that the measurement criterion and antecedents of turnover can be refined further. As a result, they proposed an expansion of the stayer versus leaver operationalization of turnover by crossing constructs of perceived control and desired employment status. This yielded four different proximal withdrawal states (PWS) or mindsets: enthusiastic leavers, reluctant leavers, enthusiastic stayers, and reluctant stayers.

In this paper, I first examine the case for the withdrawal states by reviewing, Hom et al.’s (2012) expansion of the turnover criterion. The review of withdrawal states is followed by the argument that turnover intentions may inadequately capture the theory of planned behavior (i.e. Ajzen, 1991) as the most immediate and best predictor of the expanded turnover criterion in the turnover process. As Hom et al. (2012) noted, the conceptualization of turnover intentions must be expanded to allow for the extension of the turnover criterion to include those cases where voluntary turnover is not the main outcome as well as specific destinations one may go once he/she has left (i.e. alternative jobs at a different organization and non-job related alternatives). The primary goal of the study is to test the hypothesized differences between the four different PWS in common turnover antecedents (e.g., job satisfaction and organizational commitment), performance
and actual turnover. A secondary goal is to provide evidence of incremental validity of the PWS above that provided by intention to quit.

By incorporating a test of turnover antecedents, the present thesis examines the notion that whether an individual leaves or remains with the organization is as much about the individual’s perceived control over the situation as it is their preference for a desired end state (i.e. stay or leave). With the inclusion of the volitional component, this study also provides insight to observed differences in attitudinal and behavioral reactions in individuals that conventional research would typically classify into two groups: stayers and leavers. This dichotomous classification may lead to the false impression that all stayers want to stay and all leavers want to leave.

**Evolution of Turnover Theory**

In Hom et al.’s (2012) review of turnover and introduction to the proximal withdrawal states, the authors began with the assumption that “everyone eventually leaves; no one stays with the organization forever” (pg. 833). The premise that every employee leaves has been acknowledged in the evolution of turnover theory (Holtom et al., 2008). From this perspective, individuals not only leave unexpectedly because of the desire or ability to leave (i.e. March & Simon, 1958), but also after long periods with the organization through the retirement process (Feldman, 1994). Turnover theory largely focuses on one voluntarily leaving the organization as a function of alternative job availability (i.e., the ease with which one can leave an organization) and dissatisfaction with the current job (i.e. desirability of movement from an organization; March & Simon, 1958). Models stemming from March and Simon’s (1958) original work incorporate
environmental and social factors, such as expectations of an individual regarding their
decision to remain or leave the organization, as well as the traditional cognitive and
individual components such as job satisfaction and withdrawal cognitions (e.g., Hom,
Griffeth, & Sellaro, 1984; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979).

More recently, researchers have begun to incorporate factors that may help
explain turnover when the more popularly studied constructs do not fully represent the
reasoning behind an individual’s decision to leave. For example, in a meta-analysis of
antecedents and correlates of turnover, Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner (2000) found that
two of the more conventional turnover antecedents, job satisfaction and alternative job
offers, provided only modest predictive utility, with coefficients of -.22 and -.15,
respectively. Recognizing that individuals leave the organization for reasons outside the
scope of the organization, Lee and Mitchell (1994) developed the “unfolding model”. Lee
and Mitchell proposed four distinct decision paths one can take when analyzing
information and making the decision to remain with an organization or to leave. These
paths incorporated differing distinctions of object focus (i.e. the information one is
focusing on), psychological processes, and external events that produce a shock to one’s
current state of mind (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden, 2005). According to Lee and
Mitchell, a shock is a distinguishable, jarring event that pushes one toward deliberate
judgments about his/her job. The four different paths allow researchers to incorporate
unexpected or uncontrollable influences in the turnover process that may be more
proximal to the actual turnover event compared to other job attitudes such as job

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) also extended research on reasons individuals are driven to leave by identifying eight “motivational forces”. In this regard, motivation is the force that initiates behavior in response to stimuli, and then directs the decision to either remain with or leave an organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Researchers have long mentioned external and social influences’ impact on the decision to quit (e.g. Hom, Griffeth, & Sellaro, 1984), but Maertz and Griffeth synthesize these influences into a parsimonious typology that they use to propose a content-based framework with emphasis on why individuals choose to leave. The pushing forces are influenced by the perception of expectations from individuals within the organization (e.g. constituent forces) as well as those expectations from individuals outside the organization (e.g. normative forces). However, the forces are also influenced by the individual’s perceived costs and sacrifices (e.g. calculative and behavioral forces) (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

Although the theoretical “how’s” and “why’s” of turnover research have made substantial progress over time (i.e. the unfolding model; Lee & Mitchell, 1994, motivational forces; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), measuring voluntary turnover as the criterion still faces some weaknesses. Without the expansion of turnover to include a broader array of individuals, the turnover predictors may inadequately capture the current criterion of voluntary stayers and voluntary leavers. Toward this end, Hom et al. (2012) suggested an expansion to include groups typically left unexamined in traditional research – involuntary stayers and leavers. Related to this issue, Campion (1991)
described the need for turnover measures beyond the dichotomy of stayers and leavers for reasons varying from inaccuracy of organizational turnover data to a lack of distinction between voluntary and involuntary turnover. Campion (1991) proposed a continuous measure of turnover to be more sensitive to underlying attributes of turnover, explicitly naming voluntariness, avoidability, and functionality of turnover to be incorporated as measurement criteria, yet provides little theory for accomplishing this. In the following paragraphs, the current turnover criterion will be discussed and reviewed.

**Turnover Criterion**

Currently, turnover *voluntariness* captures an individual’s choice in leaving the organization. Voluntary turnover is characterized by an employee choosing to leave an organization freely, without pressure from the organization. As opposed to one’s own choice in leaving, involuntary turnover is described as the employer-initiated separation of an individual from the organization, usually where the individual has little say in the matter (Griffeth & Hom, 2001). Although turnover voluntariness captures both involuntary and voluntary turnover, previous research has focused on employees who leave the organization freely and ignores those individuals who have been forced out by the organization (Hom et al., 2012). Griffeth and Hom (2001) noted that involuntary leavers are excluded from turnover research because a general focus of research is to predict motivated, voluntary turnover. Indeed, it is difficult to predict from one’s own motivations when one will leave if leaving is a result of the organization’s termination of the relationship. Likewise, from the organization’s perspective, involuntary turnover can be beneficial to the organization (e.g. losing poor performers in order to fill roles with
better performers) and so predicting involuntary turnover from individual perspectives may not be seen as valuable.

Turnover functionality and avoidability are ways of examining turnover outcomes so as to compare those individuals who leave the organization voluntarily (Dalton, Krackhardt, & Porter, 1981). Functionality of voluntary turnover is also operationalized dichotomously: functional turnover and dysfunctional turnover. Turnover is functional when the organization has a negative evaluation of the individual and so is unconcerned with the loss of the individual’s participation, perhaps through the loss of a poor performer (Dalton et al., 1981). In contrast, dysfunctional turnover is when the organization views the employee as a valuable asset, and prefers to retain the individual (Dalton et al., 1981). Avoidability was also introduced by Dalton et al. (1981) in part to solidify the argument that in order to prevent voluntary turnover, the organization must first have control over the causes or reasons individuals decide to leave. Dalton et al.’s (1981) expansion of the turnover criterion to include avoidability and functionality, focused specifically on an organization’s perspective after individuals have already left the organization (Griffeth & Hom, 2001). If the main objective of turnover research is to explain and predict beforehand why individuals choose to leave the organization, avoidability and functionality from the organization’s perspective provides limited utility in understanding why individuals leave an organization.

