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**A Dynamic Approach to Employee  
Attachment and Withdrawal**

**CEO Publication  
T 81-8 (14)**

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## ABSTRACT

Employee attachment and withdrawal was examined for a sample of electronics workers located in the Silicon Valley. A first attempt was made to compare the effects of current and future expectations as predictors of job responses for employees at different job tenure stages (newcomers, insiders, and long term veterans). A survey based multivariate approach with in-depth interviews was used. Results portray a high turnover pattern for newcomers who desire, but do not expect promotional opportunities and enriched jobs. The effect of job longevity remains unresolved.



## A DYNAMIC APPROACH TO EMPLOYEE ATTACHMENT AND WITHDRAWAL

Employee attachment and withdrawal is of considerable interest to high technology organizations caught in the web of social mobility, changing expectations of the workforce and increased needs for a flexible but reliable workforce. Despite considerable research dealing with attachment and withdrawal, little is known about the common correlates and antecedents of these job reactions, especially for high technology production employees.

There is recent recognition that the relationship between an individual and organizational setting is dynamic in nature and this relationship is frequently a function of one's career and/or job stages (Super, 1980; Van Maanen, 1977). Katz (1978a,b), for example, suggests that job longevity significantly moderates the relationship of job satisfaction to various task characteristics. Brousseau (1978) notes that an individual's personality may change over time, consistent with his/her job experiences. Further, Van Maanen (1977), Louis (1980) and others note that individuals regularly reinterpret their organizational setting in an effort to make sense of their changing job experiences.

Despite these studies, and the obvious interest in the topic, neither the socialization nor turnover research literature has extensively examined the ways in which employees at different job tenure stages (e.g., newcomer, insider, long term veteran) react to, and cope with, changing job experiences, resulting in attachment or withdrawal (Louis, 1980). Neither has there been a systematic comparison of the relative effects of current work experiences and future expectations on such job responses. This may be due in part to the complexity of the changing relationship

between individuals, their expectations, and their actual job experiences.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to extend our knowledge of job attachment and withdrawal as they concern workers in different stages of job tenure by considering both aspects of their current job experiences and future expectations as predictors of various job responses. There has been a call for integrative multivariate studies to compare the importance of the large number of predictors of the withdrawal process, as well as multi-method and in-depth case studies to investigate the interactive aspects of job attachment (Locke, 1976). Thus, this study combines a survey-based multivariate approach with in-depth interviews to understand the affective and behavioral job responses of high technology production workers in the electronics industry.

Relatively little of the voluminous literature on job responses explicitly recognizes that people not only change over time, but their current actions may take into account future hopes as well as present circumstances. This section examines literature relating to this dynamic conceptualization of job response.

## BACKGROUND

### Job Tenure

There is some evidence that people who have been in a job for varying lengths of time respond differently to aspects of the employment situation. Katz (1978a, b) has demonstrated that various job characteristics are differentially related to the job satisfaction of individuals who have been in the same job for varying lengths of time. He suggests that during the first months of a job, newcomers are receptive to factors

which help establish feelings of acceptance, identity and psychological safety. After the newcomer has gained insider status (after approximately six months) the employee enters a new stage in which concern for achievement and challenge predominate the job experience. Katz notes that job satisfaction-task characteristics relationships are strongest for employees having 1-3 years of job tenure. A third stage is reached when the long-term veteran adjusts to the job by becoming more responsive to extrinsic and contextual role features--such as peer relations, supervision and pay--than to task characteristics. Katz's study relates primarily to the salience of job characteristics at different tenure stages. The responsiveness of workers to characteristics other than job facets will be examined in this study.

Newcomers to a job have received special theoretical and research attention both because of their higher turnover rate, and also because they place special training and socialization demands on the organization. Research on turnover among newcomers suggests that the newcomers' expectations of the job experience are critical in isolating voluntary recruit turnover (Ross & Zander, 1957; Katzell, 1968; Porter & Steers, 1973; Mowday, 1979; Muchinsky & Tuttle, 1979; Louis, 1980). There is little systematic comparison, however, of the antecedents of turnover of this low tenure group with employees of longer tenure.

#### Current and Future Expectations

Expectancy theory addresses expectations of the job experience by suggesting that behavior is partially a function of the expected outcomes (Vroom, 1964). In addition, if an individual sees the job outcome as equitable, satisfaction and decreased chance of turnover are likely to result (Lawler, 1973).



Expected job outcomes differ along a time dimension. Outcomes such as equitable pay, interesting work, good supervision and social acceptance are aspects of the current situation. Others, such as promotion and career advancement, occur over a longer period of time. Driver (1979) notes that there are individual differences in time orientations of careers ranging from life-long career commitment to commitment which changes frequently. Individuals probably develop expectations as to what type of job performance will lead to the desired career opportunities, and whether such opportunities are present in a particular job or organization. Both the current and long-term outcomes of the job situation can be expected to influence employees' attachment and withdrawal.