With the possibility of increasing predictive validity from the individual’s perspective, and in support of the argument that individuals leave organizations without the assurance of a job offer in hand (i.e. Lyness & Judiesch, 2001; T.H. Lee, Gerhart,
Weller, & Trevor, 2008), Hom et al. (2012) proposed an expansion of the turnover
criterion beyond voluntariness, avoidability, and functionality. First, Hom et al. proposed
that criterion measures be extended to follow-up queries with employees who have left
the organization instead of relying solely on information gathered from the organization
through human resource records. By expanding the means of obtaining turnover
information, Hom et al. also noted that information such as *where* the individuals move to
after leaving the organization could be obtained (e.g., destinations). By taking the
individual’s perspective, researchers may also capture whether or not the turnover was
truly voluntary or if the individual may have been pressured by the organization or extra-
organizational forces, possibly resulting in the increase of predictor applicability.

Even with expanded criteria for measuring turnover, Campion (1991), as well as
Hom et al. (2012), noted that information regarding the driving forces behind individuals’
decisions to quit is commonly lacking because organizational researchers fail to fully
capture the extent of employees’ mental states. Traditionally, this mental state has been
captured by an individual’s intention to leave the organization. However with the
expansion of the turnover criterion to include not only those individuals who leave
voluntarily and to move beyond the organizational perspective, intention to quit as the
main precursor to turnover may not fully represent the mindset individuals have prior to
leaving. Intent to turnover as a precursor to turnover is discussed in more detail below.

**Intent to Turnover: The Current Precursor of Turnover**

The best predictor of an employee choosing to remain with the organization or
leave, and the most proximal precursor of turnover in most models, is currently captured
by the individual’s intentions to quit the organization (Griffeth et al., 2000). Allen, Weeks, and Moffitt (2005) noted however, that although intent to quit is valued as the strongest predictor, its use in predictability varies widely from study to study (95% Credibility Interval [.00, +.77]), suggesting that even when one intends to quit, one will not necessarily do so. This implies that even though one intends to quit, forces may prevent one from leaving, or that if the intention is to stay, certain forces may push one into leaving. For example, Maertz and Campion (2004) noted that one’s final action of leaving an organization may be contingent on an event occurring (e.g. “when I find a better job” or “when I have $5,000 in my savings account”).

Based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the variance in intention as a predictor of turnover may be because intentions are assumed to capture the individual’s motivation to pursue the outcome of quitting. This motivation is proposed to influence how much effort individuals are willing to exert to obtain a goal (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), intentions are a function of three components: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. However, behavior is not solely a function of intentions, as proposed in Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) theory of reasoned action, because it also incorporates a direct path between behavior and perceptions of control. Perceived behavioral control, according to Ajzen, is one’s belief in how well people will be able to carry out actions required to meet prospective objectives. Ajzen noted that “behavioral intention can find expression in behavior only if the behavior in question is under volitional control [italics added for emphasis]” (p. 181). According to Ajzen’s explanation, intentions then are only
predictive of behavior (i.e. turnover) if the individual perceives control over the decision to remain or leave. Although Ajzen clearly expresses that intention will not lead to behavioral outcomes (i.e. turnover) without the individual’s perception of control over the decision, turnover intentions continue to be used as the main predictor of turnover (e.g. Griffeth, et al., 2000) without taking one’s perceptions of control into account (Allen et al., 2005). By focusing on turnover intentions without taking into account perceptions of control, the predictive use of intentions for involuntary turnover is of less use (Hom et al., 2012), given involuntary turnover is described by employees’ lack of control in the decision to exit the organization.

With the expansion of the turnover criterion from strictly voluntary turnover (i.e., stayers vs. voluntary leavers) to incorporate involuntary turnover, and different turnover destinations, Hom et al. (2012) also proposed an expansion of the main precursor of turnover, turnover intention. Hom et al. named this precursor the proximal withdrawal state (PWS). The PWS captures not only the desire (i.e. preference) to leave or remain with the organization, but perceived control over doing so as well. This cognitive state is based on Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe’s (2004) position that “a mindset to pursue a course of action depends on its perceived purpose (staying vs. leaving) and reasons (locus of causality)” (Hom et al., 2012, p. 835). By incorporating preference to either stay or leave, and also one’s perceptions of control over the decision, Hom et al. proposed a means of more accurately conceptualizing a proximal turnover antecedent more befitting of Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior when the turnover criteria includes involuntary turnover. In the next section, I further explain the underlying
conceptualizations for the two over-arching dimensions that form the proximal withdrawal states: the preference for staying or leaving and the perception of control over preference. These two dimensions are the basis from which the different proximal withdrawal states are founded, and provide the theoretical grounding for the present study.

**Preference for Staying or Leaving**

Hom et al. (2012) described psychological quits (i.e. the decision to not participate in the organization while maintaining membership; Greenhalgh, 1980) as a precursor to turnover. Current perspectives of quit intentions focus specifically on the intent of leaving (i.e. I plan on leaving in the next six months), but may inadequately capture individuals who actually want to quit (i.e. the preference to quit) but do not intend to quit. These individuals who want to quit may be unable to do so because they have no alternative opportunities or are able to quit but at great personal cost. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) identified a strong negative relationship between affective attachment to the organization (i.e. low desirability of maintaining membership with the organization) and withdrawal cognitions ($\rho = -.58$) as well as turnover intention ($\rho = -.51$) and turnover ($\rho = -.17$). However, the authors suggest that when individuals feel the cost of leaving an organization is too high, even when taking into account low desirability to maintain membership, the relationship with thoughts of quitting and turnover will be weaker. Hom et al. (2012) argued that general attitudes toward leaving, including the desire to leave, offer better predictability as to why and where leavers go than specific quit intentions.
Hom et al. (2012) proposed this preference for either leaving the organization, or staying, is influenced by different sources within the organization, as well as internal motives. Affective forces, as defined by Maertz and Griffeth (2004), are the emotional responses that arise in response to the individual’s current evaluation of membership in an organization. They are intrinsically gratifying, and represent an alignment of the self-concept with the organization. Affective forces also reinforce the preference to stay with the organization through person-organization fit, identification with the organization, and value congruence. Along with affective forces, the anticipated satisfaction or future prospects gained from continuing membership with the organization (i.e. calculative forces) also influence the preference to stay. If an individual believes that they are likely to achieve goals by remaining with the organization, the individual is motivated to stay, whereas when an individual believes they will be unlikely to reach a goal, they will want to leave (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). These calculative forces are based on rational, rather than emotional self-interest and guide present behavior with a future-oriented outlook (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

Another intrinsic force that may influence preference is whether or not staying or leaving aligns with the individual’s values regarding turnover in general (Hom et al., 2012). For instance, there are individuals who believe changing jobs often instead of maintaining hard work is indicative of weak moral value (i.e. “I believe that quitting is bad and that persistence is a value”; Maertz & Campion, 2004) whereas others value changing jobs regularly and display high levels of organizational mobility. These levels of mobility can be exemplified by employees portraying a property called the “hobo
syndrome”. Hobo syndrome, as introduced by Ghiselli (1974), is characterized by the impulse, or urge, to move from job to job, disregarding logical thought about the act of moving. Hom et al. (2012) expanded on Maertz and Campion’s (2004) ideas of moral forces, highlighting that individuals are driven by the motive to do “the right thing” and to avoid inconsistency between their values and action (i.e. Festinger, 1957). Although not specifically an intrinsically driven force, embedding human resource management (HRM) practices also impact individuals’ preference for staying or leaving (Hom et al., 2012). Relevant embedding HRM practices include internal development opportunities, benefit plans, on-site childcare, hiring for organizational fit, and offering flextime to employees (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008).

Although desire to remain is captured largely by intrinsic forces, whether current or anticipated, there are also other forces that Hom et al. (2012) called upon to explain why an individual forms preferences to stay or leave. Individuals within the organization (e.g. colleagues and supervisors) influence an employee’s desire to remain or leave through different social attachments (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). Constituent forces, defined by Maertz and Griffeth (2004) as the felt pressures or attachment from colleagues, also have demonstrated effects on outcomes such as turnover cognitions beyond other traditional affective forces like organizational commitment (Maertz, Mosley, & Alford, 2002). There are also negative constituent forces which increase one’s desire to leave. For example, workplace bullying, defined as reoccurring and persistent negative acts toward an individual that create a hostile work environment, increase one’s intention to leave the organization (Simons, 2008). To incorporate the
desire of leaving based on a comparison of alternatives, Hom et al. (2012) also posited that attractive alternatives outside of the current job may also increase or buffer the desire to leave the organization, depending on the quality of alternatives. For example, the more attractive alternatives are outside the workplace, the more desirable it will be to leave. Likewise, if alternative jobs are unattractive to an individual, the less desirable it will be for the individual to leave the organization. Maertz and Griffeth (2004) discussed that individuals may be strongly attracted to alternatives, including both work and non-work roles, that they believe will provide better outcomes. Hom et al. (2012) postulated that the preference to remain with or leave the organization itself will not cause individuals to leave, but with the combination of perceived control, actions will be carried out or hindered. Based on the individual’s perceptions, behavior (e.g. turnover) can then be characterized by the degree to which it is considered to be done by the individuals own choice (i.e. autonomous) or done as a result of felt pressures or coercion (i.e. controlled; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

**Perceptions of Control over Preference**

Although preference to leave or stay with an organization plays a large role in one’s decision to engage in a given behavior (e.g. staying or leaving), Hom et al. (2012) argued that this preference cannot be engaged if one does not have the perception of control over the behavior. Self-determination theory (i.e., Gagné & Deci, 2005) is integrated into Hom et al. (2012) explanation of proximal withdrawal states as it incorporates perceptions of high or low control over one’s preference to stay with/leave the organization. A large assumption of the self-determined perspective is that human
beings are motivated to reach their fullest potential, and do so through meeting three psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Focusing specifically on the need of autonomy, Gagné and Deci (2005) differentiate between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation with the distinction that controlled motivation involves a feeling of pressure and “a sense of having to engage in the actions” (p. 334). More generally, self-determination theory postulates that a behavior (e.g. staying with or leaving the organization) is motivated either by an intrinsic value of the behavior (i.e. doing something because you want to do it) or by external motivators such as the perceived contingency of tangible rewards/consequences of the behavior (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Two main categories of extrinsic forces over staying or leaving influence individuals perceptions of control: employer forces and extra-organizational forces (Hom et al., 2012). Employer forces include the legal authority the organization has over the decision to continue employing individuals (i.e. the employment-at-will doctrine; Stone, 2007). Extra-organizational forces include an individual’s perceptions of being pulled from the organization by normative forces such as family members or friends (Hom et al., 2012). Because employment decisions generally impact the lives of families and peers outside of the organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), normative pressures may impact the ability to turnover even more than the individuals’ work attitudes (Prestholdt, Lane, & Mathews, 1987). An individual may be pushed to leave an organization even though he/she enjoys the work when a higher-paid spouse relocates and individuals must follow
to keep a family intact (Lauring & Selmer, 2010) or when the job creates high levels of work-family conflict (Carlson et al., 2011).

The perceived costs of leaving as well as the individual’s perception of job scarcity also decrease the perception of control over making the decision to leave an organization (Hom et al., 2012). The costs of leaving (i.e. behavioral forces; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004) reflect weighing of rational losses and past behavior against the outcomes of the current behavior. Experiences such as company specific training and development, vested pensions plans, and tenure bind individuals to the organization because they create felt obligation to the organization and a perception of loss if the individual chooses to leave (Shore, Tetrick, Shore, & Barksdale, 2000). Although leaving may create a sense of loss of factors within an organization, there is evidence an individual embedded in his/her community also weighs the costs of leaving when he/she risks losing community ties (Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). Research also supports the notion that when one does not believe he/she will be able to obtain another job (i.e. perception of few job alternatives), one is less likely to leave the current position (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom, 2010; March & Simon, 1958).

Because individuals may be motivated to perform work tasks not only from the desire to do something (i.e. intrinsic value), but also from external coercion or lack of control Hom et al. (2012) generated a typology of different states based on the different dimensions of preference (stay or leave) and perceived control (voluntary or involuntary). These states, along with the proposed study, will be discussed in the following section.
**Proximal Withdrawal States: The Present Study**

The main basis for Hom et al.’s (2012) proximal withdrawal states is that an individual’s participation in an organization can be better represented by the combination of the preference to remain with or leave the organization and the perceived control the individual has over that preference. Hom et al. proposed that these proximal withdrawal states (PWS) represent individuals’ “action tendencies to achieve desired end states of continued employment or an external destination that can have far-reaching attitudinal and behavioral implications” (p. 835). By including both the motivational states to remain with or leave the organization and individuals’ perceptions of control, Hom et al.’s (2012) PWS may better capture the differences between those motives that influence one’s’ decisions in staying compared to leaving (Steel & Lounsbury, 2009). The authors expanded on quit intentions with the proposition of four primary mental states: enthusiastic stayers, enthusiastic leavers, reluctant stayers, and reluctant leavers. These states are described below.

The present study’s main objective is to determine group differences between enthusiastic stayer, reluctant stayer, enthusiastic leaver, and reluctant leaver on the variables of job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, performance, and turnover, as postulated by Hom et al. (2012). Aside from relating to whether an individual stays with an organization or leaves, voluntarily or involuntarily, Hom et al. posited that an individual’s mental state would relate to other attitudinal and behavioral variables as well. These attitudes and behaviors could offer researchers and practitioners a standard profile of what individuals with different proximal withdrawal states might
look like when examining variables aside from directly measuring turnover. In the following paragraphs, arguments for the given hypothesized differences and relationships are presented.

**Enthusiastic Stayers.** Enthusiastic stayers are described by Hom et al. (2012) as those individuals who want to remain with the organization and are able to do so. Hom et al. noted that this mindset captures not only those commitments individuals have to the organization (e.g. organizational commitment; Meyer et al., 2004), but also incorporates embeddedness theory (i.e. Mitchell et al., 2001) in that individuals also prefer to remain in an organization because they do not want to give up social or community ties (Hom et al., 2012).

The enthusiastic stayer mental state is the mindset that turnover research traditionally assumes when studying the “stayers” in the distinction between stayers versus leavers and follows the assumption that stayers indeed want to stay. Hom et al. (2012) proposed that individuals with an enthusiastic stayer mental state primarily remain with the organization not only because of the perceived costs of leaving the community but also from the attachment to their organization. Meyer and Allen (1984) noted that affective attachment to the organization is characterized by the individual’s desire to follow a course of action, namely, staying. Enthusiastic stayers are characterized by their high levels of autonomous motivation, or rather, their perceived choice in remaining with the organization, (Hom et al., 2012). The perception of choice then facilitates one accepting organizational goals as well as being committed and attached to the organization (i.e. affective organizational commitment; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Because an
individual with the enthusiastic stayer mindset may be driven by the intrinsic value of remaining with the organization and has the perception of control in making the final decision to stay, this study examines the relationship between the desire, or preference, to remain with the organization and organizational commitment. I propose that individuals with the enthusiastic stayer mindset will have high levels of affective organizational commitment. This finding would empirically support not only the relationship between desire and organizational commitment, but would also support the notion that those individuals who perceive control over staying, such as those with the enthusiastic stayer mental state, would have a high amount of organizational commitment.

Within autonomous motivation is the concept of intrinsic motivation, or the notion that an activity (e.g. remaining with the organization and carrying out a job) is interesting and inherently satisfying (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Turnover theory also supports the hypothesis that those individuals who remain with the organization have high job satisfaction, and is one of the main attitudinal forces keeping individuals with the organization (Griffeth et al., 2000; March & Simon, 1958; Steel & Lounsbury, 2009). As such, the present study also examines the relationship between proximal withdrawal state and job satisfaction. Given the current arguments, individuals who desire to remain with the organization and have high perceptions of control over staying (i.e. enthusiastic stayers) will have high levels of job satisfaction compared to enthusiastic leavers and reluctant stayers.