#### Job Satisfaction: Reactions to Current Job Situation

Aspects of job attachment such as satisfaction and commitment have been frequently employed to predict withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism, turnover intent and turnover itself. Studies consistently find an inverse, yet relatively weak, relationship (Mobley, 1981).

One of the main integrative variables used to measure affective reactions has been Job Satisfaction, usually operationalized as satisfaction with various facets of employment. Measurement of satisfaction taps reactions to relatively immediate job outcomes. Satisfaction facets, such as the work itself, supervision, co-workers, pay and advancement opportunities, are frequently measured (cf. JDI: Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969). All of these, with the exception of advancement opportunities, reflect current perceptions of organizational situation.

## Commitment, Intention to Leave and Promotional Opportunities: Reactions to The Future Job Situation

Other affective reactions to the job experience, such as commitment, reflect not only current attachment to the organization but future attachment as well (Steers, 1977). Behavioral intentions, although they predominantly imply such future behavior as leaving the organization, may reflect aspects of past as well as current and future job expectations. In addition, behavioral intentions may signify the existence of alternate opportunities which may not constrain one's affective responses, but might enable or prevent behaviors such as turnover. A person may be currently quite satisfied with a particular job, but may plan to quit sometime in the future because of blocked advancement opportunities. Conversely, a dissatisfied worker may plan to stay because of a belief that the future may be better.

The extent to which an individual has alternative job opportunities and the relative availability and attractiveness of those opportunities have been found to influence job attitudes and behaviors (Pfeffer & Lawler, 1979; Mowday & McDade, 1979; Steers & Mowday, 1979). However, Steers and Mowday (1979) note that some employees decide to withdraw even when alternative jobs are not available. If an employee is presented with promotional opportunities outside the employing organization, his or her expectations on the current job are likely to be heightened, making it more difficult for the employing organization to meet those expectations. As a result, Steers and Mowday point out a circular cycle: increased job expectations cause current job attitudes to suffer, in turn causing withdrawal. Perceived promotional opportunities within the same company may influence current job attachment by making a worker more willing to

remain in an unsatisfactory situation. However, it might have the opposite effect of increasing current job expectations and negatively influencing job attitudes.

It is argued therefore, that workers have both short-term and long-term orientations to their work situation, and that attachment and withdrawal behaviors differ in the extent to which they are responses to current or future job concerns. Furthermore, employees of differing lengths of tenure in the same job are responsive to different aspects of the employment situation.

#### The Hypotheses

The present study will first examine the relative strength of the relationship of perceptions of the current job situation and of anticipated future opportunities to the satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions of the production worker. We hypothesize that job satisfaction will be related primarily to current aspects of the work situation, such as pay, co-workers, supervision, and job content. Commitment and turnover intentions, on the other hand, also reflect the future orientation of individuals, and will relate more strongly (than satisfaction) to such future considerations as opportunities for promotion. Specifically:

H1: Employees' overall job satisfaction will more strongly relate to characteristics of pay, co-workers, supervision and job content than to perceived promotion opportunity.

H2: Employee commitment and intention to leave will relate strongly both to future promotion opportunities and to current aspects of the work situation.

The second issue examined in this paper is the relative salience of different aspects of the current and anticipated future employment situation at the newcomer, insider and long-term veteran stages of job tenure. Consistent with Katz (1978a, 1978b):

H3: Newcomer's satisfaction will be more strongly related to peer group relations and supervision than to characteristics of the job and pay.

H4: Insider employee satisfaction will relate more strongly to job content than to other contextual and pay variables.

H5: Satisfaction of long-term veteran employees will relate more strongly to contextual variables such as pay, peer group relations, and supervision than to the job itself.

The final hypothesis is exploratory in nature:

H6: Employees who perceive that promotional opportunities exist for them will be responsive to different job aspects than those who do not perceive such opportunities.

## METHOD

### Sample

The sample consists of 318 non-unionized hourly employees of a large electronics firm located in California's Santa Clara Valley, usually referred to as the "Silicon Valley." The employees were all located in one division, and had responsibility for manufacturing silicon wafer chips. Eighty-five percent of the sample was female; the average age of the sample was 31 (SD = 11.9). Twenty-six percent had less than a high school degree, 41% had a high school degree or its equivalent, and 33% had at least one year over the high school degree, which included college and

technical training. Respondents had been in the organization an average of 3.5 years, and on their jobs an average of 2.5 years. Fifty percent were married and 54% had one or more dependents (SD = 1.6). Employees represented a number of ethnic groups including Asian, Indian (Asian), Spanish, Portuguese and Caucasian. For approximately 15% of the work force English is a second language.

The study was conducted in 1980, during a period when the company in question was fairly insulated from the recessionary conditions affecting other parts of the economy. It was, in fact, gradually increasing its workforce to meet product demand. The company maintained a policy of keeping its wages equivalent to that of other area leaders in the semiconductor industry. Wages in this industry, however, lagged substantially behind much of the unionized industry, such as automobile plants and some of the finished product electronics manufacturers in the area.

#### Procedure

Data were collected by survey questionnaires, and by unstructured and structured interviews with selected employees.

Unstructured Interviews. To better understand the organization's context, and to assist in development of the questionnaire, preliminary, unstructured interviews were conducted with 20 employees, who ranged from hourly workers to supervisors and managers. Open-ended questions were directed at obtaining broad information about type of work performed, worker characteristics, organizational procedures, turnover, and various other topics.

These interviews became the basis for formulating our research questions--and gave us a sense of how proficient hourly workers were in the use of the English language.

Survey. The total hourly workforce of 500 employees was asked to participate in the study at their workplaces on organization time. Respondents were asked for their job titles and department sections, but not their names. They were given assurances of confidentiality in the cover letter to the questionnaire, and verbally at the time the questionnaire was administered. The survey was administered during working hours by the research team to all three shifts of workers. Translators were available at all times for employees for whom English was a second language. Irregular work schedules, vacations and missing data reduced the sample to 318, or 64% of the total sample.

Structured Interviews. To supplement the quantitative survey, thirty to sixty minute interviews were conducted with randomly selected hourly employees from all three shifts over the course of four months. The interviews were structured to include both open-ended and specific responses, and provided information related to both job context and job content. Interviews occurred on organization time and premises, under guarantees of complete confidentiality. All structured interviews took place after development, but prior to administration of the survey. These interview data were content-analyzed prior to survey data analysis.

Four open-ended interview questions are particularly relevant to the issues of attachment and withdrawal. The first two solicit aspects of satisfaction, while the other two address the long-term attachment-withdrawal issue.

1. What do you like about working here?
2. What do you dislike about working here?
3. Why do people quit this company?

4. What would keep you with this company?

Respondents were also asked if workers in their workgroup talked about opportunities at other companies, and whether the respondent would prefer to be working at a different company. They were also asked if workers often complain about the company and, if so, what the nature of the complaints were. Finally, they were asked to describe their supervisor.

### MEASURES

#### Independent Variables

The scales employed as independent variables (e.g., promotion opportunities, pay equity, peer group relations, supervisory characteristics, and job characteristics) all described aspects of the work context rather than being affective responses to those aspects. Toward this end, all items having components of satisfaction were removed from the scales. Other items were deleted after a pretest with a sample of supervisors indicated confusion concerning their wording, given the large percentage of employees for whom English was a second language. In all cases, acceptable scale reliabilities were obtained; these are reported in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Pay Equity. Perceptions of pay equity were measured by a four item scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Nadler et al, 1975). These four items measure perceived fairness of pay in relation to the job performed, personal inputs, and the wages of others in the company and within the geographical area (alpha = .85).

Job Characteristics. Five job characteristics were measured, four of which were operationalized using items from the Job Characteristics Inventory (Sims & Slocum, 1976). These included variety, task identity, autonomy and feedback. These four subscales were combined with a fifth scale measuring the employee's chance to learn on the job in order to construct a global measure of the characteristics of a job. To test whether a global measure was justified, all scales employed in the study were factor analyzed, and the five job characteristic scales emerged as a strong single factor, with intercorrelations ranging from .42 to .72. The coefficient alpha is .88 for this scale.

Peer Group Relations. Items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire measuring aspects of workgroup attraction and teamwork were combined to form a global measure of peer group relations. The Coefficient Alpha internal consistency reliability of this measure is .77.

Supervisory Characteristics. The supervisory characteristics scale employed here consists of five subscales--Leader Consideration, Initiating Structure, Attention to Subordinate Development, Feedback, and Concern with Performance. Two of the subscales, Leader Consideration (alpha = .86) and Leader Initiating Structure (alpha = .84) are short versions of the LBDQ-XII, and have been shown to have acceptable level reliabilities across several samples (Kinicki and Schriesheim, 1978). The remaining three subscales--Attention to Subordinate Development, Feedback, and Concern with Performance--are from the Michigan Assessment Package, with alpha values of .84, .85, and .66 respectively. These five leader subscales were highly intercorrelated (.68-.77) and emerged as a single factor, entitled supervisory characteristics (alpha = .93).



Career and Promotion Opportunities. People's future promotional opportunities were assessed by a 3-item scale measuring their perceptions of advancement and promotion opportunities ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

#### Dependent Variables

Satisfaction. Overall satisfaction was measured with a five-item instrument, measuring satisfaction with work, pay, supervision, promotion, and co-workers ( $\alpha = .76$ ). This instrument was developed by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980), and was found to have excellent psychometric properties in three separate samples.