Traditionally, research has also shown that individuals who want to stay with the organization maintain high performance (Ferris, 1981), resulting in a negative
relationship between performance and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). When combined with career development programs, high desire to remain with the organization is associated with high performance ratings (Benson, 2006). Returning once more to the self-determined perspective, a goal of the present study is to reiterate the findings that individuals who have the goal to remain at the organization and are motivated to maintain such membership (i.e. enthusiastic stayers) will work towards their goal through maintaining high performance (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Not only will these individuals maintain company standards of performance, but because they find work to be interesting and fulfilling, they may be more highly rated in performance, possibly as a result of their willingness to exert the most effort toward their goals compared to the other proximal withdrawal states.

**Reluctant Stayers.** The mental state defined by the preference of leaving the organization, but the inability or low perceptions of control to do so, is termed the reluctant stayer mental state (Hom et al., 2012). Individuals with this mental state may display different withdrawal behaviors (i.e. absences and tardiness; Mobley et al., 1979), but meet minimum organizational standards of performance in order to maintain organizational membership. Those individuals who remain with the organization, even though they wish to leave, generally elude turnover research scholars, as many studies do not emphasize that there are differences among those individuals who remain (Hom et al., 2012). Although “psychological quits” are discussed sporadically in turnover research (i.e. Greenhalgh, 1980) little has been done to confirm the attitude and behavioral profile of those individuals who remain with the organization while wishing to leave.
Hom et al. (2012) characterized individuals in the reluctant stayer mindset as those individuals who have little to no attachment to the organization and wish to leave. Reluctant stayers are proposed to be motivated to remain with the organization through external forces or consequences (e.g. family pressures to remain). Based on the self-determination perspective (Gagné & Deci, 2005), reluctant stayers may portray low levels of affective organizational commitment because they have failed to internalize values and attitudes of the organization but perceive they lack the choice to leave. Individuals in the reluctant stayer mindset are also hypothesized to have low levels of job satisfaction. The anticipation of low job satisfaction for reluctant stayers may also be based on the self-determination perspective in that individuals who do not want to remain with the organization may have found little intrinsic value in the work they are performing and so have lower job satisfaction.

Given that reluctant stayers are proposed to be motivated to perform by external factors (e.g. pay, fear of losing benefits, etc.) rather than the intrinsic value of the work, reluctant stayers may only be motivated to work or act with the intention of avoiding an undesired outcome like being fired from the job (Hom et al., 2012). Because the individuals with the reluctant stayer mental state cannot afford to have their organization membership terminated, they must maintain a certain standard of performance. As such, individuals with the reluctant stayer mental state will receive moderate performance ratings, indicative that they are maintaining a standard of performance to keep their job. However, because they have not internalized the values of the organization and their
work, they will have lower performance than individuals with the enthusiastic stayer mental state.

**Reluctant Leavers.** Hom et al. (2012) also incorporated the mindset of individuals who leave the organization involuntarily, even though they wish to remain, and so name the mental state “reluctant leaver”. This mental state is characterized by those individuals who would like to remain with the organization, or have a preference for staying, but have perceptions of low control over the final outcome. Traditionally, these individuals have remained outside the scope of turnover research because turnover process models and motivation models have little utility in predicting when or why an individual will be pushed from the organization (Mobley et al., 1979). However, some researchers oppugn the notion that turnover process models have little use in predicting involuntary turnover by showing that individuals can foresee dismissals in certain conditions. For example, poor performers who maintain levels of poor performance are aware that they are likely going to be let go from the organization (Becker & Cropanzano, 2011).

Aside from the organizations control over their leaving, this state also incorporates the mindset individuals have when they feel pressure to move from extra-organizational forces (e.g. a spouse relocating; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004) or other social obligations. By incorporating individuals who leave the organization reluctantly due to extra-organizational forces, the predictive strength of turnover antecedents using the expanded turnover criterion may improve (Campion, 1991) because the reluctant leaver
mindset may help explain why even individuals who are satisfied with work and committed to the organization inexplicably leave.

Hom et al. (2012) also explicated that individuals in the reluctant leaver mental state may resemble enthusiastic stayers in many ways. In this regard, reluctant leavers are similar to enthusiastic stayer in that they wish to remain with the organization. Hom et al. (2012) posited that individuals in the reluctant leaver mental state “are pressured to abandon satisfying jobs…” (p. 844). Because these individuals are conceptually similar to enthusiastic stayers in their preference to remain with the organization, those individuals in the reluctant leaver mental state will also express high levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. However, these levels will not be as high as enthusiastic stayers because organizational commitment, whether high or low, decreases as the point of leaving comes closer (Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976).

Regarding performance levels of individuals with the reluctant leaver mental state, Hom and colleagues (2012) note a variety of different situations in which levels of performance in reluctant leavers could vary. For example, individuals who want to remain with the organization but are aware they may be fired because of poor performance, may actively increase performance to make one last attempt to maintain membership. On the other hand individuals who suspect job loss may also reduce productivity (Becker & Cropanzano, 2011). There are also instances where individuals may want to remain with the organization but feel pressure from family or friends to leave (e.g. to follow a relocating spouse). However, application of the self-determined perspective would also imply that individuals with high commitment to the organization
(i.e. with affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization; Allen & Meyer, 1990) are expected to have high levels of performance in order to meet their goals. Given that performance research provides a plethora of different antecedents to poor performance and high performance, and that the underlying principles of the reluctant leaver mindset has yet to be studied in the turnover literature, the current study is one of the first to explore individuals’ performance when individuals prefer to stay but feel they have no control or choice in the decision to remain.

**Enthusiastic Leavers.** Enthusiastic leavers are those individuals who want to leave and have perceptions of high control over this outcome (Hom et al., 2012). This mindset captures the more traditional sense of voluntary leavers, but expands on it by providing a broader set of actions likely to result from strictly the act of leaving (i.e. increased thoughts of withdrawal or decreased performance). Although the ultimate goal is to leave, the enthusiastic leaver mindset drives those objectives that must first be met (e.g. finding another job) before the goal is reached.

Concerning those individuals with the enthusiastic leaver mental state, and their organizational commitment, I presume that individuals in an enthusiastic leaver state will likely have low organizational commitment. Given that they have a preference for leaving, this would be indicative that they have low levels of affective attachment or loyalty to the organization or find the job dissatisfying enough to leave. Research empirically supports that the desire to leave the organization is negatively related to both job satisfaction ($r = -.38, p < .05$) and organizational commitment ($r = -.48, p < .05$; Griffeth et al., 2005). As such, following the conceptualization of leavers in traditional
models of turnover, the current study assesses relationships between organizational commitment and preference to leave, as well as job satisfaction and preference to leave, in those individuals who have the enthusiastic leaver mental state.

Hom et al. (2012) posited that individuals characterizing the enthusiastic leaver mental state must first obtain satisfactory alternatives before leaving, whether it be through another job or through becoming a stay at home parent or going back to school (see “comparison quitters”, Maertz & Campion, 2004). The preference for leaving is proposed to guide the enthusiastic leavers actions during their time left at the organization. Because the goal is to leave, enthusiastic leavers may no longer be motivated to maintain organizational membership or to meet the organization’s standards of performance. Past research has demonstrated that individuals’ performance typically decreases right before leaving (Becker & Cropanzano, 2011; Harrison, Virick, & William, 1996). Given that enthusiastic leavers are characterized by the preference to leave the organization, as well as the perceived capability of doings so, the current study moves to empirically demonstrate that individuals categorized as enthusiastic leavers will have poorer performance compared to the other types of proximal withdrawal states.

Given the above arguments, I make the following hypotheses concerning the proximal withdrawal states and influence they have on the outcomes of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance (see Table 1 and Table 2):

**Hypothesis 1:** Proximal withdrawal state will relate to levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
**Hypothesis 1B:** Levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction will differ such that enthusiastic stayers will exemplify the highest levels of both organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Reluctant leavers will exemplify the second highest, followed by both reluctant stayers and enthusiastic leavers. There will be little difference between reluctant stayers and enthusiastic leavers in levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2:** Proximal withdrawal state will relate to levels of performance.

**Hypothesis 2B:** Level of performance will differ between the proximal withdrawal states such that enthusiastic stayer will have the highest levels, followed by reluctant stayers, and then enthusiastic leavers.

Table 1.

*Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance profiles of the different proximal withdrawal states.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdrawal State Type</th>
<th>Attitudes and Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic Stayers</td>
<td>High organizational commitment, high job satisfaction, high performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctant Stayers</td>
<td>Low organizational commitment, low job satisfaction, moderate performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctant Leavers</td>
<td>High organizational commitment, high job satisfaction, unknown performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic Leavers</td>
<td>Low organizational commitment, low job satisfaction, poor performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.

Proposed Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Expected Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment:</td>
<td>EL = RS &lt; RL &lt; ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction:</td>
<td>EL = RS &lt; RL &lt; ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance:</td>
<td>EL &lt; RS &lt; ES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ES= Enthusiastic Stayer, RS= Reluctant Stayer, EL = Enthusiastic Leaver, RL = Reluctant Leaver

**PWS and Turnover.** Understanding how job attitudes and performance differ in relation to which withdrawal state an individual is in, comprises the first objective of this thesis. The next objective is the examination of the possible differences between the withdrawal states on the act of leaving an organization. Each of the withdrawal states explicitly states the expected outcome in its label. For example, an enthusiastic stayer would be expected to stay with the organization. Just as a stayer is expected to remain with the organization, one would presume that a “leaver”, whether it is an enthusiastic leaver or reluctant leaver, would exit the organization. The next step in examining these cognitive states is to test proposed differences in Hom et al.’s (2012) article between the proximal withdrawal states and turnover. Although the primary purpose of this study is to examine group differences between different types of PWS, a critical contribution of this study is to determine the significance of the PWS in predicting turnover beyond that done by turnover intentions. As previously argued, the PWS contributes to turnover theory by incorporating both one’s preferences to leave, as well as one’s perceived control over
doing so (Hom et al., 2012). Based on Hom et al.’s (2012) model, the current study
examines the incremental validity of PWS beyond that of turnover intention in predicting
turnover.

**Hypothesis 3:** Proximal withdrawal states will have different turnover base-rates.

Enthusiastic stayers and reluctant stayers will have lower base-rates, and
enthusiastic leavers and reluctant leavers will have higher base-rates of turnover.

**Hypothesis 4:** PWS improves the prediction of turnover, providing more variance
accounted for beyond that of turnover intentions.
Methods

Participants and Procedure

Data used for the current study are part of a larger survey (Griffeth, Steel, Allen, and Bryan, 2005). Data were collected from a large national insurance company. Surveys were distributed to five hundred employees over three different locations throughout the United States. Questionnaires were distributed to small groups of employees during working hours. Employees were told that participation was strictly voluntary. Confidentiality was stressed during data collection. After employees completed the surveys, the documents were placed in envelopes, which the employees then sealed. The sealed envelopes were boxed and sent directly to members of the research team at the time. The final sample consisted of 443 employees from several different job classifications (i.e. claims and processing clerks, supervisors, salespeople, customer service representatives, and underwriters). Turnover data were collected from organizational records a year after the initial surveys were administered.

The total sample consisted of 78% women, 52% married individuals, 95% full-time status, and 73% Caucasian. The average age of participants was 30 years. The average participant also had one child and had been employed by the organization for 3.7 years. All participants had graduated from high school, or had a high school diploma, and 18% had also graduated from college.
Measures

**Perceptions of Control.** The volition scale was created using eleven items asking about an individual’s perceived control over the decision to remain or leave the organization ($\alpha = .74$). See Appendix A for scale development details and items.

**Preference.** The preference scale was created using two items from Price and Mueller’s (1981) desire to quit scale with a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale ($\alpha = .95$). An example item includes “I would like to leave the organization”.

**Proximal withdrawal states.** To create groups for the four different withdrawal states, individuals were divided based on their responses on perceptions of control and preference scales using two approaches. In the first approach, the upper and lower bounds of a tertiary split were used to designate individuals as either high or low on preference and control. With the disadvantage of limiting samples size through the use of the tertiary split, a median split was done for the categorization as a second approach. Once the high and low scores were split, groups were then created by crossing the high and low dimensions of perceived control with the high and low dimensions of preference. Those individuals who reported low preference to leave and perceived high control were classified as enthusiastic stayers ($n_{\text{tertiary}} = 89$, $n_{\text{median}} = 118$) and given a value of 1 within the PWS variable. Those individuals with high preference to leave the organization and high perceptions of control were classified as enthusiastic leavers ($n_{\text{tertiary}} = 26$, $n_{\text{median}} = 57$) and labeled as 2. Individuals who had a high preference to leave and perceived low control were classified as reluctant stayers ($n_{\text{tertiary}} = 81$, $n_{\text{median}} = 119$; labeled as 3) and
those who had low preference to leave the organization and perceived low control were classified as reluctant leavers ($n_{tertiary} = 20$, $n_{median} = 44$; labeled as 4). Ninety-nine individuals fell exactly at the median when using the median-split method, and so were not included in the analyses. Those who individuals who fell in the middle-third of either the ‘perceptions of control’ or ‘preference’ scale were also not included in subsequent analyses.

**Organizational commitment.** Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian’s (1974) organizational commitment questionnaire was used to assess individual’s levels of affective commitment to the organization. Because the original 15-item measure of organizational commitment also contained turnover cognitions, the short form was used. Reliability of the scale in the present thesis ($\alpha = .87$) was comparable to that reported in Mathieu and Zajac’s (1990) meta-analysis ($\alpha = .86$). Responses were given on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example items include “I feel, for me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work” and “I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined”.

**Job satisfaction.** Four items from Price and Mueller’s (1986) job satisfaction scale were used to assess global job satisfaction with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale in its development was .86, which is comparable to alpha in the present thesis, of .85. Example items include “I find enjoyment with my job” and “I am often bored with my job” (reverse coded).

**Performance.** Performance ratings are based on supervisor ratings ($\alpha = .87$). The measure used for supervisor ratings is limited to that which the organization had already
established and included 5 items with responses ranging from 1 to 7 with specific anchors given to numbers 1, 4, and 7 depending on the item. Examples of the items are “The individual is: 1 (an example of one of the worst associates working for us) 4 (an example of an average associate working for us) 7 (an example of one of the best associates working for us)” and “The quality of this individual’s work is: 1 (very poor compared to other associates in the same position) 4 (average compared to other associates in the same position), 7 (excellent compared to other associates in the same position).

Intention to Quit. Intention to quit was measured using 3 items from Hom and Griffeth’s (1991) measure of withdrawal cognitions. Responses ranged from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes). Hom and Griffeth’s (1991) original development of the scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .96, which is comparable to the reliability shown in this thesis of .91. Example items consist of “I intend to leave [the organization] during the next 12 months” and “I intend to quit my present job”.

Turnover. Turnover data were collected from the organization’s human resource records approximately a year after the initial survey administration. Twenty-four individuals of the 443 (5.4%) had left the organization voluntarily and 416 of the 443 (93.9%) individuals remained with the organization. Three individuals were reported having left the organization involuntarily, however they were not included in analyses because of missing data.
Results

Table 3 displays overall scale means and standard deviations, correlations, scale reliabilities for the dependent variables among the groups, as well as reliabilities for the scales of perceptions of control, preference and intentions to quit. Table 4 presents means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for the four main proximal withdrawal states. All analyses were first conducted using the tertiary-split categorization method of PWS and then with the median-split categorization method. This method was used because some of the samples may have been suffering from a lack of power. Using the median split method, although at the cost of within-group variance, increased the sample size.

Table 3.