Commitment. Commitment was measured using a short form of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, et. al., 1979). This measure ( $\alpha = .78$ ) is defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization" (Steers, 1977).

Intention to Turn Over. Behavioral intent to turn over, or withdraw from the organization was measured by a two-item scale from the Michigan Assessment Package ( $\alpha = .71$ ). It asks whether the worker often thinks of quitting, and if he/she plans to look for a new job within a year. Intention to turn over has been found to relate consistently to subsequent turnover (Mobley et al., 1979) and has been used as a reliable measure of employee withdrawal.

#### Method of Analysis

Tenure Groups. Respondents were broken into three groups which correspond to Katz' (1978) three groupings: Newcomers having tenure of six months or less ( $n = 74$ ), insiders with tenure between seven months and 5 years ( $n = 172$ ), and long-term veterans with five or more years of tenure ( $n = 75$ ). The "six month or less" newcomer category was selected

because it conforms to the company-designated end of formal socialization, (i.e., after six months, the trainee becomes a senior operator). In addition, newcomers with less than six months tenure are more likely to leave than are insiders or long-term veterans. Very little turnover occurs among employees with more than five years tenure. In this case, the average length of tenure of the production employees before quitting was 3.4 months. Summary data of turnover patterns are presented in Table 2, and data pertaining to demographic and attitudinal differences and similarities among the three tenure groups are presented

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Insert Table 2 about here

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in Table 3.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Survey Analyses. Separate stepwise regressions were performed for each dependent variable, using the five general measures as independent predictors. These were conducted to examine the total amount of variance in the attachment variables which could be predicted by the independent variables.

Interview Analyses. All interview notes from the 35 employees were independently content-analyzed by the interviewer and by three other members of the research team, yielding a high degree of agreement concerning patterns and categories of responses. These content analyses

were performed prior to statistical processing of the surveys to ensure independence of the results. Two-thirds of the interviewees were newcomers, allowing a focused look at job perceptions and reactions of this group.

## RESULTS

This section will look first at the survey data and then at the interview findings.

### Survey Results

The stepwise regression analyses for the three tenure groups are presented in Table 4.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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Satisfaction. H1 was generally supported by regression results in all three tenure groups. A great deal of the variance in satisfaction (Adjusted  $R^2 = .55-.74$ ) is explained, almost exclusively by the descriptive measures of current job and contextual characteristics. Only for the insider group does the more future oriented variable, promotional opportunities, enter the equation with a weak but significant Beta ( $B = .18$ ).

Attachment and Withdrawal. As predicted in H2, commitment and turnover intent are explained both by promotional opportunities and by other aspects of the work setting. Promotional opportunities is the strongest predictor of commitment for both the newcomer ( $B = .44$ ) and the insider group ( $B = .35$ ), and it is one of the two strongest predictors for the long term veterans ( $B = .34$ ).

Results for turnover intent are less clear. Here, the future orientation is strongest in the newcomer group, where promotional opportunities have a strong inverse relationship to turnover intent ( $B = -.38$ ). For insiders, peer group relations is the only predictor variable which is strongly related (inversely) to turnover intent ( $B = -.31$ ). For the long-term veterans, both pay equity and peer group relations have significant inverse Betas ( $-.24, -.31$ ). Promotional opportunities have a direct, though unexpected, relationship to turnover intent ( $B = .33$ ). A relatively small amount of variance of the turnover of the veterans is explained by the regression equation ( $R^2 = .14$ ).

Longevity. The next three hypotheses, which dealt with the predictors of satisfaction in the three tenure groups, also receive mixed support. As predicted from Katz' framework, satisfaction of long-term veterans is most strongly related to pay equity ( $B = .41$ ) and supervision ( $B = .25$ ), but it is also related significantly to job characteristics ( $B = .22$ ). Contrary to the predictions, peer relations is not significantly related to satisfaction in this group.

In comparison, supervision is not related significantly to satisfaction in either of the two lower tenure groups, but pay equity is a very strong predictor in both. Neither of these findings was predicted.

Job characteristics enters the regression equation first in both the newcomer ( $B = .27$ ) and insider group ( $B = .32$ ). Its importance was not predicted for the newcomers, where it was expected that the social variables would have more weight. Newcomer results are very similar to those for the insider group. In this organization, the 6-60 month insider group is responsive not only to job characteristics, as predicted, but also to several other aspects of the job context such as equity ( $B = .30$ ), the peer group ( $B = .26$ ) and, to promotional opportunities ( $B = .18$ ).

Promotional Opportunities. Table 5 reports the results for the exploratory hypothesis that workers who perceive promotional opportunities will respond to different aspects of the job and its context than those who do not perceive such future opportunities.