Overall scale means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations and scale reliabilities. (n = 222 to 437)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
<th>7.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. TO</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. POC</td>
<td>-002</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pref.</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.186**</td>
<td>-.446**</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4. IQ</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.266**</td>
<td>-.398**</td>
<td>.656**</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. OC</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>-.156**</td>
<td>.462**</td>
<td>-.720**</td>
<td>-.579**</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. JS</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-.110*</td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td>-.625**</td>
<td>-.479**</td>
<td>.688**</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Perf.</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.171**</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-.154*</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01; *p < .05

TO = turnover, POC = Perceptions of Control, Pref. = Preference, IQ = Intent to Quit, OC = Organizational Commitment, JS = Job Satisfaction, Perf. = Performance.

a Perceptions of Control is a standardized scale.
Reliability estimates are presented in the diagonal.
To determine the differences in satisfaction and commitment among the four groups of proximal withdrawal states as described in Hypothesis 1 and 1b, a one-way between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted using the tertiary-split measure of PWS to account for differences in organizational commitment and job satisfaction. MANOVA examines mean differences on the variables (i.e. organizational commitment and job satisfaction) while taking into account the inter-correlations between the dependent variables (Bray & Maxwell, 1985, Haase & Ellis, 1987). The MANOVA showed a significant difference among PWSs on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, $F(6, 216) = 35.35, p < .01$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .33$.

Table 4.

Means and standard deviations for variables based on median and tertiary categorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Split</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POC</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>-.523</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pref.</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JS</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perf.</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 means of turnover are representative of Turnover Base Rates per group
TO = turnover, POC = Perceptions of Control, Pref. = Preference, IQ = Intent to Quit, OC = Organizational Commitment, JS = Job Satisfaction, Perf. = Performance
Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment using the tertiary-split measure of PWS as the independent variable as a follow-up test to MANOVA. In support of Hypothesis 1, differences in PWS were associated with significant differences in both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, F(3, 212)= 52.24, \( p < .01 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .43 \) and F(3, 212)= 80.04, \( p < .01 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .53 \), respectively.

To examine the relationships predicted in Hypothesis 1b, post hoc analyses (i.e. Tukey HSD) were conducted. First, in regards to job satisfaction, enthusiastic stayers (\( M = 5.58 \)) had significantly higher (\( p < .01 \)) job satisfaction than both enthusiastic leavers (\( M = 3.93 \)) and reluctant stayers (\( M = 3.50 \)). Although the difference between enthusiastic stayers (\( M = 5.58 \)) and reluctant leavers (\( M = 5.15 \)) was in the expected direction, the difference was non-significant (\( p = .421 \)). Reluctant leavers (\( M = 5.15 \)) also had significantly higher (\( p < .01 \)) job satisfaction than both enthusiastic leavers (\( M = 3.93 \)) and reluctant stayers (\( M = 3.50 \)). When comparing enthusiastic leavers (\( M = 3.93 \)) and reluctant stayers (\( M = 3.50 \)), there was not a significant difference between the two groups (\( p = .328 \)).

When comparing the different PWS in levels of organizational commitment, enthusiastic stayers (\( M = 5.63 \)) and reluctant leavers (\( M = 5.16 \)) were found to have the highest levels with a non-significant difference between the two states (\( p = .103 \)). Enthusiastic stayers (\( M = 5.63 \)) had higher levels of organizational commitment (\( p < .01 \)) compared to both enthusiastic leavers (\( M = 4.32 \)) and reluctant stayers
(M = 3.70). Reluctant leavers (M = 5.16) also had higher levels of organizational commitment (p < .01) when compared to enthusiastic leavers (M = 4.32) and reluctant stayers (M = 3.70). When comparing enthusiastic leavers (M = 4.32) and reluctant stayers (M = 3.70), enthusiastic leavers had significantly higher organizational commitment compared to reluctant stayers (p < .01).

All analyses were then reexamined using the median-split measure of PWS. Use of the median-split measure resulted in the affirmation of the aforementioned results concerning job satisfaction and organizational commitment with one exception. Although the previous relationships were replicated, enthusiastic leavers had both significantly greater organizational commitment (p < .01) and job satisfaction (p < .05) compared to reluctant stayers. In summary, Hypothesis 1B was partially supported, with results indicating enthusiastic stayers with the highest levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, along with reluctant leavers, and reluctant stayers and enthusiastic leavers having the lowest levels. However, with results indicating a non-significant difference between reluctant leavers and enthusiastic stayers, Hypothesis 1B was not fully supported.

**Performance and PWS**

An ANOVA framework was also applied to test the difference in performance between the four PWSs. After conducting a one-way ANOVA using performance as the dependent variable and PWS using the tertiary measure, there was not a significant difference in performance dependent on whether one is an enthusiastic stayer, reluctant stayer, enthusiastic leaver, or reluctant stayer, F(3, 118) = 1.66, p = .179, partial η² = .04.
This analysis indicated that although the enthusiastic stayer (M = 5.11) had the highest mean performance, there were no differences among the groups: reluctant leaver (M = 4.69), enthusiastic leaver (M = 4.79), reluctant stayer (M = 4.60) when using a tertiary split to determine membership in a given PWS. The median-split measure of PWS was also examined testing PWS’s relationship with performance. This analysis also indicated no relationship between PWS and performance, $F(3, 189) = 1.74, p = .161, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$. This analysis indicated that although the enthusiastic stayer (M = 5.07), again, had the highest mean performance, there were no differences among the groups: reluctant leaver (M = 4.99), enthusiastic leaver (M = 4.83), reluctant stayer (M = 4.63) when using a median split to determine membership in a given PWS. In general, Hypothesis 2 and 2b were not supported.

**Turnover and PWS**

ANOVA was also conducted to test the difference in turnover base rates among the four groups proposed by Hypothesis 3. Differences in PWS categorization, as determined by a tertiary split, were associated with a significant difference in turnover base rates, $F(3, 179) = 3.69, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$. Post hoc analyses (i.e. Tukey HSD) revealed that the individuals who were enthusiastic leavers (M = .23) had higher turnover base rates than those who were considered enthusiastic stayers (M = .03; $p < .05$). However, there were no significant differences found between enthusiastic leavers (M = .23) and reluctant stayers (M = .13; $p = .491$) or reluctant leavers (M = .18; $p = .950$). There were no other significant differences when comparing the enthusiastic leavers, reluctant leavers, and enthusiastic stayers. The omnibus test for the comparison of base...
rates when using the median split categorization method was not statistically significant, $F(3, 282) = 1.64, p = .180$, partial $\eta^2 = .017$. Although there were not significant differences when using the median-split measure, use of the tertiary measure for the analysis supports a hypothesized difference between enthusiastic stayer and enthusiastic leavers, lending partial support for Hypothesis 3.

To test the incremental validity of PWS above that of turnover intention in predicting turnover as stated in Hypothesis 4, a hierarchical binary logistic regression analysis was conducted (see Table 5 for the full model). Respondents were classified into one of two categories, those who left the organization voluntarily and those who remained with the organization. The first block entered into the model contained intention to quit. As expected, intention to quit was significantly related to turnover, $\chi^2 (4, N = 372) = 20.09, p < .01$. More specifically, as intention to quit increases, the likelihood of leaving voluntarily increases, Wald $\chi^2 (1, N = 372) = 21.27, p < .01$, local $OR = 2.18$. Perceptions of control and preference to stay or leave were entered into the second block, and the interaction of perceptions of control and preference was entered into the third block. Both the second and third blocks were non-significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 372) = .812, p = .666$, and $\chi^2 (1, N = 372) = .01, p = .921$, respectively. In the presence of intention to quit, one’s perceptions of control and preference for staying/leaving were not significantly related to turnover, failing to support Hypothesis 4.
Table 5.