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Insert Table 5 about here

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The most striking pattern of differences is between subgroups of newcomers. For newcomers who feel they have promotion opportunities, the job itself is a highly significant predictor of commitment ( $B = .42$ ), satisfaction ( $B = .38$ ), and turnover intent ( $B = -.55$ ). In the low-promotion-opportunities group, pay equity explains the greatest amount of variance in both satisfaction ( $B = .52$ ) and commitment ( $B = .38$ ) and none of the independent variables explain a significant portion of the variance of turnover intent. Newcomers either seem to see little future in the company with money as the main binder, or foresee the possibility of a career future and are responsive to the enrichment characteristics of the job.

The differences between the high and low promotion subgroups which appear in the regression analyses for the insiders and long-term veterans are not as strong or consistent as they were in the newcomer subgroups. For both insider subgroups, peer relations is a major predictor of commitment and turnover intent. Among workers of more than five years tenure, pay equity is a major predictor of both satisfaction (high = .41; low = .34) and commitment (high = .45; low = .37) for both subgroups. Peer relations continues to be a significant binding force in the long-

term veteran group which does not expect promotion ( $B = .38$ ) but is not significant for the group that expects promotion.

In 8 of the 9 sets of comparison equations in Table 5, more variance in the dependent variables is explained for the subgroup with high expectations of promotional opportunities than for those perceiving few promotional opportunities. In some cases the difference is substantial. Only in the insider group do the four independent variables explain a significant, though small, portion of the variance of turnover intent ( $R^2 = .08$ ) for those with low promotional expectations.

Summary of Survey Results. Members of all tenure groups are likely to be more committed if they perceive promotional opportunities, but only the newcomers are likely to leave if such advancement is not seen as likely. Job satisfaction is related to current aspects of the job and its context in all groups. Some general patterns of differences are apparent in the affective reactions of the three longevity groupings. Pay equity is the predominant concern among long-term veterans, and is not unimportant in other groups. Peer relations is a major binding mechanism in the middle tenure years. When taken as a whole, the two early tenure groups are most responsive to job characteristics. When broken into subgroups, newcomers who perceive promotional opportunities are responsive to job characteristics, whereas those who do not perceive such opportunities are more responsive to pay equity issues.

#### Interview Results

The presentation of the interview results will focus on several themes that were consistently noted in the content analyses. Because of the relatively small number (12) of interviewees with over 6 months tenure, this discussion will compare only 2 groups: newcomers with all longer tenure employees.

Satisfaction. All the newcomers reported at least one favorable aspect of their employment situation that they liked, including the people they worked with (65%), the work itself (22%) and the benefit package (17%). Fewer than half of the interviewees with over six months' tenure reported any aspects of their employment situation that they liked. As in the newcomer group, the most common response was "the people" (25%). Content analyses revealed a consistent trend with respect to the work itself. New workers report fascination with the technology and the machines, and challenge with learning their jobs. After two months, workers begin reporting boredom, lack of challenge and desire to learn different jobs.

Workers reported many unfavorable aspects that they disliked, although experienced workers again tended not to generate as many responses as new workers. Again, all responses referred to the job and its context, rather than to opportunities in the company. Most frequently mentioned by both newcomers (57%) and longer term employees (33%) were physical aspects of the work situation (e.g. crowded, dirty, cold, etc.). Company policies on such issues as attendance, breaks, and uniforms were mentioned by 22% of the newcomers and 17% of the long-term veterans. The most frequently mentioned disliked aspect of the job itself was that it was boring during the frequent down time (30% of the newcomers and 17% of the others).

Pay issues were mentioned by only three of the 35 interviewees in response to questions about likes and dislikes. However, 54% of the newcomers and 42% of the experienced workers reported frequent complaining about pay by workers in their fabrication area. With few exceptions, workers tended to describe their supervisor in generally favorable terms, but 25% reported hardly ever seeing their supervisor.

Attachment and Withdrawal. When asked the relatively impersonal question "Why do 'people' quit?," money was the explanation given by 60% of the newcomers and 25% of the longer term workers. Twenty-three percent of the newcomers, but no experienced workers, felt people quit to get away from their supervisors. Several experienced workers mentioned job boredom and company policies.

Responses to the more personalized question "What would keep you here?" assumed a different pattern. "More money" is again the predominant response mentioned by both the newcomers (55%) and the more tenured group (50%). Career issues such as transfer and promotional opportunities were also mentioned frequently in both groups (41% of the newcomers and 25% of the others): 27% of the newcomers wanted more training opportunities (a factor mentioned by only one experienced worker). Long-range career and development opportunities were seen particularly by the newcomers to be important in their own decisions to leave or stay with the company. The advancement system was seen as arbitrary and governed by favoritism, and many respondents felt uninformed regarding opportunities.