Summary of hierarchical logistic regression analyses for predicting turnover (n = 372)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>OR$^b$</th>
<th>$X^2_c$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Block 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intent to Quit</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>21.27**</td>
<td>.127</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Quit</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>9.15**</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
<td>.428</td>
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<tr>
<td>POC$^a$</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.596</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Quit</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>9.14**</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preference</td>
<td>.158</td>
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<td>.067</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preference x POC</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.010</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .01$

$^a$ POC = Perceptions of Control

$^b$ OR = Odds Ratio

$^c$ Likelihood ratio chi-square test statistics are reported for tests of blocks and models; Wald chi-square tests are reported for tests of predictors

Note: Voluntary leavers coded as ‘1’, stayers coded as ‘0’
Discussion

With the expansion of the turnover criterion to include possible turnover destinations, Hom et al. (2012) proposed a turnover antecedent comprised of one’s preference to leave or remain with an organization, along with their perceptions of control over said preference. The authors termed this antecedent one’s PWS, which could be classified as one of four main categories: enthusiastic stayer, reluctant stayer, enthusiastic leaver, or reluctant leaver. These states are posited to drive one’s attitudes and behaviors while participating in an organization. Given this refinement of turnover antecedents and criterion by Hom et al. (2012), the contribution of the present study of PWS is twofold: Firstly, this study is one of the first to empirically test the relationships between PWS and commonly studied turnover antecedents, as well as the relationship between PWS and turnover itself. Secondly, the incremental validity of PWS beyond that of turnover intention was examined.

In the following paragraphs, findings of the present study will be discussed. More specifically, the results will be discussed to further explore possible conceptual explanations of the differences, or lack-there-of, found between the different states. I will then discuss the incremental validity of PWS topic, along with limitations of the current study which may have affected the results detrimentally. Finally, recommendations for future research will be made with the hope that research on the newly modeled PWS continues to develop and aid in the understanding of employee turnover.
Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and PWS

A main premise of the present study was that one’s categorization as an enthusiastic stayer, reluctant stayer, enthusiastic leaver, or reluctant leaver would be related to different levels of job attitudes, namely job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Hypotheses 1 and 1B, focusing on the differences in these job attitudes, were partially supported with differences in job satisfaction and organizational commitment dependent on PWS categorization. However, not all of the differences hypothesized in 1B were evident in the given study. It was hypothesized that individuals in the enthusiastic stayer and reluctant leaver groups would have the highest levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, but reluctant leavers would have lower levels compared to enthusiastic stayers. Previous studies have shown that job attitudes, such as organizational commitment, decrease before one leaves an organization (e.g. Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976), and because individuals in the reluctant leaver group perceive low control over remaining with the organization, and are consequently being pushed or pulled from the organization, one would have anticipated lower levels of positive job attitudes.

Although both enthusiastic stayers and reluctant leavers have the highest levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, reluctant leavers did not have significantly lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Hypothesis 1B was partially supported through the examination of differences between job attitudes of those categorized as enthusiastic leaver and reluctant stayers, with both groups displaying lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment compared to
those in the enthusiastic stayer and reluctant leaver groups. Interestingly, those categorized as a reluctant stayers, when using the median split categorization method, has significantly lower organizational commitment and job satisfaction compared to those categorized as enthusiastic leavers. Although using the tertiary split method indicated no significant differences between the two states in job satisfaction, the difference in organizational commitment when comparing the two groups was still apparent. Given the overall decrease of sample size, while increasing the between group variance, it appears that this result was likely due to a lack of power.

With the apparent differences between those individuals with preferences to stay and those who would prefer to leave, it seems that preference for staying or leaving was the distinguishing factor in the difference between the states in regards to levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Consistent with previous research and theory, those individuals who had a high preference to leave (i.e. reluctant stayer and enthusiastic leaver) had lower levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, with reluctant stayer being the lowest, while those individuals who had a preference towards staying (i.e. reluctant leaver and enthusiastic stayer) had the highest levels (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

Although there were not significant differences between those individuals who preferred to stay with the organization, perceptions of control may be a contributing factor when comparing the groups of individuals who preferred to leave. As previously stated, it was argued that reluctant stayer would have low affective organizational commitment because they may not have internalized the values of the organization and
are not emotionally attached to the organization. Although this reasoning is believed to be the same when referencing enthusiastic leavers, it is not as clear how perceptions of lack of control in individuals in the reluctant stayer mindset would be reflected in lower organizational commitment and job satisfaction compared to enthusiastic leavers. One possible explanation for the difference in these states is that individuals who want to leave and feel they can do so may feel like they are able to escape, while those individuals who want to leave but are stuck are less attached to an organization. Gagné, Chemolli, Forest, and Koestner (2008) support this notion with research indicating that those individuals who have less control over their decision, along with external reasons forcing them to stay with an organization, have less affective organizational commitment.

Regarding the Hom et al. (2012) model, the present study’s findings also generally support the authors’ profiles of the different PWS. Based on their model, both enthusiastic stayers and reluctant leavers would have, and did, high job satisfaction and organizational commitment whereas enthusiastic leavers and reluctant stayers would have lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The focal difference between enthusiastic stayers and reluctant leavers, or likewise, enthusiastic leavers and reluctant stayers, is perceptions of control rather than preference for remaining or leaving and job attitudes (Hom et al., 2012).

**Performance and PWS**

In stark contrast to those relationships proposed in Hypotheses 2 and 2b, there were no differences in performance when comparing the PWSs that had been created using both the tertiary- and median-split methods. In some regards, the findings that the
main PWS do not differ in performance may not be all that surprising. Hom et al. (2012) describe the four main PWSs in their article, but they also break the main categories down into subtypes that differ in relation to one another based on the motives or forces underlying their perceptions of control and preference. With that said, the variability of performance in each of the groups may be based on the forces or motives (e.g. Maertz & Griffeth, 2004) of specific subtypes rather than reflected in the main categories. For example, an reluctant leaver leaving because his/her spouse received a better job across the country (i.e. a normative force), would not necessarily be expected to have the same level of performance as an reluctant leaver who is being fired for having poor performance (i.e. a legal force). Having previously discussed the possible differences in performance within those individuals in the reluctant leaver category, differences in performance may also be observed within the other three main categories dependent on the forces. Research testing variability within the four main PWSs (i.e. the different subtypes) may shed light on why no differences were found between the PWSs in the present study.

Another possible explanation for the lack of differences between the groups could be biases in supervisor’s ratings of their employees. Benedict and Levine’s (1988) study investigated common biases and found that supervisors have a tendency to positively distort ratings of poor and moderately performing individuals. In other words, although there may be larger differences between high performers and low performers, the overall effect size may be attenuated by rating low performers higher while maintaining true ratings of high performers. This may be evident when examining the performance means
of each of the groups, finding that the lowest mean of the groups (i.e. reluctant stayer at 4.60) is actually above the midpoint on the rating scale. Although enthusiastic stayers had predictably higher performance in both the tertiary and median splits, I found no significant differences among the groups. A larger sample may be necessary to find significant differences among the groups.

Although this study does not focus on the measurement of performance, there are some steps that can be taken in future research to limit possible rater biases. One such method would be to use multi-rater methods of performance appraisal, such as 360-degree feedback, in which ratings are taken not only from the supervisor, but from co-workers, subordinates, clients, and from the individual receiving the evaluation. Using this method may provide a more holistic and accurate look at one’s performance compared to a supervisor-only appraisal (Wildman, Bedwell, Salas, & Smith-Jentsch, 2010).

Turnover Base Rates and PWS

Given that the PWS was proposed by Hom et al. (2012) as a refined precursor of turnover, another main purpose of the study was to determine if there are differences in turnover base rates dependent on categorization as enthusiastic stayers, reluctant stayers, enthusiastic leavers, or reluctant leavers, as proposed by Hypothesis 3. As hypothesized, those individuals who were classified as enthusiastic stayers and reluctant stayers were expected to have the lowest turnover base rate, while enthusiastic leavers and reluctant leavers were anticipated to have the highest. This hypothesis was only partially supported. When using the tertiary split method for categorization of PWS, the test of the
differences indicated a significant omnibus result. When examining the group differences more closely, the only difference was found between the enthusiastic stayer and enthusiastic leaver groups. More specifically, the enthusiastic leaver group had a much higher turnover base rate compared to those in the enthusiastic stayer group. When using the median-split categorization method to test Hypothesis 3, no significant differences were found between the four states; however, high within group variability may have been a contributing factor. In general, previous research on voluntary leavers and stayers supports the notion that people who want to leave (i.e. enthusiastic leavers) have higher turnover base rates than individuals who want to stay and are not being pushed from the organization (e.g. Griffeth et al., 2000).