Interviewees were asked to what extent people in their workgroup discussed employment opportunities at other companies. Most portrayed an active exchange of information between workers. These workers gave consistent renditions of the advantages and disadvantages of other companies (three local employers in particular were frequently mentioned as being superior employers). The advantages cited were better pay, benefits, and profit sharing possibilities. The power of the grapevine was evidenced by an incident in which most of the interviewees on one particular day informed the interviewer of a twenty cent boost in hourly pay that had been announced by a competitor that morning. Fifty percent



of those interviewed said they would prefer employment in a different company. Although several preferred a different industry, most wanted to move to a better paying job in the electronics industry.

Summary of Interview Data. Responses to the satisfaction-oriented questions revealed that peer relations is the major source of contentment, while physical work conditions and personnel policies caused discontent. Pay was reported as the major focus of workgroup complaints, although newcomers reported considerable griping about supervision.

When asked specifically about withdrawal and attachment, money became the primary focus. It was most frequently cited as the reason people leave, as the measure that would keep the interviewee from leaving, and as the attraction of other employers in the area. A substantial number of respondents, especially newcomers, also reported that career, promotion, and training opportunities would keep them in the company.

Differences between tenure groups were in the quantity of responses rather than their focus. Experienced workers tended to be less critical of their employer, and to offer less information. The two differences which did emerge were the relatively greater concern of the newcomers with promotional issues, and the tendency of brand-new workers to be fascinated with work that would rapidly come to be perceived as tedious and routine.

#### DISCUSSION

The data indicate a high rate of turnover among the high technology production workers during their first six months of employment. Interviews reveal a workforce which engages in frequent discussion of opportunities and wage rates of other companies in the area, and a great deal of agreement among workers concerning the relative merits of these companies.

Interviews with the workers, as well as with the managers, commonly revealed that money was the major reason for the high turnover. This is hardly surprising since these workers were receiving a relatively low wage compared to other area workers and in view of the high cost of living in the Silicon Valley. Over half the workers provided sole financial support for their families, and many had attendant transportation and child care expenses.

The results of this study portray a problem more complex than inadequate pay. Survey data indicate that pay equity issues are of particular importance for some subgroups: long-term veterans and newcomers who see little chance of advancement in the company. For other groups, pay, although related to satisfaction, may not contribute to long-term commitment or willingness to remain with the company.

The importance of taking a dynamic approach to these phenomena is evident. Both survey and interview data indicate that current job outcomes, such as peer relations, physical work conditions, company policies, job content and pay equity are related to job satisfaction. Promotional opportunities are related to the more future-oriented commitment to the organization. Many of the production workers evaluate their own employment situation with a time-frame that extends beyond the daily aspects of their job and its context.

Long-term expectations, particularly of workers in their first five years, may also influence their responsiveness to current aspects of the job. The commitment and turnover intentions of workers who see future opportunities are more strongly related to current aspects of the situation than is true of those who see no future potential.

Promotional opportunities may be so critical that when a person sees little chance of advancement, the immediate contextual and pay variables do not influence turnover intent.\* If promotional opportunities are perceived as available, then the individual is responsive to other aspects of the job.

The effect of job longevity remains unresolved. There are clearly differences in the patterns of variables which explain the affective reactions of the three tenure groups, yet it is unclear whether these differences are due to self-selection, adaptation to the job, or other factors. In interviews as well as in the survey data, for example, a group of long-term veterans could be distinguished from other workers by their instrumental orientation. Many in the veteran group expressed their gratitude to the company for their job and their paycheck.

In contrast, newcomers distinguish themselves not only by their high turnover rate, but also by the important role of promotional opportunities in their interview and survey responses.\* The affective reactions of those who expect advancement are determined almost exclusively by job characteristics, while those who have low expectations of advancement are more responsive to pay equity issues. A large amount of the variance in turnover intentions (29%) can be explained by job characteristics alone for those who expect job advancement. In this early tenure group the company may be losing some of its best promotional prospects as a result of the relatively unenriched jobs. Strong and consistent differences between high and low promotion groups are not as evident in the two longer tenured groups.

An unexpected finding of the study is the extent to which new employees are responsive both to the long-term promotional opportunities

and to the more immediate pay and job characteristics aspects of their work situation, rather than to the social and supervisory variables traditionally believed to be important at this early job stage. These workers appear to be consciously evaluating long-term opportunities, growth opportunities, and equity issues. Peer and supervisory concerns have a stronger impact on affective reactions for longer term employees, with peer relations being especially important in the middle stages.

Most interview respondents mentioned peer relations as a positive factor in their work situation. Survey responses indicate that peer relations are particularly important as binding mechanisms in the middle tenure group. This may reflect the amount of time it takes to become integrated into a social group. It may also reflect the recent influx of various foreign groups into the workforce of the area, and the desire of many foreign workers to want to remain in a comfortable niche where there are friends and relatives who speak the same language. Since it was generally agreed that foreign workers did not turn over so rapidly, a situation not unfamiliar in the history of this country may exist: where relatively low-paying jobs in growing industries are filled by immigrants, who provide some stability in the workforce because of the relative security they experience.

#### Implications

The high technology production workers surveyed in this study appear highly responsive to factors traditionally believed to foster attachment for white-collar employees. They formulate expectations regarding their opportunities in the company and exchange information with one another regarding opportunities elsewhere in the area. Some see their current job as preparing them for high-level or higher paying jobs in the same or other companies.

Job content is important to these workers from the onset, and boredom sets in as soon as the training period is over. Worker desire to learn new skills presents a job design dilemma for industries characterized by technical jobs which are repetitive but involve relatively long learning periods.

Our results provide only partial support for Katz's theory that workers at different tenure stages will be responsive to different aspects of the job. Job content is less salient for the long-term veteran, but other facets are related to worker reactions in all tenure groups. The data provide reason to believe that differences between long-term veterans and shorter term workers may reflect the advancement or turnover of those who are able to find or continue to seek better opportunities.

This study suggests that looking for one-facet solutions to job dissatisfaction and turnover will not work. Modern workers are simultaneously social, instrumental, and achieving (Schein, 1980). Job responses involve both present experiences and future hopes. This study supports other recent evidence that job decisions are made both in reaction to facets of the current job and a set of beliefs about available alternatives (Farrell and Rusbult, 1981). Theories which inform the development of career progressions, job designs, and human resource systems must be as complex as the people they serve.

To the extent that the findings from this study may be generalized to other samples, it can be concluded that, for organizations concerned with enhancing employee attachment over time, and curbing the withdrawal of high technology production workers, aspects of the current as well as future job experience must now be considered. In particular, it should be noted that:

- Employee satisfaction relates more strongly to current organizational phenomena than do such future attitudes or behaviors, as one's intention to leave. This perhaps accounts for weak relationships between satisfaction and withdrawal behaviors. As such, organizational emphasis on a satisfied workforce may not contribute to a long-term committed workforce.
- Perceived promotional opportunities figure prominently in building a long term committed production workforce. Particularly for newcomers, long term expectations strongly influence the reaction to the current job.
- For organizations unable or unwilling to offer articulated career and promotional paths for its production workforce, an effort should be made to select those with few expectations of promotion. This selection procedure can be abetted by offering realistic job previews which address this lack of career growth.
- Because attachment and withdrawal occur over time, greater attention needs to be paid to the longitudinal impact of production jobs on personality. Clearly newcomers who expect promotional opportunities must be assigned to enriched jobs which provide them with job advancement. Otherwise, these newcomers (who have decreased expectations) are likely to be highly sensitive to pay equity issues.

This study attempted to explain attachment and withdrawal for newcomers, insiders and long term veterans by recasting these job reactions into a dynamic framework. Further attention needs to be focused on the impact of job longevity on employee attachment and withdrawal over time.

## FOOTNOTES

- \* It should be noted that the company recently began hiring outsiders with college degrees into supervisory positions.

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TABLE 1

## Coefficient Alphas and Intercorrelations

(N = 318)

Variable (Mean, Variance)	Commitment	Turnover Intent	Job Satisfaction	Job Characteristics	Supervisor Characteristics	Pay Equity	Peer Group	Advancement
Commitment (4.6, 1.3)	(.78)	-.50	.56	.45	.33	.47	.41	.56
Turnover Intent. (3.9, 1.8)		(.71)	-.46	-.33	-.24	-.28	-.38	-.31
Job Satisfaction (4.6, 1.2)			(.76)	.69	.57	.65	.57	.57
Job Characteristics (3.7, 1.0)				(.88)	.60	.46	.44	.49
Supervisory Characteristics (4.7, 1.4)					(.93)	.32	.46	.41
Pay Equity (3.3, 1.5)						(.85)	.34	.47
Peer Group Relations (4.6, 1.1)							(.77)	.44
Advancement Opportunities (4.4, 1.3)								(.81)

\*(All correlations significant at the .001 level)

TABLE 2

Summary Data  
 Total Turnover - 92 Employees\*  
 (December 1979 - February 1980)

	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>	<u>RAW SCORE</u>
A. Shift		
1 -	30.43%	28
2 -	26.09%	24
3 -	38.04%	35
Not Reported	5.44%	5
B. Absences (Reported by Supervisor)		
Frequent	41.30%	38
Minimal	25.00%	23
None	14.13%	13
Not Reported	19.87%	18
C. Tenure		
1. 1 Month	39.13%	36
2. 2 Months	20.65%	19
3. 3-6 Months	23.91%	22
4. 7-12 Months	5.43%	5
5. 1 + Year	2.17%	2
6. 2 Years	6.52%	6
7. 3 Years	1.09%	1
8. 4 + Years	1.09%	1