Although enthusiastic stayers had a lower base rate than enthusiastic leavers, as predicted, there were no differences between reluctant stayers and reluctant leavers in turnover base rates compared to the other PWSs. One possible explanation is the dynamism of the PWS. Given that turnover was collected from the organization 12 months after participants completed the surveys, it is possible that one’s PWS may have changed. Hom et al. (2012) discuss in length the dynamisms of the PWS and how one can progress from a reluctant stayer to an enthusiastic leaver, through changes in perceptions of control. For example, if one is trapped at an organization because he/she cannot find another job, one can become “untrapped”, so to speak, when job opportunities arise and one is then able to leave more easily. Possible changes over the turnover data collection period may have attenuated the true relationship between turnover base rates and PWS membership. Another possible attenuation of the relationship is the low rate of turnover
in general from the sample. Recall that only 28 individuals (i.e. 5.4%) of the overall sample of 443 individuals left the organization. This number was reduced even more after categorizing individuals in the different PWS through the tertiary- and median-split methods. Thus, variability between groups may not be as apparent in the current sample compared to an organization which has a higher turnover rate. Finally, we cannot help but wonder what the results would have looked like if the involuntary leavers had not been eliminated because of missing data in the PWS measure.

**Incremental Validity of PWS**

The final premise of the current study was to examine if there was indeed an increase in variance accounted for in turnover by PWS above that accounted for by turnover intentions. Although this hypothesis was not supported, there are several explanations for these findings. Recall that PWS is proposed as a precursor to an expanded criterion (i.e. Hom et al., 2012). This criterion is not only comprised of voluntary leavers compared to stayers, but incorporates those individuals who leave an organization involuntarily. Hom et al. (2012) also focused on turnover destinations, recognizing that different forces will result in individuals leaving for a variety of purposes. One of the major limitations of the current study is that it was only able to capture those individuals who left the organization voluntarily and those who stayed. Although there were individuals who left involuntarily, those individuals were not included in the analyses because they did not provide answers to necessary items (i.e. items used in the preference to leave scale for categorization). As such, testing the
incremental validity of PWS in this instance may not be the most appropriate because the criterion is not operationalized the same as that proposed by Hom et al. (2012).

In response to a comment about the PWS construct offering better prediction beyond that of intention to quit, Maertz (2012) states that comparing studies using the new criterion and PWS construct to previously used techniques (i.e. the dichotomous turnover criterion and turnover intentions) would be like comparing “apples to oranges” (pg. 860) because one is changing what is being predicted. Therefore, as much as turnover intentions are meant to predict whether an employee stays or leaves voluntarily, PWS are proposed to predict not only whether someone will stay or leave, voluntarily or involuntarily, but where they will go (i.e. turnover destinations). Although the current study failed to find support for incremental validity, that is not to say that studies using Hom et al.’s (2012) turnover criterion (i.e. turnover destinations) would find the same results.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although several limitations and possible attenuating factors have been discussed throughout the previous sections, there are limitations that remain unaddressed. A major limitation is the perceptions of control scale used for the classification of individuals into PWSs. The scale used for perceptions of control was created using items that captured forces impacting one’s perceptions of control (e.g. normative forces) along with one’s actual perception of control (e.g. “If I leave ______ in the next 6 months, it will be mostly my decision.”). Although this scale provided acceptable reliability, it may have also been an attenuating factor. First, it did not provide measurement of all possible
forces influencing one’s perceptions of control. Second, it did not focus solely on one’s perceptions of control over leaving. Both of these standards were proposed as means of identifying the control dimension of four main categories (Hom et al., 2012). Results based on the preference components of PWS were clearly indicated, but those hypotheses concerning turnover and performance may have relied more heavily on one’s perceptions of control, and may have been attenuated.

To address this limitation, distinct measures of the four main PWSs should be developed and validated. Hom et al. (2012) describe several methods of measuring PWS. One of these methods consists of measuring the dimensions of perceptions of control and preference, much like this study did. However, the measure suggested was based on Ajzen’s (2006) focus on one’s judgment on the possibility of leaving versus staying, and his/her control over the possibility. To determine classification once the measures are taken, the authors suggest using cluster analysis to determine classifications of PWS, or, consistent with the present study, using median splits. Another method consists of directly asking individuals about their state categorization, or even assessing different preference and control antecedents to distinguish between the different subtypes.

One of the current study’s primary purposes is to determine the different profiles and characteristics individuals in a given PWS would be likely to display. In other words, this is a correlational study, with no intention of making causal inferences. Hom et al. (2012)’s model includes attitudinal and behavioral outcomes from the PWSs, and so future studies should focus on how perceptions of control, along with preference for staying or leaving, influence outcome variables like organizational citizenship behaviors,
counterproductive work behaviors, along with the attitudinal variables included in the present study. Another purpose of the present study is to test the incremental validity of the PWS above that of turnover intentions. Because this study focuses only on turnover as a dichotomous variable, future studies testing the relationship between PWS and turnover should utilize the expanded turnover criterion as proposed by Hom et al. (2012).

**Conclusions**

Research in the field of employee turnover has been progressing beyond a model where employee turnover is simply the result of dissatisfaction, or one’s preference to leave. Even in the early years of turnover research, March and Simon’s (1958) theory on employee participation in an organization and Thibault and Kelley’s (1959) comparison level model offered explanations for why one would not leave an organization even though he/she is dissatisfied. These models, which include both the desire to leave, and perceptions and comparisons of job alternatives, may be viewed as the predecessors to Hom et al.’s (2012) model, and much of turnover literature. However, turnover theory is moving beyond simple acknowledgement, to actual incorporation of the idea that employees leave for alternatives other than work into models of turnover and its antecedents (e.g. Campion, 1991; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Hom et al., 2012). Although some anticipated differences were not supported, the current study contributes to the literature in providing some encouraging support in one of the first tests of the PWS profiles described by Hom et al. (2012). Given that the differences in job attitudes and performance are but two of the many factors in the development of the Hom et al. (2012) model, there is plenty of room for development and testing to be completed in the future.
References


Appendix: Development of Perceptions of Control Scale

Fourteen items for the Perceptions of Control scale were taken from a) the mobility dimension of Griffeth et al.’s (2005) Employment Opportunity Index mobility scale, and b) items capturing perceived alternatives and control over leaving. Items were selected on the basis that they portrayed one’s perceptions of control over leaving or staying with the organization and were recoded as necessary so higher ratings reflected perceptions of higher control (see Table 6 for full list of items). Items 10, 12, and 13 were removed from the scale after an item analysis revealed low item inter-correlations, resulting in poor scale reliability. After these items were removed the resulting scale reliability was deemed adequate ($\alpha = .74$) (See Table 7 for item and scale bivariate correlations).
Table 6.

*Items for perceptions of control scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family and/or friends strongly encourage me to remain with __________. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My investment in my job is too great for me to consider leaving. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am unable to move to another place of residence now, even if a better job came along. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My spouse’s career makes it very difficult for me to leave. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are factors in my personal life (e.g. school age children, relatives, etc.) which make it very difficult for me to leave in the near future. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If I leave in the next 6 months it will likely be due to encouragement I expect to receive from __________. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. If I leave in the next 6 months it will likely be partly due to some encouragement I am currently receiving from ____. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Informally, I am being encouraged to leave __________. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Formally, I am being encouraged to leave __________. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. If I leave _____ in the next 6 months, it will be mostly my decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If I leave _____ in the next 6 months, it will mostly be due to the organization’s decision. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I plan on leaving in the next 6 months only if I can find an acceptable job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I plan on leaving in the next 6 months even if I cannot find a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel the company is planning to discharge me in the next 6 months and there is nothing I can do about it but look for work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Items deleted due to low inter-item consistency*
Table 7.

Correlations of perception of control scale and scale items.

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</table>

POC = Perceptions of Control

* p < .05
** p < .01