\*Total Hourly Workforce = 500

TABLE 3

Comparison of Demographics

	<u>≤ 6 months</u>	<u>6-60 months</u>	<u>≥ 60 months</u>
Sex (% female)	81%	85%	93%
Education			
High School or more	75%	75%	62%
Income			
-Sole Financial Support	59%	59%	60%
No dependents	49%	48%	39%
Mean number of dependents	1.5	1.2	1.4
% Ethnic Minority	71%	67%	74%
Age (Mean)	28.2	28.5	42.0
Family Members Work At			
Same Company	33%	38%	35%
% First Job	28.6%	33%	37.4%

TABLE 4

Stepwise Regression: Outcome Variable = f(Promotional Opportunities, Job Characteristics, Supervisory Characteristics, Peer Relations and Pay Equity)<sup>a</sup>

	<u>Newcomers</u> ( <u>&lt; 6 months, N = 74</u> )	<u>Insiders</u> ( <u>7-60 months, N = 172</u> )	<u>Long-term Veterans</u> ( <u>&gt; 60 months, N = 72</u> )
General Satisfaction	R <sup>2</sup> = .65***	R <sup>2</sup> = .74***	R <sup>2</sup> = .55***
	Job .27*	Job .32***	Equity .41***
	Equity .38***	Equity .30***	Supervision .25***
	Peer Relations .20*	Peer Relations .26***	Job .22*
	Supervision .18	Promotional Op. .18***	Peer Relations .15
		Supervision .10	
Commitment	R <sup>2</sup> = .47***	R <sup>2</sup> = .38***	R <sup>2</sup> = .33***
	Promotional Op. .44***	Promotional Op. .35***	Equity .37***
	Job .28*	Peer Relations .19**	Promotional Op. .34***
	Supervision .13	Equity .15*	
		Job .10	
Turnover Intent	R <sup>2</sup> = .22***	R <sup>2</sup> = .22***	R <sup>2</sup> = .14*
	Promotional Op. -.38***	Peer Relations -.31***	Equity -.24*
	Job -.17	Promotional Op. -.16	Promotional Op. .33*
		Job -.14	Peer Relations -.31*
			Job -.20
			Supervision .15

<sup>a</sup>Beta weights are listed for variables which contribute to explained variance, in order in which they enter the equation. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>'s are presented

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

TABLE 5

Comparison of High and Low Promotional Opportunity Subgroups<sup>a</sup>  
 Stepwise Regression: Outcome Variable = f (Job Characteristics,  
 Supervisory Characteristics, Peer Relations and Pay Equity)

	Newcomers ( $\leq$ 6 months, N = 74)		Insiders (6-60 months, N = 172)		Long-term Veterans ( $>$ 60 months, N = 72)	
	High Promotional Opportunity N = 37	Low Promotional Opportunity N = 37	High N = 96	Low N = 36	High N = 36	Low N = 36
General Satisfaction	$R^2 = .54^{***}$	$R^2 = .59^{***}$	$R^2 = .54^{***}$	$R^2 = .69^{***}$	$R^2 = .34^{***}$	$R^2 = .61^{***}$
Equity	.52 <sup>***</sup>	.38*	.32 <sup>***</sup>	.42 <sup>***</sup>	.39*	.41 <sup>***</sup>
Job	.30*	.20	.29 <sup>***</sup>	.35 <sup>***</sup>	.34*	.25*
Peer	.23	.19	.24 <sup>***</sup>	.36 <sup>***</sup>	.19	.25*
		.17	Superv. .22*	Superv. .22*	Superv. .19	Superv. .18
Commitment	$R^2 = .23^{***}$	$R^2 = .39^{***}$	$R^2 = .07^*$	$R^2 = .28^{***}$	$R^2 = .24^{**}$	$R^2 = .18^{***}$
Equity	.38 <sup>***</sup>	.42*	.25*	.39 <sup>***</sup>	.37 <sup>***</sup>	.45 <sup>***</sup>
Job	.28*	.29	.13	.31 <sup>***</sup>	.38*	.38*
			Superv. -.15	Superv. -.33	Superv. -.33	Superv. -.33
			Job .10	Job .10	Job .24	Job .24
Turnover Intention	NS	$R^2 = .29^{***}$	$R^2 = .08^*$	$R^2 = .21^{***}$	NS	$R^2 = .11^*$
		Job	Peer	Peer	Job	Job
		-.55 <sup>***</sup>	-.24*	-.40 <sup>***</sup>	-.26	-.26
		Job	Job	Job	Peer	Peer
		-.14	-.16	-.16	-.24	-.24

<sup>a</sup>Subgroups formed by splitting at the mean on the Promotional Opportunities variable in each tenure category